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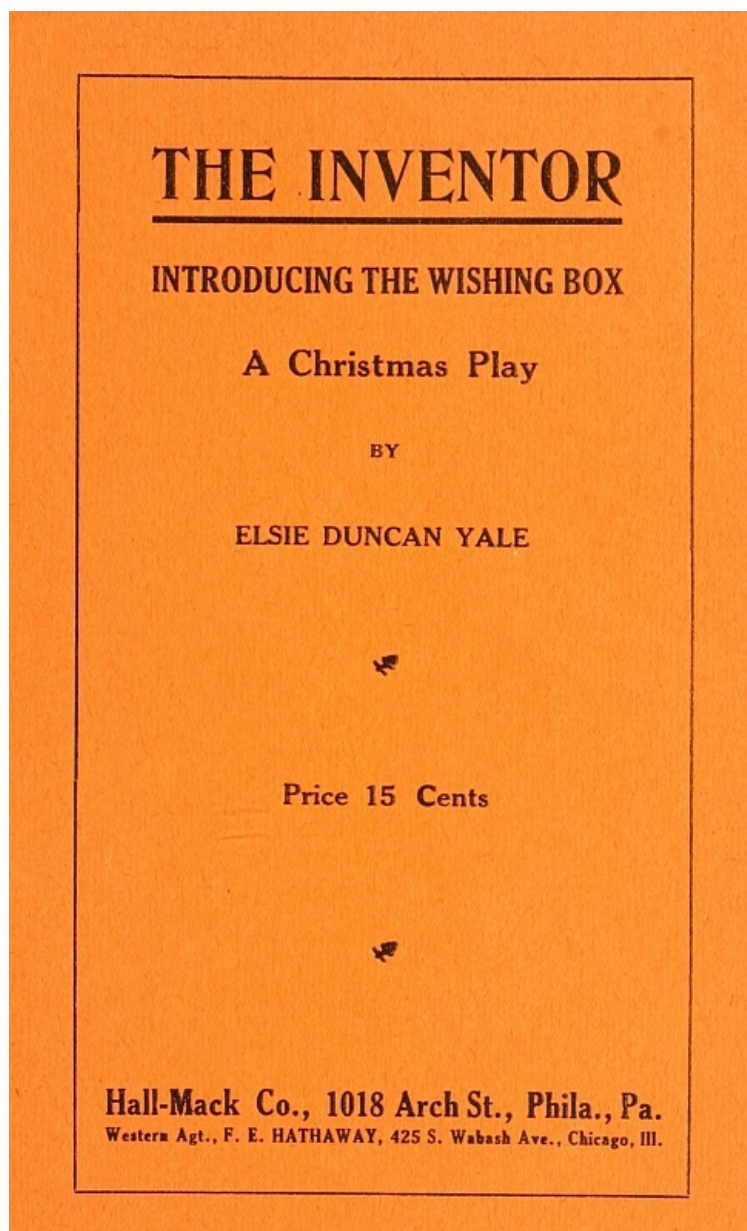
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE INVENTOR. INTRODUCING THE WISHING BOX. A CHRISTMAS PLAY ***



THE INVENTOR
Introducing the Wishing Box

A CHRISTMAS PLAY

by **Elsie Duncan Yale**

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The Inventor **Introducing the Wishing Box** **A CHRISTMAS PLAY**

[1]

SCENE AND PROPERTIES REQUIRED.

The sitting room of Faraway Farm. Rocking chairs, table covered with red cloth or oilcloth, braided rugs, small mirror hanging on wall, beneath which are comb and brush. Lantern, carpet slippers, books, and large box (see suggestions).

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

TOM.—Ordinary street clothes, long overcoat, and afterward cap with college band. Carries college flag, after he comes from the Wishing Box.

EDITH.—Dressed as girl of fourteen in traveling costume.

AUNT SUSAN.—Gingham dress, white apron, white wig.

ABNER.—Old suit, blue overalls, boots, afterwards removed for carpet slippers. After he comes from the Wishing Box wears checked suit, gay necktie, derby and carries "sample" case of soap and perfumes.

MISS WISE.— } Teachers. Long cloaks and veils.
MISS MARKUS.— }

MISS PRISCILLA.— } Spinsters. Old-fashioned dress, carry
MISS PRUDENCE.— } old valises, umbrellas, bundles, bird-cage,
} etc.

RASTUS (1) Black face.—Pullman porter. Dark uniform trimmed with brass buttons, cap lettered "Pullman." Blackened face and hands.

RASTUS (2) White face.—Same size boy, costumed identically. He takes Rastus' place, as provided in the play.

