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FEELING *the* HURT

A CHRISTMAS DRAMA

FOR CHURCHES, YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES
AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS

BY MRS. F. D. BUTCHART



FILLMORE MUSIC HOUSE
528 ELM STREET, CINCINNATI, O.

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FEELING THE HURT

CAST

MRS. LANGMORE—mother of Fred and Elizabeth.
ELIZABETH LANGMORE—age 23 years.
FREDERIC LANGMORE—age 18 years.
MARTHA—the maid.
DR. JOHN SPENCER—returned missionary from China.
DR. HENRY WELLS—pastor of the church.
Chorus of children.

PART I.

SCENE I.

(A large living-room: chairs, table, piano, fire place, etc. Above center stage—placed to remain in the dark until the last scene—are two flags, the American flag and Christian flag. These are crossed above a Service Flag. Room is in disorder. There are papers, pillows, etc., out of place.)

Enter MARTHA (in dark wool dress, a white cap and apron, carrying a dust mop and cloth).

"Miss Elizabeth and her friends surely left this place torn up! I must hurry and put these pillows and papers back in place or Mrs. Langmore will be after me again, telling me I haven't done my work. I get so *tired* of being blamed for things I don't do! There, there, didn't I make up my mind last Sunday that I wouldn't complain any more? It's these little things that worry so. I ought to be strong enough to overcome and keep sweet about it, too! This week has been easier and better since I have learned what it really means to be a Christian. Now, Miss Elizabeth would be a great deal happier if she would get up and go to church of a Sunday so that she could get to know some of the young people." (She hums as she works and at last breaks in the song, "I love to tell the story"—sings first verse as she works.)

"Thanksgiving is past and Christmas will be here before we know it. I suppose we shall have a gay time, with a great many young people, friends of Mr. Frederic and Miss Elizabeth; and Mrs. Langmore will give lots and lots of gifts and a good bit of money, too, to help people. I remember she said last year she always could enjoy her Christmas dinner better if she felt she had done her duty by the poor, even if it were just throwing the money away! It *helps*; that's sure, even if she doesn't care where it goes and who enjoys the things it brings."

(Sings the second stanza. A door opens noisily and Elizabeth Langmore enters. She is dressed in a costly street dress, coat, hat and furs. Martha, while she sings, is on her knees dusting the under part of the table. Elizabeth stands in the doorway watching her and listening to the song.)

ELIZABETH—"For Goodness sake, Martha! You really and truly sound *happy!*"

MARTHA—"Indeed I am, Miss! And why not?"

ELIZABETH—"I can't just see what you have to make you so. Why, *I'm* not one *bit* happy and I have heaps more than you!"

MARTHA—"So you have, Miss, but did you ever stop and count your reasons for being happy?"

ELIZABETH—"Count my reasons! Why, *no*. How could I do that?"

MARTHA—"Well, Miss Elizabeth," (Martha drops her cloth, sits on the floor and counts on her hand) "you see, you don't have to work like I do, to get your food and a place to sleep. That's *one*. Then you have nice things to wear, like your coat and your shoes and your dress. There are *two* things to count. Then when you want anything, you just go and get it, and, what's best of all; here is your home, Miss, with your mother and Mr. Frederic, your brother. Oh, there are ever and ever so many things to make you happy, if you would only count them all."

ELIZABETH—"I wish I could *see* to count them but, I declare, I can't. Martha, why do you get down on your knees and dust the under side of that table? Nobody is going to see it and mother would never know."

MARTHA—"That's true, Miss Elizabeth, I used to feel that way about it, too, but I don't any more. You see, I'd know if it wasn't dusted the way it should be and your mother pays me my wages to keep the table *clean* and not just run over the top. Here, let me take your coat and hat, if you are going to stay in, Miss!"

(Martha takes Elizabeth's things and leaves the stage with them over her arm.)

ELIZABETH—"What can have come over Martha? Why, she is a changed girl; it used to be that I couldn't get her to do a thing for me unless I paid her extra or mother *made* her do it. And to think she was singing 'I love to tell the story,' at that! She sang as if she really and truly believed it. I wonder if she could have gotten religion. (Laughingly) Well, I go to church, too, but I never felt that way about it."

(Goes to the piano—plays a little of one air after another—in a dreamy way.)

ELIZABETH—"Here is the new book of soldiers' songs for the boys in camp. Aren't they great? I must get Fred to learn them so we can sing them together."

