

SANTA CLAUS AND DICK SNIFFER.

A Christmas Story for Boys and Girls.

Dick Sniffer sat in a chair before the fire-place in the library gazing at his limp stocking which hung from the mantelpiece.

Dick was an only child, and a matter of fact young gentleman, who declared there were no such things as fairies and openly scoffed at the idea of Santa Claus coming down the chimney, and, in fact, he even went so far as to express doubts of the existence of the jovial St. Nick.

The doorbell had been rung several times while they were at dinner, and each time Mrs. Sniffer said to the waitress, "If it's a bundle take it upstairs and leave it in my room Mary."

And now, as Dick sat before the as yet empty stocking, he could hear his parents moving about up stairs, and he could hear, too, a great rattling of stuff brown paper, and the creaking and groaning that told of the opening of heavy cases and boxes. And now and then Dick would catch a word or two, such as "Isn't it lovely?" and "Won't Dick be pleased with that?" which was very tantalizing and very trying to a boy's patience.

Once Dick heard something fall with a steely crash.

"Jimminy!" exclaimed Dick. "That's a pair of skates!" The he leaned forward in his chair and gazed incredulously at the narrow opening in the grate.

"Dollars to doughnuts," he muttered, "that if I ask the folks to-morrow who gave me skates they'll say Santa Claus came down the chimney and left 'em for me. Jes' as if I didn't know that there wasn't any such a person! It's jes' papa and mamma that gives you everything. They ought to know that they can't fool me with any baby talk about Santa Claus."

Dick went to the window, and, pressing his nose against the pane, he tried to make out what the weather was like. The white, unbroken snow lay waist deep over the road and the meadows beyond, and now and then a flurry of flakes blown against the glass told Dick that the storm had not altogether ceased, though the moon was trying its best to escape from the hurrying enveloping clouds. Then Dick went back to his chair. It was his bedtime, but his engrossed parents had forgotten to remind him of the fact. Even the delightful speculation as to what was likely to find its way into his stocking could not prevent Dick from yawning several times, and by and by, with no other sound audible but the quiet ticking of the old grandfather's clock in the corner, Dick began to nod and doze in his chair, starting up now and then at the slamming of a door or a suspicious noise from above stairs. Suddenly Dick was aroused to thorough consciousness by the faint tinkling of sleigh bells, which seemed to be growing louder and clearer with each second. Now, Dick's home was quite a way from the village and on a most unfrequented road, so he was curious to see who might be travelling by at that time of night. Running noiselessly out into the hall he picked up his cap and muffler, and in a trice he had slipped out of the front door, closing it softly behind him.

It had stopped snowing and the moon was shining out gorgeously over the whitened landscape. Strange to say the air felt almost balmy. As Dick reached the front gate, which opened on the road, he caught sight of a fat little horse, trotting along, before a small, low sleigh, and seated in it, all alone, was a funny fat little old man. He seemed strangely familiar to Dick, though the boy could not remember whether he had ever seen him before or had just seen his picture. At almost the same instant the funny old man caught sight of Dick, for he called out a cheery "Hallo there!" and, drawing rein, he threw back the lap robe, and clambered laboriously from the sleigh. He had the merriest, brightest pair of eyes Dick had ever seen, and his round little nose reminded the boy of a crab apple, it was so red and shiny.

"Why, my boy, glad to meet you!" he cried, cheerily. "Always glad to meet a boy, and most boys," he added with a chuckle, "are glad to meet me."

As though this last needed explanation, the old gentleman thrust a mittened hand deep in a capacious pocket and fished out a card. It was an absurdly large card for so small a man—about the size of an ordinary envelope. He handed it to Dick, and the astonished boy read, "Mr. S. Claus, of Troytown."

"Why—why, you're not really,

truly Santa Claus, are you?" cried Dick, with a fast beating heart.