INVENTOR.—Should be dressed to suggest "absent-mindedness," as, for example, a tan shoe on one foot and a black one on the other, gloves on wrong hands, etc.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

[2]

The magic wishing box is a large packing box, lettered "Wishing Box Patent Applied For." Across the rear of the platform a dark curtain is stretched, making as it were a false wall to the room. This conceals the box until it is needed, and affords opportunity for the characters to make the necessary changes in their costumes. One side of the box, also the top are removed, so that

the characters may enter the box through the top, using a small stepladder if necessary, and come out again quickly, being enabled to change their costumes and receive the necessary accessories through the side which has been removed. It is important that everything necessary for the change of costume should be in readiness. In the case of the Pullman porter it will be found advisable to substitute for "Rastus," a boy costumed in exactly the same manner but with face unblackened.

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The Inventor

[3]

ACT I.

(Curtain rises. Aunt Susan seated near table with knitting in hand.)

AUNT SUSAN (laying down knitting).—Dear, dear, it's snowing still. This will certainly be a white Christmas. (Resumes work.) I must hurry and finish this sock for Abner. He's been such a faithful hired boy, and I don't know of a thing that would please him better for Christmas than a pair of nice red socks. (Holds them up to view.) (Knits a few moments.) They're finished now, and I know he'll be plumb tickled. He did say somethin' about a baseball an' bat, but these here socks are better. I must wrap them up in paper. Where's that piece the meat came in? (Rises and searches, at last finding it.) I don't believe in this new-fangled nonsense about red ribbon and holly tags for wrapping presents. (Wraps socks in meat paper.)

(Enter Abner, whistling, sets down lantern, takes off boots and puts on bright colored carpet slippers. Goes to mirror and combs hair.)

ABNER.—The chores are all done now, thank goodness. Where's that book I wuz readin', "Wyoming Will, the Hero of Gold Gulch?" (Searches on table and finds it. Sits down to read.)

SUSAN.—Did you shut the henhouse door and lock the stable?

ABNER.—Yes, ma'am. I got up at three o'clock this morning, an' I swept the barn an' fed the horses an' cows an' pigs an' chickens, an' did the milkin', an' shoveled paths, an' split kindlin' an sawed wood, an' cleaned the harness, an' got the mail, an' shoveled some more, an' mended the sleigh, an' did the evening chores, an' now it's nine an' I'm through. (Sighs.) Nothin' to do till tomorrow. Ain't I the lucky guy?

SUSAN.—Yes, Abner, you are a right lucky boy to be hired man here I can tell you, an' I hope you won't be foolish an' run away to the city. You may be plumb thankful you have to work. Do you know who finds mischief for idle hands?

ABNER (promptly).—Yes, ma'am, you do. I know what I'd do if I had a lot of money, though.

[4]

SUSAN.—What would you do?

ABNER.—I'd go to a high-class hotel an' hire a number-one room, an' leave orders to be called at three.

SUSAN.—That's a crazy notion.

ABNER.—Then, when they knocked on my door, I'd say, Nix, I don't have to get up.

SUSAN.—Hark! I hear someone at the gate. I hope it ain't a tramp. I ain't got no time for those fellers that don't want to work between meals. Cut out the meals, I say, if that's the case.

ABNER.—You've got as much sympathy for them as you have for me. The only place I find sympathy is in the dictionary.

SUSAN.—Don't stop to talk, Abner, but open the door.

(Abner reluctantly lays down his book and rises.)

ABNER.—Got to tend door, too. Next thing I'll have to wear a frilly apron and a dinky little cap. Miss Susan is sure the President of the Society for the Prevention of Leisure.

VOICE.—Anybody home?

ABNER.—Nobody but the lamp and that's going out.

(Opens door and enter storm-bound party.)

ABNER.—Well, I swan! Are you sure you're all here and ain't left anybody setting down in the snow? (A thought strikes him.) If this is a surprise for Miss Susan, you're a week too late for her seventy-eighth birthday was last Wednesday.

SUSAN.—Abner! Aren't you ashamed of yourself! Seventy-eighth birthday!

EDITH.—We really must apologize for coming in this—er—this—what IS the word I want?

TOM.—Nervey.

EDITH.—No, indeed. I mean unceremonious. That's it. This unceremonious fashion. We are passengers on the Limited, and it is stalled in the snow half a mile below here.

TOM.—We've been late the last six hours, for the train before was behind, and we were behind before besides.

EDITH.—We hated to spend Christmas eve in a snow bank, half frozen, and the conductor said it would be at least two hours before the plows could reach us.