FRED (entering from left, dressed in the coat and cap of a soldier's uniform) sings at the top of his voice, while he acts the verse for Elizabeth:

||: "We'll raise our hats and make a how
Hurrah! Hurrah! :||
When Johnny comes marching home again
The Captain of ten thousand men!
We'll all sing Hurrah!
When Johnny comes marching home."

ELIZABETH—"Some soldier boy, we have! Where did you get it?"

FRED—"Get what?"

ELIZABETH—(laughingly) "Don't pretend you don't know. Mr. Innocence! Why, the coat and cap, to be sure."

FRED—"Oh, they belong to Sam, my chum. Elizabeth, I had to stand by and see Sam enlist. His mother let him. Why can't mine? Sam says it's *great* to be in it all. Confound it, if ever a fellow had worse luck! When everybody's doing it, what can have come over mother to hold me back?"

ELIZABETH—"Because she is afraid that something may happen to you, and you know how she hopes that you will go to college and then come back and take father's place in the firm."

FRED—"Well, can't I do that later? If I were a year older, I'd do as I pleased. They say that the boys have great fun at camp. Think of going to France! Why, I'll just bet you anything I've got, that a good many fellows, who are no older and who haven't had any better chance than I, will make good and become famous before this war is over, and here I have to stay at home."

ELIZABETH—"But, Fred, you can go next year. You know you may have to, because you will be subject to the draft. So you needn't think the others will be so far ahead."

FRED—"It isn't that, I want to go *now* when all my friends and everyone I know is having his hand in it. I even went to the officer in charge when he was off duty and asked him if there wasn't some way I could get in. He just laughed and said I could enlist without my parents' consent or I could run away and enlist, but if I felt that my people ought to know, I had better stay home another year. He must have thought me a fine sissy. Sure!"

ELIZABETH—"Never mind, Fred, I'll ask mother for you. Maybe I can make her understand how badly you want to go. I'll ask her to-night. But come and let's learn the songs from the soldiers' song book."

(She plays one after another. Fred hums or sings a line or two of each, as he wishes. This goes on a short time during which Martha is seen busy at one end of the stage. She arranges a small table for tea, a tray holding four or five cups, tea-pot, sugar, etc. Every little while she stops and looks at Fred as he sings or hums to Elizabeth's playing.)

FRED (looking around)—"Ha! A tea party! All for me, Martha?"

MARTHA—"I'm sorry, Sir, but your mother's entertaining at tea this afternoon. I was told to have things extra nice because Dr. Wells, our minister, brings a friend, a missionary from China, I think."

ELIZABETH—"Oh, yes, I know. It is Dr. John Spencer, the man who has the school in Nanking or somewhere, and mother helps support it. She thinks it a fine work and she entertains everyone who comes home from there. I suppose we'll see this man on and off during the whole year he is home. I hope he is more interesting than the last one we had. You're lucky; being a boy, you can leave, but I have to stay for tea. Ugh!"

FRED—"So glad you *said* I might leave, because I was going to anyway. No missionaries in *our* family. They're such a queer lot. He'll doubtless sit with his feet together and his hands folded and wear a solemn expression—*thus*. No, siree, I'm off! A soldier's life for mine." (Starts for door; as he goes he turns and calls to his sister): "Be sure and don't forget to ask mother, sis; tell her how fine I'll look when I get home and how much good it will do me. You can think up a lot of reasons, if you try."

(Elizabeth nods her head and knits as she waits for her mother.)

ELIZABETH—"Poor Fred, how much he wants to go! I wish I wanted to do something that badly. There seems to be nothing for girls to do; it's always the boys who can get out and do things. Martha, what shall I tell mother when I ask her about Fred?"

MARTHA—"You shouldn't ask me. I know nothing about such things, but, if you'll excuse me for saying it, I don't think that either you or Mr. Frederic have the right idea about the war or about Mrs. Langmore letting him enlist."

ELIZABETH—"Why, pray?"

MARTHA—"Well, Miss, your mother is afraid that he can't stand the suffering and hardships of the war. My sister's husband just came home from camp and he says that it is no fun to get used to sleeping in a tent with six or eight others and eating army food. Besides, after they get into France they see real fighting. Sure! And some of our boys are not coming back."

ELIZABETH—"Oh yes, everyone knows there is a dark side, but don't you think it's fine, he *wants* to go."

