

A Midsummer Visit From Santa Claus



NE time somebody they could never find out who it was played a joke on Santa Claus and tore off all the leaves of the calendar up to Dec. 22, which, as you know, is only three days before Christmas. It was really midsummer, and the weather was very hot, but Santa Claus, who had always gone according to his calendar and had never found it wrong, believed time must have slipped by him without his realizing it.

He had been rather taking his time in the workshop and had scarcely half enough toys to go around, so he was much worried how to give presents to all his children.

A fairy heard him talking to himself about his troubles and had a splendid idea. She hurried into the woods and told the other fairies and all the beasts and birds and bugs about Santa Claus' trouble, asking their help in the matter.

"I don't see how we can help much," said a little bear cub. "We can't make toys."

"No," said the fairy, "but you can be toys. My plan is for us to offer to take the places of the toys that Santa Claus needs. We fairies can be dolls, for there are lots of dolls' dresses in Santa's workshop, I know."

"Splendid!" Santa said. "Just hop aboard my sleigh, which is hitched to the front yard, and we'll be off."

So the animals and fairies and everything else hopped into Santa's great sleigh, and he, climbing to the seat, slunked to his reindeer and bade them



SPREAD THEIR WINGS AND FLEW OFF. fly over the ground. But they could not move the sleigh, for there was no snow on the ground. Santa Claus did not know what to do, but the fairy declared that she could fix that difficulty.

She blew a little whistle, and hundreds of white wild geese came flying from the sky. She told them what was the matter, and the geese, catching the end of a long rope in their beaks, spread their wings and were off with the sleigh and its precious load, bearing it as lightly as a feather, so that it hardly touched the ground.

By morning Santa visited all the towns and left presents everywhere. He hadn't a single thing left in his sleigh and thought that he had done a very good night's work. The children when they awoke in the morning and found the presents wondered where they could have come from. Some of the little bears had cards around their necks, which read "A Merry Christmas." The children were surprised, but joyously began to play with their strange toys. The little baby bears, who kept their claws curved in, so that they wouldn't scratch, were the most delightful things. The children were very fond of the gifts.

The gnomes made splendid clown dolls, and some of the fairies were particularly pretty dolls. The birds in the cages sang sweetly, the beetle-drilled like armies of real soldiers, and the field mice spun on their heads and skipped over each other's tail to the amusement of their small owners.

In a few days, however, the children began to dre even of these wonderful new toys, and the forest people said it was time to return to their own homes.

When they reached home they started in to help Santa Claus make toys as fast as they could so that no time would be lost for the real Christmas. The dear old man had by this time found he had made a mistake in the date and that the children would be expecting their regular call from him at the usual time.

Jolly St. Nicholastown, Where Old Santa Claus Lives

"UNCLE BOB," said Nan as she and Ned took their places, one on each arm of the big rocking chair, in which, as usual, during the children's hour, he was seated before the blazing log fire. "You promised you would take us to St. Nicholastown some time."

"That's so!" exclaimed Ned. "And we're all aboard now. Let's start. Toot, toot! Clang-a-lang-a-lang! Next station—"

"Hold on," said their uncle. "I'm the conductor of this excursion myself. The first station is Maybetown. Then we come to Perhaps. Here we follow the banks of Goose creek, which, as you know, wanders everywhere to get to Noplace, and the first thing you know—why, here we are at the gates of the city which is named after good old St. Nick himself."

"Ah! This is the office of the Wishmaster. He takes the place of a postmaster with us, and a busy man he is too. This is about how he talks to himself as he records the wishes as they come over the wishophone:

"A sled for Billy, skates for Joe; A wish that Christmas will bring us snow; A poor woman wishes it won't be cold; Dick wants a suit for a soldier bold; Dolls for a million or more of girls; With go-to-sleep eyes and fuses curis; Billions of boxes of candies and such; Books in French, English, Spanish and Dutch

And every common language under the sun; Weapons and pistols, watches that run. "But here's old St. Nick himself. Listen to him. But I forgot that while he understands all languages he speaks only Fantasmia, so I'll have to translate. He says:

"Hello, chicks! So you've come to see your dear old friend, have you? Glad it! Make yourself at home. Yes, we're busy, very busy, indeed, but never too busy to be polite. We have every kind of factory in the world here, and all rushed with wishes. I tell you it keeps us busy sort'ng them. Why, if we filled every order just as it came the world would be a funny place. Just think of it! Here's a little pickaninny wishes to be painted white, another boy wishes he was a man, and a man wishes he was a boy, and a girl wishes she was a boy, and so on, but we got a funny wish during the dull season last summer. A little boy whose mamma would not let him go in swimming every day wished he would be turned into a fish so he could go swimming all the time. Ha, ha, ha! That reminds me of the saying in Mother Goose:

"If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." And a charming lady Mother Goose is. The dear soul writes me every now and then, and I'm glad to hear from her. I'll read you her last letter. It says:

"Dear old Santa Claus, I hope you're well. As for me, I'm feeling wellish. With only food and drink enough. To give to life a relief. I'm somewhat bothered, though, at times. For Little Boy Blue and Little Bopeep. Don't let your duty well, And little Johnny Green and big John Stout

Will quarrel about the cat, While the Three Blind Mice eat up the food. Helped by Jack's big rat. The Little Roast Pig is pretty well, And Jack and Jill are better. I cannot write about all the folks; 'Twould make too long a letter. And now I must stop and put on the pot Of porridge for the Man in the Moon. Give my love to all good children. Wherever they may be found, And tell them I always think of them When Christmas comes around. With best wishes,

"MOTHER GOOSE." "Good, dear old Mother Goose! She certainly has her hands full, but I was talking about present factories and such things. Look around you. Take that candy factory, for instance. It's built of the finest blocks of candy in the world, surrounded by a grove of chocolate elair trees. In that hill over yonder is a fine plum pudding mine. That stream is a lemonade river. Its banks and bed are sugar. That crackling sound you hear is from the cracker factory. Ha, ha, ha! We crack crackers and jokes here too!"

"But," interrupted Nan, "now tell us truly, Uncle Bob, is there a Santa Claus or St. Nicholas, and does he really come down the chimney?"

"Now, when it comes to that," answered the uncle, "there are some things it doesn't do to ask too many questions about. There's one thing I do know, though, and that is that every Christmas either Santa or somebody else sends me a lot of things I'm mighty glad to get and am very thankful to receive."

PUSSY AND THE CHRISTMAS TURKEY



FROM the moment the kitten knew anything he was aware he was a beauty. His father and mother were lovely, long haired Angoras. Although so good looking, he was a very spoiled and ill mannered kitten. His mother had foolishly said in his hearing that with his looks he could do as he liked.

One day, when the kitten was about three months old, a telegram came to the house where he lived. It said, "Send little Angora to Miss Nellie Dale, Fifth Avenue, New York."

The butler came in with a box, put the unsuspecting kitten in and nailed down the lid.

What followed is too confusing to tell. There was much rattling over rough streets, much jolting over tracks, much shrieking of engines, much bumping against boxes. At last it was over. The box was carried into a warm, softly lighted room. A child's voice was heard exclaiming: "For me! Why, I wonder what it can be." A tiny new born girl, and in a few minutes the kitten was out of its prison and tightly snuggled in the arms of a little girl. A saucer of milk was soon lapped up, and pussy's life in his new home began.

Nellie named her new pet Blizzard because he was white and soft like drifted snow.

Blizzard thought this name all right, but did not for an instant mean to an-



A SMOTHERED MEW SOUNDED FROM THE INSIDE.

swer to it. He had never learned to mind or do anything else but be a trouble. He stole everything he could get. He broke an expensive vase because he would play tag with himself on the parlor mantel. He climbed up the handsome new curtains at the hall windows with the result that they soon looked like streamers. He cried all the time people were eating, wanting meat and other things not good for kittens.

"Twas the night before Christmas, and the servants were busy preparing for the big dinner tomorrow.

All the relatives were invited, and Dinah, the cook, knew that the only way to have her dinner on time was to get things ready for it the day before.

She had just got the big turkey out and picked it clean of pinfeathers. She put it in the pantry while she graded bread with which to stuff it.

Company came in, and Dinah did not get her turkey filled as she had hoped. She went to bed, setting her alarm for 5 o'clock, expecting to stuff the turkey before breakfast. When bedtime came no Blizzard was to be found.

The household was awakened at 5 in the morning by a scream from Dinah, which brought the family to the kitchen all armed and expecting to see a burglar. They found Dinah in a faint on the floor of the pantry, and beside her was the big turkey. On looking closer and hearing Dinah faintly whisper, "The cat," all eyes turned to look for the cat. No one could locate him until a smothered mew sounded from the inside of the turkey. Nellie peeked in and saw Blizzard's head sticking out where the stuffing is usually poked in. He was hauled out. His white coat was sticky and dirty, and his stomach stuck out like a wolf's in the fairy tale after he had dined off the little pigs.