TOM.—So, when we saw the lights of your farm-house, we invited ourselves, and we hope you will accept the invitation. [5]

SUSAN.—Well, this is a surprise party, an' I am plumb pleased to see you folks, for I wuz lonesome here by myself. I wouldn't want nobody a-celebratin' Christmas eve in a snow bank. I thought I heard that train a-whistlin' there awhile ago, an' yet I didn't hear it go past; they're company for me, them trains, though I fought considerable agin the track crossing my land. Their fust plan was to have the tracks run right through my barn, and I set my foot on that. No, sir, says I. I ain't goin' to get up all hours of the night at my age, to open the barn doors to let them trains through, an' shut 'em after they pass. I guess that made them railroad men change their plans. Abner, take the folks' coats an' hats. Sit down all of you an' get thawed out.

MISS PRUDENCE.—Be careful of that hat, young man. I've worn it six years. (Removes hat and hands it to him.)

EDITH.—Why, I get a new one every season. Last Easter I had such a pretty one, all trimmed with pansies, and the milliner sent it home in a paper bag. Uncle Reuben opened the door and took it in, for I had gone to bed. He thought it was flowers, so he put it to soak in the dishpan all night, and you should have seen it in the morning.

(Abner lays down pile of wraps and proceeds to try on Tom's hat and overcoat. "Business" of examining wraps, trying on hats, while whistling—



[Transcriber's Note: You can play this music (mp3 file) by clicking [here](#).]

or something monotonous which should be introduced at every opportunity. Whistle "off the key" as much as possible. The others whisper to each other, moving quietly, to positions away from centre, to right and left.)

ABNER.—Now I can get the latest city styles better than Bill Barker's mail-order catalogue that he was reading out of last night. These clothes have sure got some class to them. If Lorena Boggs had seen me now she wouldn't have gone to the picnic with the soap salesman, she'd have gone with yours truly. (Puts on hat.) This is I reckon one of them there fried egg derbies that's so nifty. Yes, sir, if I'd been togged up in these here instead of them hand-me-downs of Miss Susan's brother's. (Miss Susan approaches him.) I'd have gone up to Lorena, and taken off my hat like this an' said— [6]

MISS SUSAN (sharply).—Don't be a fool!

ABNER (as if surprised).—No, ma'am, I wouldn't said that to Lorena at all!

MISS SUSAN (in irritation).—Haven't you any sense?

ABNER.—No, ma'am, nor dollars either, seeing as I earn ten dollars a month and there ain't no raise of salary visible to the naked eye.

(Exit with wraps, whistling).

MISS PRISCILLA (advancing).—I am certainly glad to be here, for I'm always so nervous when traveling. I'm afraid of losing my ticket. That reminds me—I wonder if I have it now! (Opens valise and nervously takes out miscellaneous articles. Shakes her head. Replaces articles. Opens hand bag, and finds ticket.) Thank goodness, here it is!

TOM.—I lost my ticket once and when I told the conductor I was traveling on my face he said he always punched his fares, and guessed I wasn't going very far.

EDITH.—I get nervous, too, and when I was in England with Cousin Lydia, I had two bags and a rug, and I asked the porter if he had seen two rags and a bug.

MISS PRUDENCE (looking about her).—How delightfully comfortable it is here, and how charming your old-fashioned furniture is. We don't see anything like it nowadays.

TOM.—No, modern furniture is on the instalment plan; pay a dollar down and a dollar a week till death us do part.

MISS PRISCILLA.—If you will permit us, Miss Susan, we will continue our fancy work, for we are somewhat belated with our Christmas gifts. (Abner enters.)

MISS SUSAN.—No need to offer excuses, ladies, for I like to see folks busy.

ABNER (with earnestness).—Yes, ma'am, you do.

MISS PRUDENCE.—I was reading in a magazine article recently that a business man should always be well-dressed, and as my nephew has recently accepted a position with a large firm, I am making him a handsome necktie for business wear. (Displays gaudy tie to audience, and then continues knitting it.)

MISS PRISCILLA.—I am making a gift for my sister-in-law who is a woman of fashion, and who is fond of automobiling, so I am knitting her a tasteful scarf which I am sure will prove pleasing. (Shows gay muffler, and continues knitting it.) [7]

SUSAN.—What do you folks say to having a Christmas tree?

ALL.—Fine!

SUSAN.—Well, I ain't had a tree for years, but I think it would be nice to trim up one to celebrate.

EDITH.—That will be splendid!

