



AN ORIGINAL CHARADE.

HOLIDAY AFTERNOONS.—IV.  
ONE Monday morning, Marian and Clara Lane

asked to speak to Miss Walker before school commenced. They had a request to prefer, and Marian was the spokeswoman.

"As next Saturday will be our last half-holiday before we break up, we should very much like to get up a charade or two, if you will allow us. I have the words of a simple one which we had at a juvenile party at Westwood last Christmas, and you know, dear Miss Walker, that if mamma herself took a part there *could* be nothing wrong in it."

"I am quite sure of that, dear, but charades generally require more preparation than we should have time for; especially during examination week."

"Our charades are very simple affairs, what we call 'fireside charades,' and demand nothing but what our every day resources will supply. Then examination week being all occupied in going over old work, we really have as much spare time as when we are preparing fresh lessons, if not more. You know, Miss Walker, you *do* make us learn things thoroughly the first time, and, at any rate, there is not much chance of our forgetting them before the end of the term."

"I hope not," replied their teacher, smiling at Marian's arguments. "I cannot, however, discuss the plan fully now, but come to me when afternoon school is over; explain everything, and I will see what can be done."

The girls went off, abundantly contented with this reply. Miss Walker's promise to see what could be done did not mean what similar words do in the mouths of many people, and especially in dealing with children—namely, that the matter would pass away from the thoughts and memory as if it had never been mentioned.

They knew their teacher would consider it fairly, help them if possible, and, in any case, give them an answer without needless delay. They left their manuscript charade in her hands, wondering how she would manage to read it and decide as to its suitability during the short time at her disposal, and with all the business of school going on, almost without intermission for her.

Amid these various occupations Miss Walker did find time to read the charade, and we will imagine that we are looking over her shoulder whilst she is thus occupied.



"SHOWING CONSIDERABLE INDEPENDENCE WITH REGARD TO TIME."



## CHARADE.

WORD—"HOLIDAYS."

A slight orthographical liberty being taken with the first two syllables in the opening part, which represents "Holly."

## CHARACTERS.

MAMMA (Mrs. Keith).

FOUR CHILDREN (Annie, Tom, Hilda, and Harry).

AUNT ALICE.

THE PARLOUR MAID (Mary).

Party of carol singers, or waits, not less than four in number, but as many more as you like.

## SCENE I.

A lady is sitting in a drawing-room with young children about her. On the floor is a large open basket, or tray, containing sprigs of holly, which the children break into suitable pieces and hand to the mamma. She twists them into a wreath and binds them together with fine wire.

TIME—December 21, Evening.

(Youngest child, TOM, yawns, drops his hands on his lap with a weary look, and says)—I think it must be nearly time for bed.

Was it this morning that the gardener said "We've reached the shortest day"? He must be wrong.

I'm sure I never knew one half so long. Mamma, mamma, when will these wreaths be done?

At first this garland work was famous fair; But all the funny part is long since past, And each tough stem seems tougher than the last.

I tried a knife, when, ah, unlucky elf!

I mean to cut a twig, but cut myself.

Ivy and laurel wreaths were well enough;

But, oh, this holly is such prickly stuff!

Look at my fingers. (Holds them up.)

SECOND CHILD (Harry).—Yes, and look at mine. (Holds up his hands.)

THIRD CHILD (Annie, the eldest of the four).—And poor mamma has had them to all twine.

We've only cut the sprays for her to use. A trifling task, and yet you would excuse yourselves from further labour. Fie, for shame!

MAMMA.—Hush, Annie, dear, you really must not blame

These tiny workers; they have done their part,

And done it well; though little fingers smart With many a thorn, and each dear weary head

Longs for old nurse's summons, "Come to bed."

FOURTH CHILD (Hilda).—Annie, it was not kind to say "For Shame."

I'm sure papa quite wondered when he came And saw how much we'd done. I know he said,

Putting his hand upon Tom's curly head, And cuddling me quite close upon his knee— "These willing hands make labour light. I see

You've changed my study to a fairy bower; And these small folks have helped with all their power."

He kissed us then with such a merry smile, And asked how much we'd done? Tom said,

"A mile."

(AUNT ALICE enters in out-door costume, shakes hands with all, and kisses the children; then, at MAMMA'S request, takes off her jacket and sits down with little TOM upon her knee.)