"To be sure I am!" was the reply. "And now perhaps you can tell me something." Santa Claus went on, "I have just heard of a boy who lives near here, who says he does not believe there is any such person as I—and after all I have done for him, too! Let me see; his name is Dick—something or other." Here Santa Claus hauled out a heavy book, which was short and fat like himself. He turned over the leaves till he came to a certain page, and Dick, looking over his shoulder, could see that the page contained a list of boys whose first name was Dick, like his own.

Santa ran a fat forefinger down the page till he came to a certain name with a black mark after it. "Ah, here we have it!" he exclaimed, "Dick Sniffer! That's the young rascal. Do you happen to know him?" Santa added, turning quickly on poor Dick.

"Yes, sir. He—he lives in the same house that I do!" Dick faltered.

"Dear me!" cried Mr. S. Claus. "Here's luck! It will save me time to speak to you about it, and you can repeat it all to the young disbeliever."

Here the old gentleman paused, with his head bent as though in deep thought. Suddenly he looked up and delivered himself of the following history of his work:

"When I first began to make my Christmas rounds, many, many hundred years ago, there wasn't a boy or girl in all the world who did not know me and believe me, and I never forgot one single child. But after a while the world grew so big and so many children were born into it, that it became very hard for me to get around to them all.

"By and by things got so bad I had to enlist the services of the fairies. You believe in fairies, don't you?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Dick, earnestly though but half an hour before he would have made another answer.

"Well," pursued Santa, "I got the fairies—only the good fairies, of course!—to go about and make up the lists of all the boys and girls in the world and to find out what they wanted for Christmas, and if they believed in Santa or not. I have all the names in this book here. For instance, I have Dick Sniffers down for skates, bobsled and a fishing rod. Do you happen to know if that is right?"

"Yes!" cried Dick. "That's right! He—he told me what he wanted!" "Do you think he deserves anything for not believing in me?" asked Santa Claus, gravely.

"I—I s'pose not!" cried poor Dick. "But if I promise to tell him about meeting you and prove to him that you're real, perhaps you'll forgive him this time."

Old Santa Claus shook his head sadly. "It always makes me feel very bad to think anybody needs proof of me. A boy or girl ought to believe what their parents tell them about old Santa Claus."

"If I—I mean, if Dick had only seen you come down the chimney once, I'm sure he'd have never doubted that you were real!" said Dick eagerly.

"That was all very well in the old days," replied Santa sorrowfully. "But they make the chimneys so all-fired narrow these days, and what with steam heat and gas logs in the city houses, I haven't any chance at all to make my Christmas calls on children in the good old-fashioned way. Though now and then, if I happen to pass a particularly large and roomy chimney, I am very apt to try the old way. It's such a pretty sight," added Santa with a chuckle, "to peep in and see two or three young ones fast asleep and to think how they would stare if they should wake and see me there. Once in a while a child does wake up, and then I clear out in a jiffy, so that by the next morning the poor thing doesn't know whether it really saw me or dreamed it!"

"If you don't go down chimneys much how do you manage to fill all the stockings?" asked Dick.

"Oh, that's easy!" cried Santa. "I have formed what I call a parents' league. I have a talk with each parent just before Christmas about what is best to give each child, and when it comes Christmas Eve the fairies distribute the presents for me, delivering them at each house, and I go about the country just superintending and seeing that everything goes right."

Here Santa's little horse began to show impatience by pawing and shaking his head.

"Well, I must be getting along,"

cried Santa, and he climbed into his little sleigh, and as he picked up his reins he called out, "Good night, Dick, and a right merry Christmas to you!" And then, as he noted the look of dismay on Dick's face, beaded brightly—"I knew you from the first my boy, but you believe in Santa Claus, now, don't you? so it's all right. When you look in your stocking in the morning you won't be disappointed." And with that he chirruped to his horse, and in a moment was out of sight down the road, though the tinkling of the sleighbells was audible for a long time after.

The next thing Dick knew he was being roughly shaken by the shoulder and his father's voice was saying in his ear—"What are you snoozing here for? You ought to have been in bed long ago. It's almost time for Santa Claus to come."

