

cake and plum pudding. She planned for turkey and for chicken pie, and her husband eyed her in gloomy retrospection of the glad old times, growling out to her that she seemed to be preparing for an army, and she dashed out that this wasn't the time to be stingy and perhaps there would be some poor to feed—there always had been so far.

Then came the 24th day of December, a heavy snowstorm and much embarrassment for the old couple. Each had secretly sent all the children presents and a letter, neither mentioning the other, and the lawyer had called on them and told them that it was time to drop the divorce business and make up or push it and have it over with. They almost drove him from the house, and he laughed as he went down the street.

About noon John came in, gruff and sly, and put a great armful of holly on the white kitchen table. She looked at him till he explained.

"May Carr give it to me. They had too much at the church, and she give me no chance to say I didn't want it—you know May's way. She said the Christmas tree was the biggest the church ever had and there were more children needing things. She asked if you had anything pretty or useful you didn't want, and I said I would ask you."

They had missed the church woefully and had always helped out with everything. They had always been cheerful and pleasant. This appeal touched them both.

Mary summoned a maid and sent an offering that rejoiced the hearts of those who were trimming the tree. John took it to the church, and everybody shook hands with him and in the general gladness seemed to have forgotten that anything was wrong.

About 4, while Mary was alone resting after putting up all the holly, a telegram came for John. She did not know where he was, and she suffered the usual agony of simple people unaccustomed to receiving telegrams. She dared not open it and imagined the death and burial of all her children and grandchildren, one after the other.

While she was in this frame of mind another message came, and the boy had scarcely gone when a third arrived. Then she sent a neighbor's boy for her husband and received him almost fainting. He was as frightened as she, but the first read: "Meet 6 o'clock train tonight, Mary." The second said: "Meet 6 o'clock train tonight, Paul." The third bade him meet the 6 o'clock train and was signed "Elizabeth." While they stood staring at each other a boy brought another. This was different.

"Meet 8 o'clock train from west for little Christine. Alice died suddenly yesterday. Mother, give her a home till I can get to you. Letter later." It was 5 then. They stood staring a moment, and then Mary fell to piling wood on the fire and spoke briefly to John.

"Father, you'll have to hurry to get to that train." He went out to the barn and hitched the team to the double cutter. When he came back he lifted down to their grandmother's arms her daughter Mary's three children, three of Paul's and one of Elizabeth's. They were all laughing and shouting and each was tickled "Merry Christmas, I am a gift to grandpa and grandma."

They were barely fed and warmed when John went to the later train and returned with the motherless three-year-old Christine in his arms. She had been put in the conductor's care and was sound asleep, with tears on her cheeks and her yellow curls tousled, on her grandfather's shoulder. Her grandmother reached up for her.

"John," she said, "she is ours. We must keep things together for the children! John, I'm awfully ashamed of how hard I've been, and I ain't ashamed to say so. Will you forgive me?" He stooped suddenly and kissed her as he put the child in her arms.

"Ma," he said, "I've been an old fool, and I'm the one to blame! I'll go and straighten things at church and if you'll have me for a Christmas present all right!" And she smiled happily up at him.

Tried to Bribe Santa.

The appearance of the Salvation Army Santa Clauses on the streets of New York are the occasions of many a curious little scene when the children spy them. In Twenty-third street a little girl suddenly pushed up to the spoken saint of toys and children and, thrusting into his hand a quarter, cried out: "Here, Santa Claus, take this, I don't want you to forget me," and was back to the side of her mother again in an instant. The little lass had tried to bribe the saint!

Something to Look Big.

Mr. Bigheart—Wiggins, old boy, we have raised \$50 to get the boss a Christmas present, and we want something that will make a show for the money—something that will look big, you know. Can't you suggest something?

Wiggins—Sure. Buy \$50 worth of rice and boll it.—Men and Women.

Salvation Army as Santa Claus.
The thousands of cents or nickels or dimes dropped into the Salvation Army's iron-kettles under the red tripods at the street corners in New York city last December provided Christmas dinners for fully 28,000 poor people, and 450 were supplied with clothing with the money contributed by the public.

The Niecechildren's Lament.

Little Sisie Mermald
In the deep was weeping;
Little Johnnie Merbox
Company was keeping.
Cause of their bewailing?
We admit it shocking—
They can never, never
Have a Christmas stocking!
—New York Herald.

A Christmas Recenciliation

How Santa Claus Brought Peace to Two Troubled Old Hearts.

By JOANNA SINGLE.

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THEY were both sixty, and they both had gray hair, and their six children were all happily married and prosperous, but living at long distances from their parents. There was money enough for both, and both were in good health. But they were both wretched. For this state of affairs John Bowen blamed his wife and Mary Bowen blamed her husband. It had all come about since they sold the farm, three years ago, when Will, their youngest son, had married and moved to Colorado with his pretty wife, Alice. Then the old people had moved to town and had begun to quarrel. Nobody, not they themselves, knew just how it had begun, and only Mary, the eldest daughter, had suspected that anything was wrong. She had said nothing, considering silence the better part, until something really had to be done.