AUNT ALICE.—I had to pass the gate, so thought I'd come

And ask when all the rest are to be home. Have you had news?

MAMMA.—Yes; letters came to-day

From Winifred and Mabel, just to say That on the twenty-third they will be here, And Winny adds, "Mamma, we've such a dear Sweet darling schoolfellow, the best of girls; She is so good. And she has lovely curls! Her parents are abroad; too far away For her to join them; and she was to stay The holidays with friends who love her well, When, all at once, a letter came to tell Of sickness in their home. She cannot go: And what to plan our teacher does not know. Do ask if she may come to us instead; Now don't say No. She may have half my bed.

I've heard you say our house was full before, Still there was always room for just one more.

Write by return. You really must say Yes. And I'll the postage pay with many a kiss; I cannot write one-half that's in my head, So close, with love to all, from

WINIFRED."

AUNT ALICE.—So like that loving child.

What shall you do?

MAMMA.—Write her the "yes" she asks for; one or two

The more amidst our merry, noisy clan Will only make us happier.

(Turns to TOM, and shows him the wreath completed.)

Little man,

Our task is done; this wreath is quite the last.

Now I must write, or post time will be past.

(MAMMA lays finished wreath on the basket, and sits down to answer WINIFRED'S letter, in which she encloses a second note; then, having closed the envelope, she hands it to HARRY, saying)—

Tell John to post this letter, and not wait A moment, or I fear it may be late.

(Child goes out of the room with the letter.)

AUNT ALICE.—My own dear boys have sent a line to me

Saying they bring a comrade, who will be Like sunshine in the house; no time to tell More than this much, "You're sure to like him well."

MAMMA.—Guests add a little to our household cares;

But love makes light of this, and, unawares,

We may have angel guests in earthly guise.

In any case, it surely must be wise

To help our children when they wish to share Their joys with others and to lighten care.

(At this moment singing is heard. MAMMA, AUNT ALICE, and the children, including HARRY, who is come back after taking the letter, go to the window and look out, but cannot see the singers.)

MAMMA.—They must be in the hall; I'll ring the bell.

(Does so, and MARY, the parlour maid, appears.)

Who are those singers, Mary; can you tell?

MARY.—They are the waits, and will be glad to know

If you will hear them sing before they go.

(Voices come nearer, and words can be distinguished by the listeners in the drawing-room.)

CHORUS.—Heigho, sing heigho unto the green holly;

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then heigho! the holly, the holly!

This life is most jolly, most jolly,

This life is most jolly.\*

(Enter WAITS, in thick coats and shawls and woollen comforters, the males hats in hand. They bow awkwardly, and ask leave to sing.)

\* This is a part of the chorus to a beautiful glee, called "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind," published, at a very trifling price, by Novello & Co., and forming a number of their Standard Glee Books.

On receiving permission they sing the glee all through, and then the leader says, after the children have clapped and applauded the singing)—

Please, ma'am, we'd like to sing a carol too.

MAMMA.—A carol! No, indeed, that will not do.

It is too soon. But come on Christmas Eve Again, and I will gladly give you leave.

(She gives money to the leader, and the singers go out, led by the parlour-maid, saying all together as they make their bows and curtseys)—

Good night! Good night! Good luck to all,

Right soon we'll make another call.

(AUNT ALICE resumes her out-door dress, saying)—

Now I must go.

MAMMA.—And these must all to bed, Or I shall hear of many an aching head.

(They all go out, the little ones led by MAMMA and AUNT ALICE, the elder children following.)

END OF FIRST SCENE.

## SCENE II.

## CHARACTERS.

GOVERNESS and SCHOOL GIRLS (named WINIFRED, MAGGIE, EMMA, NELLIE, LOUIE, &c.)

WORD—"Days."

TIME—December 22nd, 11 a.m.

A SCHOOLROOM.

(A number of girls sitting at desks or tables, and occupied in various ways, with books, slates, maps, &c., scattered up and down. One girl takes a pen, opens a small memorandum book and carefully crosses out something, then closes the book with an air of great satisfaction, and puts it in her pocket.)

MAGGIE.—What are you doing, Winny?