SUSAN.—Then Mr. Tom you an' Abner go out and chop down a tree. Land sakes! Abner's asleep an' I never called him till quarter past three! Abner! Wake up! Take off them slippers, an' put on your gum boots, an' go chop down a tree!

ABNER (drowsily).—I ain't George Washington! Work again!

(Repeats). O life is just a round of joy
To one who is a hired boy.

(Whistling, exeunt Abner and Tom.)

SUSAN.—Now we'll get the decorations ready. (Takes up bowl of popcorn.) I know you young ladies will enjoy stringing these. (Bring pail of cranberries, needles and thread.)

MISS PRISCILLA (reluctantly).—I can hardly spare the time from my fancy work, as I know that my sister-in-law would be terribly disappointed if this scarf were not completed.

MISS PRUDENCE.—It is really imperative that I finish this scarf for dear Reginald, so we will continue our knitting while the others make ready the decorations.

(Enter Miss Wise, Miss Markus and Rastus the porter, the latter carrying suit-cases.)

MISS WISE.—This really is an imposition, but when we saw the others crossing the fields to your delightful farm-house, we thought we would follow their example.

(Porter sets down suit-cases and extends his hand.)

MISS WISE.—Dear me, must I pay another porter?

(Miss Wise and Miss Markus give porter coins which he pockets with thanks.)

RASTUS.—Dis sholy am a salubrious farm. Nice place for chickens. I wonder if dey's all roostin' now?

SUSAN (nervously).—I hope Abner locked that henhouse door!

MISS MARKUS.—I'm surely glad to be here, for that train was dreadfully cold.

RASTUS.—Well I been habin' trubbel too, for de genelman in de diner dis mornin' he ordered two fried eggs,—two fried eggs he sez, one fried on one side an' one fried on tother. I asked him again jest natchelly thinkin' I hadn't heard c'rect, an' he say "Two fried eggs, one fried on one side an' one fried on tother," I done told de cook an' he wuz dat mad he gwine pitch me out de winder into a snow bank? Yes, sir, an' see de black eye he gib me! Mebbe it doan' show but its dere all right!

SUSAN (cordially).—I hope you ladies will feel quite at home, and join us in our preparations for a Christmas tree.

MISS WISE.—That will be lovely. Porter, take my wraps and be careful of my Raglan coat.

RASTUS.—Yessum, I'll shore take care of dat ragbag coat.

MISS WISE.—Raglan, not ragbag!

MISS MARKUS.—What a relief to have finished my school work! I had a terrific headache from correcting those papers of mine. What do you think of answers like this? One of my scholars in English history said that the kings were not allowed to order taxis without the consent of Parliament.

TOM.—Well, it kept the rulers from being too extravagant.

MISS WISE.—I told one of my young hopefuls to write a sentence containing the word income and this was the sentence, "I opened the door and in come the cat."

MISS MARKUS.—I asked a boy what gravitation was and he said, "Gravitation is that which if there were none we should all fly away."

MISS WISE.—I was positively discouraged with my algebra class. One girl wrote that algebraic symbols were used when you didn't know what you were talking about.

(Abner's whistle is heard.)

MISS MARKUS.—O that whistling! Is that all he can whistle?

SUSAN.—Yes, and it gets on my nerves somethin' awful sometimes.

MISS MARKUS.—Have you a lemon? Lemon juice is most good for everything.

(Susan procures a lemon and hands it to her as Abner and Tom enter with tree.)

TOM.—Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is some tree. I cannot tell a lie, I did it with my little hatchet.

ABNER.—You mean I did it. That's the way it always is, I do the work and some other feller gets [9] the credit of it.

SUSAN.—Well, Abner, I think you had better see that the henhouse door is locked. I'd feel safer. My brother in the South heard someone in his henhouse one night, and he went out with a gun to investigate. He hollered out, "Hey, who's there?" And the third time he spoke right up an' said he'd shoot; then a voice came right plumb out of that henhouse an' said, "Don't shoot, massa, it's only one of us chickens."

RASTUS.—Yas'm! I done heerd 'bout dat. He's de genelman what was skeert to leave de henhouse do' open, kase de chickens might all go home. (Rolls his eyes and laughs.)

TOM (to Rastus).—Come on, Rastus, help me up with this tree, but remember this is a free-gratis job, no tips for this.

RASTUS.—Why sholy, Sir, I wouldn't want no remuneration for settin' up a Christmas tree.

TOM.—We'll nail it to a board. (Takes hammer and strikes his finger. Yells.)

(All speaking at once.)

EDITH.—Did you hurt yourself?

ABNER.—What you do it for?