Dinah locked Blizzard in the laundry until he should thoroughly repent. Another turkey had to be prepared, and Blizzard was forgotten until the day after Christmas. When Nellie came to take him out of his prison Dinah went with her.

"Will you ever do such a naughty thing again, Blizzard?" she asked him. Blizzard looked right at her and said "Mew."

"See," said Ellen; "he says he never will, Dinah."

Dinah answered, "I guess that mew means he will never do such a thing again—this Christmas."

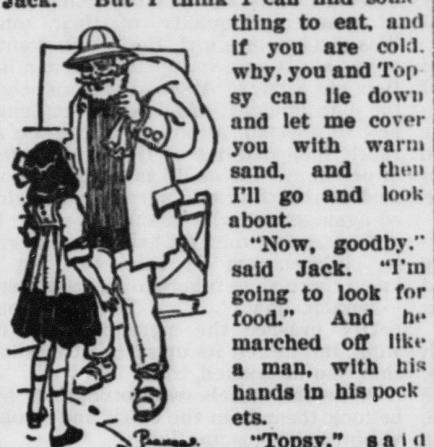
A SANTA CLAUS FROM THE SEA

NAN and Jack and little black Topsy rubbed their eyes and stared about them. A big wave had landed them high and dry on a sandy island.

"All shipwrecks are horrid," said Jack. "But I think I can find something to eat, and if you are cold, why, you and Topsy can lie down and let me cover you with warm sand, and then I'll go and look about."

"Now, goodbye," said Jack. "I'm going to look for food." And he marched off like a man, with his hands in his pockets.

"Topsy," said Nan after he had gone, "do you know it is the day before Christmas and we won't get a single present tomorrow?"



But Topsy was not despondent. "What's de mattah wid Marse Santa Claus?" she demanded. "Ah! he can't be dis islan'?"

"Why, Topsy," explained little Nan patiently, "how could he? His reindeer couldn't cross the water."

"Let him come in a boat, den. Dat's what I say. Let him come in a boat," said Topsy fiercely.

"Oh," said Nan, "but I am afraid he can't."

Suddenly Topsy sat up and pointed a skinny black finger toward the sea.

"It's a boat," she said, "a little boat, and it's coming here."

Nearer and nearer came the little boat, and presently Topsy shrieked: "It's Marse Santa Claus. Miss Nellie, it's Marse Santa Claus, and he's coming straight to dis yer islan'. Didn't I tole yer? Didn't I tole yer he'd come?"

The man in the boat had a nice white beard. He had on a red sweater and wore a soft hat pulled well down over his ears. As he climbed out of the boat they saw that he was very round and fat and had a jolly red face.

When he had pulled the boat up out of the water he leaned over and picked up a great bag and slung it over his shoulder and came trotting up the beach.

"It truly is Santa," said Nan breathlessly, "and he is coming straight to ward us. I am going to run right down and meet him."

Away she sped, her golden curls flying behind her, and when she reached the old man she slipped her hand into his confidingly.

"I'm awfully glad you came, Santa," she said. "We were so frightened and lonely, and maybe you can tell us what to do."

The old man stood still and stared at her. Then he chuckled.

"Well, well!" he said. "Where did you come from?"

Just then Jack came running down the beach.

"It's Santa Claus," called Nan as soon as he was within hearing.

But Jack was older than Topsy and Nan, and he had his doubts. "Are you really Santa Claus?" he asked gravely.

The old man winked. "Don't I look like him?" he said.

"Yes," said Jack, "you do."

"Ain't I got a pack on my back?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jack, "but it looks like potatoes and not toys."

Then the old man leaned down and whispered in his ear: "That's jes' what it is, but if them little dears wants to think I'm Santa, why, let 'em think it. It won't hurt anybody, will it?"

"No," said Jack. "It won't."

"Well, then," said he out loud, "that being decided, we will go and have dinner."

"Dinner?" said Jack, in surprise.

"Why, where do you live?"

"Follow me," said the man, and they trotted gayly after him.