WINIFRED.—That's the last

But one. The tedious days are nearly past; Just a few hours of work, and then, away To weeks and weeks of home and joy and play.

No tiresome bell to ring us in to school, No crosses, or bad marks for breach of rule, Nor anything to do that is not nice.

MAGGIE.—What were you marking?

WINIFRED (taking book out of her pocket again).—Listen, in a trice

I'll tell you all about it. 'Tis a way I have of marking off each tiresome day

That comes between mamma, and home, and me.

I started it six weeks ago. You see (Opens book and points to the page.)

I drew six rows of strokes—in each was seven—

And every morning when it struck eleven I crossed one off. Now there is only one;

By twelve to-morrow we shall all be gone.

MAGGIE.—Not all. Alas! not all. I shall be left.

The hour which brings you joy leaves me bereft

Of all my playfellows.

(Puts her hand before her face and appears to be weeping.)

NELLIE.—O Maggie, dear,

I am so sorry we must leave you here;

It grieves me, too, to think that you will be Alone and sad, in this dull house, while we Are scattered north, and south, and east,

and west.

To pass our time with those we love the best. I'd like to take you with me, but we spend

The next ten days with father's oldest friend. But dry your tears, my darling.

(Draws MAGGIE'S head lovingly on her shoulder, wipes her eyes and kisses her, then



turns sharply round to a little girl who approaches, slate in hand, and with a beseeching look at NELLIE.)

Little Dunce,

What do you want?

LOUIE.—Please, just this once To help me with my sum; it won't come right, Although I did it seven times last night; And it was always wrong.

WINIFRED.—And likely, too, It should be wrong. The stupid things you do, You careless child, would almost drive me mad,

I tell you, Louie, I am very glad I'm not your teacher. See, now; there are seven, Six, five, two, three! You say they make eleven!

And, out of seven, three, six, and just one more, You nicely calculate an even score!

MAGGIE.—She's such a little thing—at six years old We don't know much of figures; do not scold A weeping child. Come hither, little mite, And do your sum with me; 'twill soon be right.

(Takes the slate from LOUIE and makes little groups of strokes upon it, corresponding with the numbers the child has to add, then says to her)— Count all these strokes and see what they will make.

Put down the six. The one we onward take To the next line, and add it with the rest: They make eighteen. All's done.

LOUIE.—You are the best Of friends to little girls who want to play; I do so hate to be kept in all day.

(LOUIE runs off joyfully, and as she does so the schoolroom door opens and the Governess enters with a number of letters in her hand. GOVERNESS distributing the letters as she speaks)—

Annie, there's one for you. For Winny three.

MAGGIE (aside).—I'm very sure there will be none for me.

GOVERNESS.—Louie's mamma a message sends in mine

To say her train will start at five to nine, And that, two stations on, she will be met By Uncle Tom. Nellie must not forget To take her waterproof, for fear of rain, As brother James will bring the car again. The brougham is engaged for grandmamma, But Nellie will not mind, it is not far, And wraps and rugs in plenty will be sent.

NELLIE.—I like the open car, and am content

With anything that bears me quickly on.

MAGGIE.—I knew there was no letter.

WINIFRED.—Here is one Enclosed in mine for you. Why do you stare?

As though it could not be. Come, take your share

Of postal spoils, and, if you care for me, Pray read it quickly, Mistress Marjorie.

(MAGGIE takes the letter held out by WINIFRED, opens it, and reads as follows)—

"My dear Girl,  
"I have heard from one of my children that something has occurred to prevent your spending the vacation with the friends who hoped to welcome you. It will give my young people and myself great pleasure if your governess, who, I understand, arranges everything for you in the absence of your parents, will allow you to pass the next few weeks with us. She has known us so long that I do not think she will say 'no,' and I trust, my dear girl, you will accept this invitation in the loving spirit in which it is given.

"I shall be delighted to count you as one

amongst my rather large flock of youngsters, and for the time, and in order to make our house more like home, you must look upon me as your own, dear mamma's deputy. Ask anything of me that you would ask of her; come to me when you please, and try to think of me as representing, to the best of my power, that dear mother who is longing to have you with her again.

"Hoping to see you arrive with my daughter Winny, and with love and kindest wishes,

"Believe me, yours affectionately,

"ELEANOR KEITH."