MARTHA—"To be sure, he *ought* to want to go!" (She turns to Elizabeth and speaks directly to her for the first time and leaves the room quickly as if ashamed of her outspoken answer.) "*But he ought to go to serve his country and a great cause and not for the glory of it and because the other fellows are going.*"

ELIZABETH (looking after her, much surprised)—"For pity's sake!"

Enter Mrs. Langmore (hurriedly)—"Elizabeth! Elizabeth! Oh, here you are! Run and tell Martha again about the tea, there's a dear."

ELIZABETH—"Oh, Martha remembered, mother. She has just been in fixing the things. See, the table is all set. Do sit down and rest a little before they come. Besides, I want to talk to you." (Mrs. Langmore takes off her coat and hat and sits by the fire and starts to knit.)

MRS. LANGMORE—"Well, my dear, what is it you wish to talk to me about?"

ELIZABETH—"About Fred, mother."

MRS. LANGMORE—"So he has been talking to you, has he? You need say no more about it. He has been getting you to ask me to agree to his enlistment."

ELIZABETH—"Couldn't you think it over again, mother? I think it is real fine of Fred not to do it without your consent."

MRS. LANGMORE—"What you say is true, Elizabeth, but neither you nor your brother seem to realize the serious side of this war. Do you think I want to lose

my son? Fred is just carried away with the thoughts of a soldier's life and he thinks nothing of the long nights in the trenches, the cold and hunger and perhaps illness and death."

ELIZABETH—"Others are going, mother."

MRS. LANGMORE—"Not because their mothers can help it. Besides, let others give their sons, I have only one and I have spent my life giving to this and that. I pray Heaven, this dreadful thing may end before Fred is drafted. Let us talk no more about it." (Door bell is heard) "You will stay for tea, Elizabeth. Dr. Spencer is a fine man; it is rather an honor to know him."

(Enter Martha, followed by Drs. Wells and Spencer.)

MARTHA—"Dr. Wells and Dr. Spencer, Mrs. Langmore."

(The men are of the modern type, active and alert, both dressed in business suits.)

MRS. LANGMORE—"Oh, my dear Dr. Wells, it is indeed kind of you to bring Dr. Spencer so soon after his return!" (Greets them both.)

DR. SPENCER—"We allow ourselves a little pleasure before we get to work, Mrs. Langmore."

MRS. LANGMORE—"Work! You have come home to rest, you know, not to work. May I present my daughter, Elizabeth? My dear, this is Dr. Spencer, of whom I told you. Martha, take the gentlemen's coats. Do sit near the fire; the air is cool to-day."

DR. SPENCER—"Now, this is comfort. No use talking; I shall have to stop this, Wells, or I'll get so softened, I shall not be able to work."

DR. WELLS—"No danger of you not wanting to work again. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. You have earned a rest, Spencer."

MRS. LANGMORE—"That is true, I'm sure, so come and enjoy your tea."

(Martha draws the tea table near Mrs. Langmore, who pours, and Martha serves.)

MARTHA—"You must tell us of your school in Nanking. We are so interested in its progress."

DR. SPENCER—"The school, my friend, is progressing splendidly, but there is great need of money and workers. It is the same story we all tell. There is so much work to be done and so few to do it. That is the principal reason I took my furlough. I wanted to use any influence I might have to send more workers into the field."

MRS. LANGMORE—"You will give up your year's rest to this work?"

DR. SPENCER—"Most certainly. I am spending a week here with Dr. Wells for a short rest and then I go immediately to fill lecture engagements, for the year will be short at best, for the task I have set before me."

ELIZABETH—"Do tell us more about the school, Doctor."

DR. SPENCER—"The school is such a bright spot! The Chinese girls are so happy in the new faith, and so ready and willing to learn. We want to educate enough native teachers to start new schools in the outlying districts before another five years have passed. A hospital and then a school, because once you cure a man's physical nature then you may treat his spiritual illness. There is one great problem, that of the girls and women who cannot or will not come to the mission school. No men are allowed in the homes to talk to them and there is no way of reaching them unless we can send native women workers into the homes. Until we can teach these native women, we must use our missionaries and they are overworked as it is and have little or no time during the day for such work."

DR. WELLS—"I have been telling Spencer, that I'm sure our missionary society might undertake to support a worker if we could find a woman who would care to go."

MRS. LANGMORE—"How fine that would be! I am sure that there is enough

money for a start in the society now and if there is not, I, for one, shall be glad to help support a woman for a year."