SUSAN.—Ain't you hurt yourself?

RASTUS.—How did that—ar happen?

TOM.—I did it for fun of course. O those foolish questions! (Puts thumb in mouth. Abner begins his whistle. Miss Markus bites top off lemon and begins sucking it (or pretends to). Abner sees, and after a few efforts to whistle, gives up. Miss Markus places lemon somewhere. Abner watching slyly, and when opportunity arrives slips it in his pocket.)

SUSAN.—Now all get busy and trim the tree for we have plenty of popcorn and cranberries. Abner, hand me some of those nice red apples to tie on the branches.

ABNER (sighing).—More work! (During the following all trim tree.)

SUSAN (severely).—Abner, I have always tried to inculcate in you habits of industry. Do you not remember the poem about the little busy bee?

ABNER.—Well, if any one takes me for a bee they'll get stung!

(Miss Wise and others decorate the tree with the strings of cranberries and popcorn.)

EDITH.—Abner, hand me an apple, there's a good boy, this branch just needs one. [10]

MISS WISE.—Abner, give me a string of cranberries, a nice long one.

ABNER.—My land! what a rest-cure this here farm is!

SUSAN.—Abner, get some string from the kitchen.

EDITH.—Look out, Tom, your tipping the tree.

RASTUS.—If dere's any tippin' roun' here, doan't forget de porter.

EDITH.—Abner you're real tall, hang that string of popcorn there on the top branch. (Abner gets chair.)

SUSAN.—Abner don't you dare stand on that chair, you'll break it!

MISS WISE.—Now our tree looks fine! I am proud of it!

SUSAN (suddenly).—Why how inhospitable I am! I've never offered you a thing to eat and you must be half starved!

ABNER (promptly).—Yes'm, a pie and some gingerbread would sure go good!

SUSAN.—I didn't mean you, Abner, I meant the company.

EDITH.—I must say it sounds good to me!

TOM (enthusiastically).—Lead me to it!

RASTUS (announcing).—First call for dinner in de dining car!
Second call for dinner in de dining car!
Last call for dinner in de dining car!

SUSAN.—Abner, you can stay and redd up the sitting room while we have supper!

(Exeunt all, while Abner pantomimes disgust, but takes the lemon from his pocket, looks at it, grins, replaces it, and, whistling, takes seat; begins to doze and nod as curtain falls.)

(Intermission.)

ACT II.

[11]

(Curtain rises on same scene. Abner dozing, chin on chest, or head back, mouth open. Voice outside, "That sure was good pie, Aunt Susan." Abner wakens, rises.)

ABNER (soliloquizing).—That's just it! The others all in there eatin' pie, an' me got to redd up the settin' room like a sissy! (Picks up a few articles in a discontented manner.) Christmas tree! Much chance there is of being something for me on that tree! I guess stinginess must run in Miss Susan's family, for when her brother and his wife spent Christmas here last year, do you s'pose they brought Miss Susan a present? Nix! Christmas morning brother says (mimicking) "Merry Christmas, dear Susan! We wish to give you a useful gift and no foolish trumpery, so Amelia and I decided to pay for having your henhouse whitewashed as it needs it badly." Then that there generous giver he turns to me and says, "Abner, my boy (mimicking), I do not wish to forget you, and I have noticed that a pane in your bedroom window is broken, so I will have it fixed at my expense." Yessum, that there gentleman literally and figuratively gives me a pane!

(Continues work, whistling over and over—)



[Transcriber's Note: You can play this music (mp3 file) by clicking [here](#).]

Well I s'pose now I have performed the noble duties of a vacuum cleaner enough to satisfy Miss Susan, an' here comes them pie-eaters!

(Enter all except Aunt Susan.)

EDITH.—I really think we ought to give some presents to this dear old lady who has been so good to us. Let's hang up a stocking for her. Abner, you get one, there's a good boy.

(Exit Abner, returns immediately with stocking, and meanwhile guests rummage through valises for suitable gifts.)

ABNER.—I'll contribute the pair of red socks she gave me.

EDITH.—How ungrateful! I'm going to put in this pretty lace handkerchief.

PRISCILLA.—Here's the jelly I was going to give Uncle Joshua. He'll never know the difference.

TOM.—Right-O. What you don't know don't hurt you. That's a good motto.

RASTUS.—Dis here am a rabbit foot, an' it will sholy bring de Madam good luck. An' whenever she travels on de Limited I'll sholy see dat she is taken care of. I'll steal a magazine from de train boy, and pinch a box of chocolates when he ain't lookin' an' I'll tell de waiter in de diner to make out her check wrong so she gets twice as much as she pays for.