MAGGIE (with a look of bewilderment).— Winny, you've played a trick. It can't be true,

Your mother asks me to go home with you! She has not even seen my face.

WINIFRED.—As though That mattered, Maggie darling. You must go. I spoke beforehand to our teacher. She is quite agreeable, and certainly We shall take no denial. Not a word Of doubt or protest, it will not be heard.

(WINNY puts her fingers to her ears, as if determined not to listen to a word from MAGGIE, and the teacher, laying her hand affectionately on MAGGIE'S shoulder, says)— I can rejoice with you, my child; no fear That I shall say you nay, or keep you here. Go and be happy with these friends, and when The days of rest are past, come back again, With roses on your cheeks, once more to find A welcome here.

MAGGIE.—You always are so kind. (Another girl comes to the governess and says)— Please may we put our work and books away? We really cannot think of them to-day.

GOVERNESS.—No wonder, dear; I know your thoughts will roam, However you may strive, to friends at home. Clear all away, and when this task is done Put on your garden hats and take a run For half an hour; then come and do your part—

To make all ready for to-morrow's start.

(All the girls jump up, and, with thanks to the governess and exclamations of delight, rapidly clear away all school articles, and then run out, followed more quietly by the governess, who has been watching them with an amused face.)

END OF SECOND SCENE.

### SCENE III.

COMPLETE WORD—"Holidays."

TIME—Evening, December 23rd.

#### CHARACTERS.

MAMMA, PAPA, ANNIE, HILDA, TOM, HARRY, AUNT ALICE, UNCLE JAMES (her husband), FRED and JACK, their two boys, and their school friend, CHARLIE FREEMAN, WINIFRED and MAGGIE, and MABEL, an elder sister of WINNY'S.

(The drawing-room as in scene first. MAMMA, AUNT ALICE, and the four children are together. Nobody seems able to settle to any employment. First one and then another goes to the window, draws aside the curtains, and looks out, or appears to be listening for something. Mamma rises from her seat, goes to the fire, and stirs it vigorously.)

ANNIE.—Mamma, you surely mean to roast us quite!  
See what a blaze! I do not think the night is very cold.

MAMMA.—My child, you do not know How cuttingly this fierce, north wind can blow, Clothed, fed, and sheltered, all your happy past Has been so bright. You never felt the blast

Piercing your half-clad limbs, or hunger knew,

Or suffering, from which love could shelter you.

AUNT ALICE.—True, but we have no starving people here.

I wish with all my heart that we could cheer Each homeless wanderer with such a sight As waits our children when they come to night.

They will be glad enough to gather round This fireside. Hark! was not that a sound Of coming wheels? It surely must be time.

MAMMA.—I hear no sound except the merry chime

Of evening bells, ringing, so soft and sweet Through the clear air.

AUNT ALICE.—I'd rather hear the feet Of trampling horses and the shout of boys. To me sweet music now were only noise And hateful discord. All my listening ear Is for my children. Would that they were here!

(Looks at her watch, then puts it to her ear to listen if it is going; then compares it with MAMMA'S watch.)

MAMMA (holding out hers).—See, sister, they are both alike. 'Tis only we Whose thoughts are in advance of Time, and he

Goes hobbling on with the same lagging feet Now as of old, when joy we fain would meet.

But, O the change! No sooner do we grasp The happiness we longed for, than our clasp We tighten round it, and would gladly tie The feet of Father Time, lest he rush by Too rapidly; and, all un pitying, tear From loving hearts what most we cherish there.

(The children are now all standing at the windows and peeping behind the curtains, hoping to catch the first glimpse of the expected travellers.)

Enter PAPA and UNCLE JAMES.

MAMMA.—What! Are you here? We really thought you went To meet the children.

PAPA.—We must be content to wait with you.

AUNT ALICE.—I think the train is late. TOM (shouts, while all the others clap their hands)—

I see a carriage. It is past the gate.

HARRY.—And there's another, both are coming round.

ANNIE.—I see the girls.

HARRY.—And don't you hear the sound Of boys hurrahing? Yes they come, they come.

UNCLE JAMES.—And lads approaching home are never dumb.

The door is open; now the frosty air Steals in.

AUNT ALICE.—And now their feet are on the stair.