Away among the sand hills they came suddenly upon a little house. Within was a glowing fire, and a great pot was bubbling on the stove, and each of the little folks had a hot bowl of soup and a big piece of bread, and when they had finished their eyes drooped.

"Now hang up your stockings," said their host, "and go to bed."

How the old sailor found things to fill those stockings was a wonder. But there was a quaint sandalwood fan for Nan, a pair of Chinese shoes for Jack, and a Japanese doll for Topsy. Then he filled up the corners with beautiful shells and with little boxes of dried fruit and such things as sailors pick up in many voyages.

Such a jolly Christmas morning as it was! The children were delighted with their gifts, and afterward Santa roved them over to the mainland and put them on the road for home.

How Little Jack Guessed A Christmas Secret



IT was the afternoon before Christmas, and the air was full of big, feathery snowflakes. Jack and Mary stood at the window watching them, and Baby Jane sat on the floor.

"See how pretty they are!" cried Jack, clapping his hands.

"They're just like fairies going to a Christmas party," Mary clapped her hands, too, and Baby Jane thumped her rattle on the floor and crowed. But Mrs. Brown looked out of the window rather anxiously.

The store was a mile away, and the snow seemed to come thicker and faster every minute.

"How do you s'pose Santa Claus can get here in such a storm?" asked Jack, at which Mary's face clouded.

Perhaps this thought was troubling Mrs. Brown. She didn't answer for more than a minute, not until Jack spoke again.

"Pooh 'n nonsense!" he said. "This isn't much of a snow. I could go in it myself well's not."

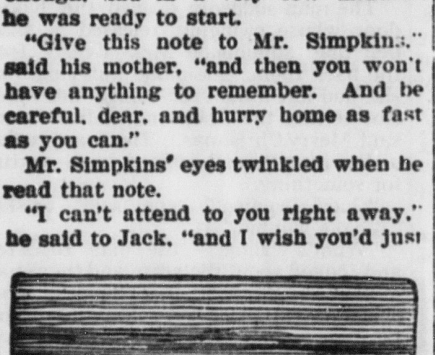
"Could you, dear?" asked his mother quickly. "I'm afraid it's a chance if papa gets home before tomorrow, the wood road will be so blocked, and I want some things from the store tonight. Do you suppose you can go with your sled, Jackie?"

"Why, yes!" cried Jack, delighted enough, and in a very few minutes he was ready to start.

"Give this note to Mr. Simpkins," said his mother, "and then you won't have anything to remember. And be careful, dear, and hurry home as fast as you can."

Mr. Simpkins' eyes twinkled when he read that note.

"I can't attend to you right away," he said to Jack, "and I wish you'd just



JACK STRUGGLED ON. run over to the house with a line to Mrs. Simpkins for me."

"Yes, sir," answered Ted.

Mr. Simpkins had the bundles tucked away in the sled box and covered with thick brown paper, that the snow couldn't get through, when Jack came back.

"Hard night for Santa Claus to get around," he said, pinching the boy's red cheek. "Do you suppose you'll see him at your house?"

"I hope he'll come," answered Jack politely, "but I don't guess I'll see him, sir."

"I saw him once," Mr. Simpkins said soberly, "when he was a little boy, about your size. He looked a great deal like you too."

When he got home mother had a plate of hot oatmeal pudding with sugar and real cream waiting for him, and she whisked the bundles out of the sled box and into the pantry in a hurry.

All this time the snow kept falling, falling, and the wind blew until the little house fairly shook. If it had been set on a hill there is no saying what might have happened. Jack felt a good deal troubled. He told his mother what Mr. Simpkins had said about Santa Claus when she was tucking him into bed for the night.

"I'm afraid he can't get here," said he, "and then Mary will be so disappointed."

But his mother laughed, stooping down for the good night kiss. "Don't worry, dear," she said. "Santa Claus won't mind this little storm."

And, sure enough, when morning came the three little stockings hanging beside the chimney were stuffed as full as they could hold.

"So Santa Claus did come," said Mrs. Brown, laughing at the children's antics.

Jack looked thoughtful a minute. His eyes danced. He put his lips close to his mother's ear.

"I do believe I know what Mr. Simpkins meant," he said, "but I shan't tell Mary. And it's lots of fun, just the same."

THE DIAMOND WEDDING.

Come, sit close by my side, my darling. Sit up very close tonight; Let me clasp your tremulous fingers In mine, as tremulous quite, Lay your silvery head on my bosom, As you did when 'twas shining gold; Somehow I know no difference, Though they say we are very old.