MISS PRISCILLA.—What a shocking sense of honor.

[12]

RASTUS.—Yes, Miss, I'm a genelman of honor, an' when a lady is as kind as de Madam here, I suttinly would study to pay her back. I'd even put some of de neighbors' hens in her henhouse. Here am a couple of silver spoons for de lady. (Brings spoons from pocket.)

EDITH.—(Examining spoon). C. P. R. That's Canadian Pacific Railroad.

RASTUS (with dignity).—No, Miss. Dat means Colored Pusson's Remembrance.

(Enter Susan.)

ALL.—Merry Christmas.

EDITH.—This is a little token of appreciation of your kindness, which we hope you will accept. (Hands stocking to Aunt Susan.)

ABNER.—Nobody says nothin' about my kindness for workin' overtime trampin' out in the snow for the tree. I'll join the hired man's union and strike for only sixteen hours a day.

SUSAN.—Well, I never. I ain't hung up a Christmas stocking for forty years.

EDITH.—What do you suppose became of that man in the car with us who said he was an inventor and spent all his time drawing on brown paper with a stubby pencil?

TOM.—I think he was inventing a convertible submarine, one that could be turned into an air ship when necessary.

MISS PRUDENCE.—Maybe he has frozen to death upon the train.

(Knock at door and enter Inventor.)

INVENTOR.—Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! Madam, will you permit me to avail myself of the shelter of your home? When the other passengers left the train I was so absorbed in a drawing I was making that I did not observe their departure until a few minutes ago. So seeing the lights of your farm-house I started across the snow.

SUSAN.—You are very welcome. Abner, take the gentleman's hat and coat. [13]

(Inventor hands hat and overcoat to Abner and absentmindedly gives him a tip.)

ABNER.—Thank you, sir.

RASTUS.—Hey you, don't be buttin' into Pullam porter's work.

EDITH.—Merry Christmas to you.

INVENTOR.—O dear me. It is Christmas isn't it. I had forgotten all about it.

RASTUS.—Yes, sir, this am the happy Christmas time when everybody gives presents, specially to them what has blackened their shoes and brushed their overcoats and waited on them in the diner. Folks gives them pussons presents like fifty cent pieces an' dollar bills to show their appreciation an' gratitude.

ABNER.—Well, Rastus, you come round here this spring and I'll give you an asparagus tip.

INVENTOR.—Ladies, gentlemen and Rastus!

RASTUS.—What's dat? Ladies, gen'l'men and Rastus!

INVENTOR.—Surely. You're not a lady, are you? Your youth and inexperience precludes the possibility of your exercising a gentleman's prerogatives, and therefore having eliminated all surrounding superfluties you remain—just Rastus; that's all.

RASTUS.—Jes' so! When de wissle blows, fo' ev'rybody else it means dinner time, but fo' me its jes' twelve o'clock an' dat's all.

INVENTOR.—Correct. To resume. Ladies, gentlemen and Rastus. You all have contributed to the success of the Christmas party. (To Tom.) Doubtless this young giant hewed this mighty monarch of the forest (points to tree) and single-handed and alone bore it upon his capacious back to this hospitable domicile for our delectation.

ABNER.—Well, I never! After all the work I done dragging that there tree through them there drifts!

INVENTOR (continuing).—And the ladies by decorating the tree in this most artistic manner (girls courtesy), and this estimable friend by offering us her hospitality, so I would like to contribute to the evening's pleasure.

RASTUS.—Yessir! You shall sholy contribute. Where's a genelman's hat for de c'lection box!

INVENTOR.—So I will have a new invention of mine which is in the baggage car brought here, with this lady's kind permission. [14]

SUSAN.—Certainly, I am greatly interested in new inventions. Abner, go over to the train and get the gentleman's box. The porter will help you. Abner, are you asleep again?

ABNER.—Nothing to do till to-morrow. Plow through them drifts again? I ain't no snowplow,

Miss Susan. Have a heart can't you?

SUSAN.—You should be glad to do anything to give others happiness.

ABNER.—Come on, Rastus. All aboard for the North Pole. (Go out whistling.)

SUSAN.—It is such a great pleasure to have you young folks all here, for Abner and I would have spent a very quiet Christmas together, and this really seems like a very festive celebration. My father was always a great hand for keeping Christmas, and he contrived to combine generosity with economy in a very remarkable manner. I remember one year he purchased a china cup for my mother, and desiring to prolong her pleasure in the gift he gave her the cup alone for Christmas and the saucer for her birthday in April.