DR. SPENCER—"Oh, that is a fine spirit! How I wish more people had your willingness to give. We must learn to give for the war and for the missionary cause. The other day, I heard a gentleman lecturing on the war situation and he says that America hasn't learned to give yet. It isn't enough that women shall borrow the yarn from the Red Cross and knit a sweater or two, while she pays ten or fifteen dollars for a bag in which to carry the knitting, in order that she may look just right while she is doing it. It is the same with this cause, so few of us *feel the hurt!*"

DR. WELLS—"Tell them something of the brighter side, Spencer."

DR. SPENCER (laughing—"True, I shouldn't make it all dark. One afternoon, in the early spring, I sat by my study window in China. The rainy season had come upon us and the water fell in torrents. The high wind and beating rain had sent everyone in search of shelter so that the streets were practically deserted. As it was too wet to work outside, I was writing some reports and had moved the table beside the window in order that I might take advantage of the fast fading light. I sat watching the storm at intervals and soon my attention was attracted by a figure coming over the hill at the east of the Mission. I saw that it was a woman and that she was having hard work to make her way through the storm. She was entirely unprotected. I soon made out that she had a baby strapped on her back and that a tiny child of three or four years clung to her skirts. The great gusts of wind blown rain would strike her and it seemed as if the fury of the storm would beat her to the earth. She would sway and catch herself to keep from falling, and come tottering on, helping the child as best she could. Calling two of the men to help me, I hurried into the storm to meet her. I doubt if she could have reached the Mission alone, her strength was so far gone. One of the men took the little girl in his arms and carried her back into the house, while we helped the mother. All three were taken at once to the hospital where doctors and nurses watched over the tiny baby and the little girl to see that no bad effects came from the exposure. The little mother was a different matter, however. For a long time we could get nothing from her and the doctor became very much worried because she would eat nothing. We knew she must have seen better days, because, though much worn and mud stained, her clothing was of fine material. At last one of the women learned her story. She was the daughter of a well-to-do tea merchant and was married when very young to a man living in Nanking. For a time all went well, but the husband soon grew tired of her and when the little baby was three weeks old, he had driven them from the home, bidding her support her children or starve. Lu San, for that was her name, was unable to work in her weakened condition with two children to care for, so she wandered about the streets seeking aid, giving food to the children and going without herself. This had gone on for some time until she could endure it no longer. She had heard of the Mission where food and care were freely given. She knew we would feed her hungry babies, and yet because of her old faith and her fear of the wrath of Buddha, she would accept nothing for herself. The next day, when the nurses went in to see her, they found that she had stolen away in the night leaving the children in our care. One of the missionaries adopted the older child and the baby was placed in a Christian Chinese home. The little girl has grown to be the joy of the Mission. She is learning so rapidly and is so happy with the other girls. When we ask her what she intends to be when she grows up, she tells us that she is going to learn to teach other Chinese girls in a mission school all her own. I am sure that she will become one of our best native

women teachers." (Turns suddenly to Elizabeth.) "Miss Elizabeth, how would you like to serve by going out to China as a missionary teacher for our native girls?"

ELIZABETH (much surprised)—"Why, I never thought of such a thing; I doubt if I could teach successfully at home, let alone in China."

MRS. LANGMORE (much agitated)—"I have no doubt you are right, my dear. I am sure these gentlemen will excuse you, if you carry the package I left on the dining room table to Mrs. Monforth. Could you do it now?"

ELIZABETH—"Why, surely, mother. Good day, sir. Your talk has been so interesting! Do you know, I have never thought of the Chinese as real people. Your study made them all seem alive. I hope I may hear something more about them again some time." (Exit Elizabeth.)

Mrs. Langmore watches her as she leaves, then turns fiercely upon the men.

"Dr. Spencer, for years I have helped your cause with money and with effort because I believe it to be a good one. For years you have been a welcome guest in my home, but I tell you *this*, that if ever you speak to my daughter again of service in the foreign field the doors of this house shall be forever closed against you! Now, I beg you both to excuse me and when you come again, let us forget this unhappy incident." (Leaves the room quickly. Martha appears to show them out.)

DR. SPENCER—"Oh, Wells, Wells, didn't I tell you that so *few of us can bear the hurt!*" (Martha looks after them, turns, and slowly carries the tea tray from the room.)

PART II.

SCENE I. Christmas Eve. Mrs. Langmore sits by the fire.