At last and suddenly things had come to a head. The pastor of the little church to which they belonged had noticed that there was an un-Christian coolness between husband and wife. They no longer sat side by side, some-



"JOHN," SHE SAID, "SHE IS OURS."

times one went home without the other, their offerings were no longer one, but separate gifts, and they disagreed more fiercely than ever, not from selfishness, for each wanted the other to have the larger share. On this John Bowen insisted until some devil prompted Mary to say his generosity was only for the purpose of putting her in the wrong by making her seem mercenary. Then they saw a lawyer, a kindly man, who failed to reconcile their differences, and from trying to divide the property each got more and more angry until finally Mary had the papers drawn up for a divorce, and John filed a cross claim. Neither would have the papers served just then. There were things to be attended to, and then the children must be told.

Somehow neither one of them could bear to tell the children, and more than once they were on the verge of making up. So it happened that it was almost Christmas time, and still nothing was done about it. However, the pastor finally wrote to their daughter Mary, asking her if she could not reconcile her parents to each other, and she wrote to her brothers and sisters. The three of them who could meet and talked it over and concluded to adopt a plan evolved by Mary, who probably understood the root of the trouble better than the others.

This daughter, her mother's name sake, had three fine children. Paul had four, and Elizabeth had two, one too small to leave its mother. At the little home of the old people all was gloom. The old man was sorting and destroying old papers, and his wife was mending and arranging and cleaning her already clean house. She was bound to leave her husband comfortable and was convinced that no one would properly look after his ailments and his rheumatism when she had gone to her daughter's. This she had fully purposed to do, for she would not put him out of his own house. He was equally obstinate about leaving it to her.

Two days before Christmas Mary began to cook, with all her experienced skill, pumpkin and apple and mince and squash pies, fruit cake and layer

Christmas With The Sky Dwellers

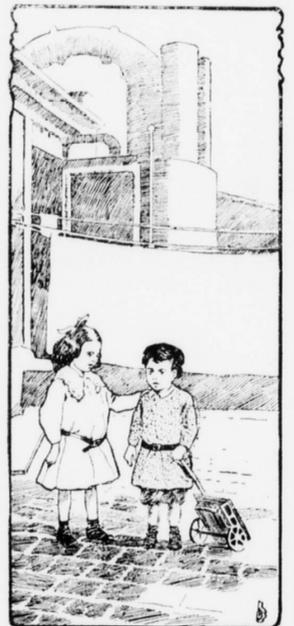
The First Stop on Santa Claus' Reindeer Route.

TO had a snorting reindeer six-in-hand on the roof of a New York skyscraper requires pretty skillful handling of the lines, but Santa Claus is the man who can do it without jarring a brick off the chimneys. Why should he want to stop at such a queer depot? you ask. Because there are hundreds of little children living right in the very center of New York who have never pressed their tender feet upon the brown earth, climbed trees, played in the grass or experienced the thousand and one pleasures so common to everyday life. They live above the clouds, twenty stories or more above the real things of the world, but nearer by those twenty stories to the stars, the angels—and Santa Claus. Their aerial dwellings are his first stopping places on his annual Christmas journey through the atmosphere.

Don't hundreds of feet above the haunts of ordinary mortals, these little ones often pass years of their lives in their dizzy homes without a thought of what is going on so far below them. Their fathers are the superintendents, engineers and janitors of these lofty buildings. Upon the very roofs of these great pillars of steel cozy, home-breathing cottages have been erected.

Here, right up against the sky, the children live and play from morning until night. They never miss the green fields and the tall trees, for they have never known them. Their playgrounds are the expansive roofs of the big buildings, and they are as free as the air.

While the smaller children pass their early years at home with their mothers twenty stories above everybody, their older brothers and sisters attend school with the little ones living far down on the streets. In the evenings



TWO LITTLE SKY DWELLERS.

they tell a gaping crowd of sky dwellers the sights they have seen while going to and from school. The "skyscraper twins," who were born on top of one of New York's highest buildings and who so far have gone through life together as they started upon the journey, often think of the great day to come when they will go down the elevator and be among the toy people they have seen so far below them crawling along the sidewalks.

These twins, who are the pride, of course, of their father and mother, have never been away from the roof on which they were born. Life has been one short and happy dream to them. They do not know what a street car really looks like, for they have merely seen the shapeless, dingy roofs of the "L" trains as they squirm along their crooked ways like some short, thick snake with square head and tail. They are full of health and have rosy cheeks and big, dancing, bright eyes.

This means that they eat well, sleep well and enjoy life. There are seesaws and swings high up among the clouds on some of the skyscrapers and the ever present little red express wagon so dear to the small boy's heart. Races are run on the iron roofs, and top spinning and marble playing are favorite sports.

There are deaths on the tops of the skyscrapers as well as births. One of the saddest of these was that of a little boy who had gone down to the street for the first time to play and was crushed to death by a heavy truck.

A family of nine children born to one couple who have lived on the same roof for nearly forty years shows that race suicide has its enemies there. Five of these children have grown to manhood and are in the public service as policeman, fireman or mail carrier.

Dogs and cats are numerous on the skyscrapers. The children there are as well off for four footed playmates as those on the earth. Some have never known anything else but the roof, where they play by day and howl all night long to their hearts' content.—New York Times.

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