EDITH.—My Aunt Malvina is a great hand for giving useful presents, and one Christmas she gave the boys a rubber doormat, and Lilian, her little girl, a set of soup spoons.

MISS PRISCILLA.—I'm thankful that this tie is almost completed, and I'm sure that it will please my nephew who is most elegant and refined in his tastes. (Exhibits tie.)

(Voices without are heard.)

"Easy there!"

"Hey, you, Abner. Doan you drop dat ar on my toes!"

"Givin' me all the weight."

"I ain't! Hol' on dar!"

"Look out, you'll smash the door!"

"Easy! Whoa dar, Abner!"

(Enter Rastus and Abner. Draw aside curtain and reveal Wishing Box.)

RASTUS.—Here she am, sah! Nigh as heavy as a Mogul locomotive.

ABNER.—Jiminy! My feet are cold! Where's them slippers?

INVENTOR.—Here it is, ladies and gentlemen, the wonder of the ages!

[15]

EDITH.—How interesting.

INVENTOR.—I will explain it if you desire.

MISS PRISCILLA.—I am sure it will be most edifying.

RASTUS.—If there am gwine to be speechifyin' I reckon you an' me had better fortify ourselves with popcorn, Abner. (Abner, and Rastus take strings of popcorn from the tree unobserved and eat them.)

INVENTOR (as if lecturing).—Ladies and gentlemen, it affords me great pleasure to address this cultured and intelligent audience.

RASTUS (aside).—That's us, Abner, cultured an' intelligent!

INVENTOR.—My invention is the result of years of study, experimentation and research and is destined to fill a long felt want.

TOM (aside).—That's what they say about every new rat-trap, egg-beater, dictionary, or patent hairpin.

INVENTOR.—One of the secrets of the psychological unrest which characterizes the human race is that each person desires, in short, to be someone else. The poor man wishes he were rich, the rich man would like to be a boy again, the young would like to be old, and the old young. Now by means of my remarkable invention, these wishes may be gratified either permanently or temporarily.

EDITH.—You really mean that any one can be transformed into somebody else by stepping into the wishing box?

INVENTOR.—Precisely, my dear young lady, and I desire to offer as a Christmas gift to this pleasant little assembly the transformation which each one desires.

ABNER.—Well, I wish (clapping his hand to his mouth) I nearly put my foot into it that time!

TOM.—Your mouth?

EDITH.—Aunt Susan, you make the first wish.

RASTUS.—Wish for a watermelon, or a possum, or fried chicken.

SUSAN.—I know a lot of things I wanted when I was a young girl, but I ain't young no more. (Regretfully.) I wish I didn't have gray hair.

INVENTOR.—You made your wish, Aunt Susan. Hop into the box.

SUSAN (as she gets in).—Mercy sakes, it's all the hair I have, I don't want to be bald.

[16]

(Inventor grinds policeman's rattle a few moments, and assists Aunt Susan out, who now, having removed wig, has hair in long braid.)

EDITH.—What lovely hair. Do let me arrange it for you, Aunt Susan. (Arranges hair, while next character enters box.)

INVENTOR (to spinsters).—Now, ladies?

PRISCILLA.—Well, it may be a foolish wish, but (looks toward sister who nods) we would like to be young again.

INVENTOR.—Very easily done. Step right into the magic box.

(The two spinsters assisted by the porter enter the box and emerge again, having removed cloaks and let down hair, and are seen in girlish dresses. They look in the mirror and smile at each other.)

INVENTOR.—Now for our teachers?

MISS WISE.—I have consulted my friends, and we agree that we would rather have a year's vacation than anything else.

INVENTOR.—A sensible wish. (Draws three envelopes from box.) Here, ladies, you will find leave of absence with salary for a year, and trust that you will spend a delightful vacation.

ABNER.—Well, I wish I could be a soap salesman so the girls would take some notice of me, like that feller that comes round here every once in awhile an' sells perfumery and stuff.

INVENTOR.—Very well, young man, step into the box and your wish shall be granted.

ABNER.—Goodbye chores! And bossy cows and pigs and chickens, I'm going on the road.

SUSAN.—Mercy! I don't know how I can get along without Abner. He was very troublesome sometimes but he was a helpful boy, and a splendid hand with the pigs and chickens. (Business of rattle, etc. Abner comes out of the box.)

ABNER.—Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to bring to your observation our famous Scrubit Soap the wonder of the century, the marvel of the ages and the apex, acme, and ne plus ultra of our civilization. Soap, ladies and gentlemen, soap. I appeal to your—

EDITH.—O for pity sakes, we can't hear ourselves think.