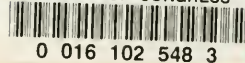
MRS. LANGMORE—"I wish the children would come home. The house seems lonely to-night. I don't seem to feel the usual gay Christmas spirit. I suppose the war makes us all a little more serious this year. What problems come up! Here I must make up my mind what I shall do about Elizabeth. Was it only yesterday she asked me to give her no Christmas present but to allow her to enter the College of Missions in February and prepare for the foreign field? I suppose it was that story about the girls' school in Nanking which Dr. Spencer told that put the idea into her head. Why should she want to do this thing? She has everything that heart can wish—home, money, and friends. She *should* be happy, but—why, I never thought about it before; is Elizabeth really and truly happy? In my heart, I know she is *not*, and yet her happiness is my greatest wish. I wonder if I could make her happy by allowing her this opportunity for service. To give my daughter to the foreign field, and perhaps, my son to the war, is almost greater than I can bear. I must think; I must put my feelings aside and meet this question with the clearest thought possible. Martha!"

(Martha comes to the door.) "Yes, Mrs. Langmore."

MRS. LANGMORE—"Should anyone come, tell them I am not receiving, but if Miss Elizabeth asks for me, tell her to come in. And, Martha, if you will finish packing the baskets for the church supper, please. The food and the toys are on the dining room table."

(Martha goes out, the door is open. She is heard at work.)

(Mrs. Langmore walks slowly up and down, thinking.) "And Fred, too, with his heart set on his enlistment. Good heaven! Had ever a mother two such problems? How I have hoped and prayed that the war might end before he is called! He wants to serve and who can blame him? It is my selfish mother love which holds me back. Oh, Frederic, my son, my son, how can I give you up and send you into this fearful war!"



(Silence a while and then Martha is heard singing, first softly and then louder, "I gave, I gave, my life for thee." She sings two stanzas of the song. Mrs. Langmore starts, looks up and listens.)

MRS. LANGMORE (slowly)—"Oh, that is it! I have given, it is true; and I felt so proud and self-righteous over a little money and time. But the money was given to *me* in the first place, and I have never had to deny myself *one thing* I truly wanted, in order that I might give it. I never gave so that it hurt. And, now, the Lord is asking of me the greatest gift I have! Am I strong enough to give it?" (She bows her head on her hand. *A short tableaux.*)

(Elizabeth and Fred are heard outside; enter as they are talking.)

FRED—"I tell you, Elizabeth, I've been a plain idiot! If you could have heard that man talk at the Y to-day! He has just returned from the front. He said, before they went into the battle, the Y. M. C. A. put up posts painted white so that the wounded men could see them through the smoke, and find their way back to the hospital. I can't get the things he told us out of my mind. It makes me feel as if I were not fit to serve and yet I feel also that every man ought to forget himself and do all he can to help. I shall give all I can at home this year and offer my services wherever I can be of use, and, I hope, next year mother will feel better about my going."

(They sit at the end of the room, not seeing Mrs. Langmore.)

ELIZABETH—"How hard it is for mother! I am afraid I have spoiled her Christmas. I should have waited until the season has passed. It seems as if I just must go to China, and I cannot go without her consent. I want her love and her interest to go with me. I am so glad you have changed your ideas about the war, Fred, but I *knew* that you would in time. Listen! The children are singing the Christmas carols. How sweet they sound!"

(Carols are heard from outside, sung by a group of children. One having an answering chorus from above. Sing first softly, then louder, then very softly, as if the children have passed down the street. Suggested carols, "Holy Night! Silent Night!" and "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.")

ELIZABETH (quickly in a whisper)—"Fred, look at mother!" (She jumps to her feet and runs to kneel beside her mother's chair.) "Mother dear, do not decide it now, let us wait until after Christmas. Only come and have a happy time together."

(Mrs. Langmore looks up with a bright smile.) "I have decided, my dear children, I want you both to do as your hearts bid you at this Christmas time, although I am giving a far, far greater gift than I have ever given in my life before; I can truly say, I have never been so happy!"

ELIZABETH—"Mother, mother, how happy you make us!"

FREDERIC—"Now I can give the flag salute with the rest and truly mean it." (His left hand on his mother's chair, his right arm brought in salute as he gives it.) "I pledge, etc." (As he ends Elizabeth sinks to her mother's side and lifts her arm toward the Christian flag above the center stage. *Tableaux* as this position occurs; as spot light is thrown on the flags—house in darkness. Outside a voice is heard singing one verse of "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord." Then children are heard again singing the hymn, "Joy to the World.")

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