'Tis seventy-five years to-night, wife. Since we knelt at the altar low, And the fair young minister of God (He died long years ago) Pronounced us one that Christmas eve. How short they seem to me, The years—and yet I'm ninety-seven, And you are ninety-three.

That night I placed on your finger A band of purest gold; And to-night I see it shining On the withered hand I hold. How it lightens up the memories That o'er my vision come. First of all is the merry children That once made glad our home.

There was Bennie, our darling Bennie. Our first-born pledge of bliss— As beautiful a boy as ever Felt a mother's loving kiss. 'Twas hard as we watched him fading Like a flower 'ret day by day, To feel that He who had lent him Was calling him away.

My heart it grew very bitter, As I bowed beneath the stroke; And yours, though you said so little, I knew it was well nigh broke. We made him a grave neat the daisies— There are five there now instead of one— And we've learned when our Father chastens— To say, "Thy will be done."

Then came Lillie and Allie, twin cherubs, Just spared from the courts of heaven To comfort our hearts for a moment— God took them as soon as He'd given. Then Katie, our gentle Katie, We thought her fair.

With her pure eyes soft and tender, And her curls of golden hair, Like a queen she looked at her bridal (I thought it were you instead.) But her athen lips kissed her first-born, And when and child were dead, We said that of our old number Two noble boys, Fred and Harry— But God thought the other way.

Far away on the plains of Shiloh, Fred sleeps in an unknown grave; With his ship and noble sailors, Harry sank beneath the wave. So sit closer, darling, closer, Let me clasp your hand in mine; Alone we commenced life's journey, Alone we are left behind.

'Tis dark, the lamp should be lighted, And your hand has grown so cold; Has the fire gone out? How I shiver! But then, we are very old. Hush! I hear sweet strains of music. Perhaps the guests have come; No, 'tis the children's voices, I know them every one.

On that Christmas eve they found them, Their hands together clasped, But they never knew their children Had been their wedding guests With their head upon his bosom That had never ceased to love, They held their diamond wedding In the mansion house above.

—Anonymous.

PAD AND PENCIL GAMES.

Always a Pleasant Pastime For Yuletide Time.

Pencil and pad games always form a pleasant pastime as the children sit in front of the Christmas fire. The children should all be provided with freshly sharpened pencils and fresh paper pads. A basket of evergreen sprays or any variety of Christmas greens is used for the first writing game. There may be sprigs of holly and mistletoe, ivy, fir, spruce, hemlock, the many kinds of pine including ground pine and arbor vitae, all of which are to be found somewhere and somehow at Christmas time. Each child selects one spray of green from the basket, writes down the name as he guesses it, and passes it to his neighbor by the fire. This is continued until the supply of greens is exhausted and the basket is empty. The children, during the game should not ask each other the names of the greens. At the end the slips are collected and mother decides which child has won the prize by handing in the nearest correct list of tree and shrub names.

Another pencil and pad game is that of the Christmas cakes. A number of sheets of paper are prepared before the game begins, with the following questions written on. The answers, hoe cake, sponge cake, fruit cake, etc. are left blank on the papers and are filled in by the children.

What kind of Christmas cake would be made by a Farmer? Hoe cake. A diver? Sponge cake. A little curly haired girl? Ribbon cake. A huckster? Fruit cake. Little Jack Horner? Plum cake. A miser? Gold cake. A drummer? Pound cake. The man in the moon? Cheese cake. Old Mother Hubbard? Poverty cake.

There are many other Christmas cakes which may be added, and the paper with the longest list of correct answers wins a prize. The game may be varied by using the names of candy instead of cake, as follows:

What kind of Christmas candy would be bought by a Schoolmaster? Stick candy. Shoemaker? Shoestrings (licorice). Baby? Kisses. Dentist? Gum drops. Flatterer? Taffy. Milkman? Cream candy. Miller? Barley sugar. Dairymaid? Butterscotch.

A Woman's Word

is worth much to women. "I suffered for fifteen years with falling of internal organs and nervousness," writes Mrs. Vincent Bohall, of Franklin, Johnson Co., Indiana. "One year ago I began taking your 'Favorite Prescription' and 'Golden Medical Discovery.' I took six bottles of each, and now I am well. I owe my life to Dr. Pierce. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is the most wonderful remedy for woman's ills known to science. It makes weak women strong and sick women well."