MISS MARKUS.—How delightful it is to think that we won't have to teach for a whole year.

ABNER.—Ladies, I perceive that you now have your pay envelope. May I suggest that you devote a little of your money to the purchase of soap? I have many varieties here. Nifty Soap for Nice People, Pink Powder for Particular Persons, and Diamond Dust which makes washday an occasion of rejoicing equal to Fourth of July, Valentine or Christmas?

[17]

SUSAN.—Abner, what has come over you?

INVENTOR.—It is simply my wonderful invention, madam, and instead of being tied down to the pursuit of agriculture which was evidently distasteful to him, he has now entered the mercantile world.

ABNER.—Miss Susan, here is Cleanup Soap for tired toilers, especially good for farmhands.

TOM.—Have you a little hired boy in your home?

MISS SUSAN.—O don't pester me!

ABNER.—Is any one here interested in a hand laundry?

MISS SUSAN.—Hand laundry? I should say not! Just think of folks bein' too plum lazy to wash their own hands.

ABNER (to porter).—Rastus, here is a bleacher which I think would help you.

RASTUS.—Massy sakes! Bleach me? I'd like to be white all right!

INVENTOR.—Well, Rastus, you've made your wish. Into the box with you!

RASTUS.—O no! Massa I was only being facetious like!

TOM.—A wish is a wish, into the box with you!

(Rushes Rastus into the box, etc. Business of rattle. The substitute Rastus emerges.)

RASTUS.—That sholy am a wonderful box.

ABNER.—Can I sell you some skin food?

RASTUS.—Why, I feed my mouf, I don't feed mah skin!

TOM (to Edith).—Why, Sis, you haven't had your wish. Fire away.

EDITH.—It sounds silly, but I want to be a young lady, so that I can go to parties.

INVENTOR.—Foolish child, stay young while you can. Get into the box though.

(Edith enters, and emerges in party dress, with fan and flowers.)

[18]

TOM.—Well, I wish I were a college fellow for they have no end of a good time!

INVENTOR.—Into the box with you, young man, and we'll transform you into a Rah! Rah! boy in no time.

(Tom emerges from box with college cap, college sweater, carrying college flag.)

TOM.—This is fine fellows! Give three cheers for the wishing box!

(Leads cheers.)

Fra-valio! E—E—E—E!
Fra-valio (whistle)
E—nick—a—deena—ena—wah!
E—nick—a—deena—hah! hah! hah!
Wishing Box! Wishing box! Ah!

ABNER.—A college education is an excellent thing but I prefer life in the great mercantile world, and what could be more stimulating to health, happiness and psychological contentment than the dissemination of useful articles conducive to cheerfulness and cleanliness which when once tried, always used. Let me call you attention to these novelties especially appropriate and appreciated as Christmas gifts for mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, wives, daughters, sweethearts, and others. Lilac Lotion for Lovely Ladies, twenty-five cents per bottle, this trifling sum including not only the lotion itself but bottle, cork, wrapping paper, high grade string and advertising matter which is both interesting and instructive.

(Exhibits bottle.)

EDITH.—O who wants your Lilac Lotion for Lovely Ladies?

ABNER.—Correct, miss, absolutely, unreservedly and undoubtedly correct, for there are many ladies who are not lovely. For them I have (producing a bottle) Helps for the Homely, First Aid to the Fat, and the Fiji Freckle-Killer.

INVENTOR (pointing to Abner).—You see, ladies and gentlemen, the complete change which my wishing box has wrought. He's even lost his whistle.

SUSAN.—Somehow I don't think Abner is specially improved.

RASTUS.—Hark! I done hear a snowplow moseyin' along. I guess this here Christmas party will have to be adjournin'. [19]

(Whistle is heard.)

TOM.—Ladies and gentlemen, fellow-citizens and fellow-travelers, I move that before we adjourn to the Limited we give three cheers for Faraway Farm and Miss Susan. (Repeat yell, ending Miss Susan.)

TOM.—Now, three cheers for the Inventor and his Wishing Box.

(Repeat yell ending "Inventor! Merry Christmas!")

(If desired local cheers may be given as the curtain falls.)

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 13, "perogatives" changed to "prerogatives" (a gentleman's prerogatives)

Page 17, the following line had less of an initial indentation than other lines in the play. As no reason for this could be ascertained, it was concluded to be a typesetting error and ignored.

SUSAN.—Abner, what has come over you?

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE INVENTOR. INTRODUCING THE WISHING BOX. A CHRISTMAS PLAY ***

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