



Mistletoe and Marionette

by Ellen Mackie

CHRISTMAS—the sparkling jewel-frosted Christmas, was peeping around the corner—but, ah, *mes cheries*, it would be a dull Yuletide for the little Pierre, the dancing marionette at the *Theatre Comique*. The tiny Pierre with a crick in his leg which had stuck fast in the last dance—with one bright glass eye gone, and but a half-portion moustache. *Ciel*, how he had stretched and pulled his lame leg to revive it to its former gay sprightliness! But it was useless—the little plaster leg had stuck fast.

"Throw him aside," had bellowed the cruel stage manager—he is but fit for the scrap heap." Poor little Pierre was hurled into the wings, and pop, out fell one of his bright blue glass eyes, of which he had been so proud. And now, slumped against the wall, just off the stage, it was in this very spot, *mes enfants*, that he espied the so dazzling French doll, dangling temptingly from the great, blazing Christmas tree upon the stage.

Eh bien—he had been one gay dog in his day, the little Pierre, the elegant, bold and dashing cavalier, as nightly, by the pulling of unseen strings, he had danced, twinkled and twirled his way into the capricious heart of *ma belle* Paulette.

But ladies are fickle, *mes enfants*—so easily won—so easily lost. For even now the Paulette, the coquette, the gamin—was she not captivated nightly by the rakish clown, the altogether worthless Gaston, whom the so cruel stage manager had chosen to replace the little castaway, Pierre?

Meanwhile, dangling temptingly from the tinsel branches of the great, blazing Christmas tree was the dazzling French doll. And there, oh, my little ones, above her glorious red hair, the tiny Pierre espied a bunch of twinkling mistletoe—tantalizing, teasing, provocative.

Ah, *mes petites*, never deceive yourselves—a one-eyed marionette whose leg is stuck fast; his heart, too, is it stuck fast? But no, my lambkins. For, were you keen and quick to take note—you would soon observe the graceful flourish with which the gallant Pierre raises a tiny hand to twirl the so elegant waxed moustache. *Ciel*, it is gone from his right upper lip! But vanity dies hard in the heart of the debonair male, for nothing daunted, the brave little *monsieur* gaily carresses the other half portion of the so beautifully waxed moustache—while always he casts amorous glances through his one bright eye, toward the

dazzling doll, dangling so temptingly from the great Christmas tree.

But what would you? The foolish Pierre must, indeed, have been a vain little *monsieur*—else how should he hope to fascinate, to intrigue, to altogether lay siege to the capricious heart of the *tres belle* French doll? She of the glorious red hair, the wide baby-blue eyes, brilliant like diamonds—but hard, oh my little white ones, she of the spun silver gown, the jewel-studded shoes—the bright particular star of the great Christmas tree. For why, *mes cheries*, should she flick an eyelash on a *paive* marionette with a leg stuck fast, with one beady eye and a half portion moustache?

And yet—*mes enfants*—there hung the twinkling mistletoe, the tantalizing mistletoe with its white berries cajoling—teasing, provocative. For, it is well known that a tiny bit of mistletoe brings hope to the most battered of masculine hearts. And so it was that the little Pierre, with his leg stuck fast, continued to gaze amorously through his one beady eye at the great blazing Christmas tree, from which dangled so temptingly the dazzling French doll. [See also page 60]