(WINIFRED, MAGGIE, an elder girl, FRED, JACK, and CHARLIE FREEMAN all come clattering in, and there is a general shaking of hands and embracing between parents and children. All the travellers are in out-door costume and warmly wrapped. MAGGIE is led forward by WINNIE and introduced to MAMMA, who kisses her affectionately.)

WINIFRED.—Here is the child you wrote for.

MAMMA.—Maggie, dear, I'm very glad indeed to see you here. I trust, my child, we shall find many ways To make you happy through the holidays. I cannot show you all my flock to-night: It is not often they are all in sight.

PAPA (shaking hands with MAGGIE).—Our Children by instalments you must see; They sometimes very nearly frighten me— There's such a tribe of little Keiths. Ah well!

They're dearer to our hearts than lips can tell.





“ASPIRATIONS!”

OH, that I had a spirit's words,  
Such as are heard above,  
That I might wake the sounding chords  
And sing of joy and love.  
There is so much that God has given  
To glad our lower sphere,  
And holy, precious gifts from heaven  
Are fresh and beautiful here.

Oh, that I had a spirit's wing,  
That in my earthly flight  
No spot of mortal sin might cling  
To stain its spotless white.  
Then, when my weary path might lie  
Through scenes of death and pain,  
Unsullied, I might gladly fly  
To heaven's pure light again.

Oh, that I had a spirit's thought,  
That purifies, refines,  
To trust and measure as I ought  
All that my God designs.  
Then though my lot on earth be drear,  
And sorrow threatens still,  
My soul might cry amidst its fear,  
“It is my Father's will!”

Oh, that I had a spirit's love,  
A pure and hallowed glow  
Within my mortal nature wove  
E'en while it rests below;  
Confiding, sacred in its truth,  
Unmixed with worldly strife,  
And shedding an immortal youth  
As sunshine over life.

Then, when my soul has cast aside  
Its garment in the tomb,  
And entered through the portals wide  
Of its eternal home,  
These glorious spirit-gifts would be,  
Not buried with the dead,  
But through a long eternity  
Shine brighter—perfected!

M. M. P.

Some are upstairs, the smallest are in bed,  
(Points to the elder youths, who have just arrived, and have been specially welcomed by AUNT ALICE and UNCLE JAMES)

These are Aunt Alice's, both Jack and Fred.  
UNCLE JAMES (introducing CHARLIE FREEMAN)

And this our visitor, who comes, like you,  
To make another home the happier too.

(MAGGIE starts, then darts forward towards CHARLIE FREEMAN.)

MAGGIE.—My cousin Charlie, if I may believe

My eyes! but think they surely must deceive.

CHARLIE.—There's no mistake at all; just then I was

Wondering what brought you here, my little coz.

UNCLE JAMES.—This is a glad surprise; but you, our guest,  
Must with these boys go to our proper nest.

AUNT ALICE.—Yet, happily, though you must part to-night,

'Twill be to meet again with morning light.

(All the boys and girls here begin to sing the following verses, making a great deal of noise, and showing considerable independence with regard to tune, their principal object being to make the performance as vigorous as possible. The elder people laugh, and pretend to stop their ears. As the song draws to a close, MAMMA leads out the two little ones, while ANNIE, HILDA, WINNIE, MAGGIE, and the elder sister follow. Papa accompanies AUNT ALICE and UNCLE JAMES with the three boys to the door. The last four lines should be sung as they are going out of the room, and the sound should at last die away in the distance.)

#### HOLIDAY SONG.

Hurrah! Hurrah for the holidays!  
Shan't we be having some fun?  
Won't we be having some jolly days  
Now the vacation's begun?

We'll turn the house out of the windows,  
And turn it in back at the doors;  
We'll empty the dairy and larder,  
And eat up the chickens by scores.

Hurrah! Hurrah for the holidays!  
Which bring us such pleasure and fun;  
We hope to have nothing but jolly days  
Now the vacation's begun.

No doubt we shall wear out the carpets,  
With clattering upstairs and down;  
Some parents might grumble, but “Mother”  
Won't give us the ghost of a frown.

Hurrah! Hurrah for the holidays!  
This is the first of our fun;  
This is the best of all jolly days,  
For the vacation's begun.

END OF CHARADE.