"He's been here already and he came in such a dear little sleigh," murmured Dick sleepily, as he crawled up stairs to bed.—New York Herald.

NOTES OF INTEREST.

Last year Canada produced 17,951,421 lbs. copper, valued at \$2,159,556; gold valued at \$13,700,000; 58,161 tons iron ore, valued at \$152,510; 31,915,690 lbs. nickel, valued at \$1,820,838; 4,434,085 ozs. silver, valued at \$2,583,289; the total value of the metallic minerals being \$21,622,601.

One of the most important divisions of the English forces at present in South Africa, is that led by Sir C. F. Clery. General Clery is a Catholic and a Corkman, the member of a family which has been eminent in Munster commerce for a couple of generations.

The late Vice-President Hobart, left \$5,000 to each of the Catholic charitable institutions of Paterson, New Jersey.

Dr. Edward McGlynn, who has been at the point of death from typhoid fever, is on the road to recovery.

Ten thousand plum puddings have been sent from England to the British Army in South Africa.

The custom house returns for November show a total trade at that port of \$15,293,581, an increase of \$875,000 over November of 1898.

"Innominate" the *Renaud* correspondent of the *New York Sun* says: The Czar of Russia has now taken a final decision, the religious and diplomatic importance of which can be misunderstood by no one; it is to allow the establishment at St. Petersburg of an extraordinary Papal mission.

The will of the late Michael Kane, of Alameda, makes the following charitable bequests:

To St. Vincent Orphan Asylum for Boys, at San Rafael, \$500; St. Joseph's Catholic Infant Asylum, South San Francisco, \$500; Youth Directory, \$250; governing priest or officer of St. Ignatius' Church, San Francisco, \$250, for the benefit of said

church; pastor of Catholic Church, Alameda, \$250; to Most Rev. Patrick W. Riordan, Archbishop of San Francisco, a lot 40 x 20 1/2 on Santa Clara avenue, near Prospect street, Alameda, to build a church thereon in such a manner and at such time as convenient. The residue of the estate goes to the five children of the testator, share and share alike.

A story comes from Fort Benton, Montana, which has been published in a number of newspapers, that a petrified body has been found in the mud of the Missouri river near Fort Benton, and it is claimed that the alleged fossil is the transmuted remains of General Thomas Francis Meagher, who was drowned near there in 1867.

The College of St. Francis Xavier New York City, has placed at the disposal of every pastor in that city one free scholarship.

Bishop McDonnell of the Brooklyn diocese has created a new church office by appointing the Rev. Dr. White as commissioner of Catholic Charities.

Robert Louis Stevenson's step-daughter is a Catholic, and the bishop of Sydney declares that the bishop, had not death intervened, would have been a Catholic to-day.

Bishop Hennessy, of Wichita, Kan., while in Montreal, made arrangements with the Basilian Fathers whereby they will open a college for young men in his episcopal city.

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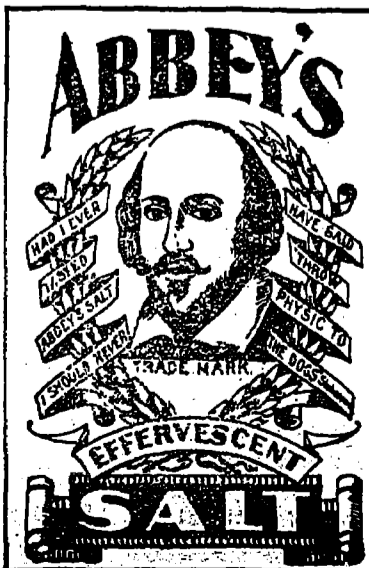
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- Embroidery Scissors, mounted sterling silver, \$1.00.
- Shoe Horns, mounted sterling silver, 35c, 50c, \$1.00, \$1.75.
- Hat Brush, mounted sterling silver, 65c, \$1.25, \$2.00, \$2.75.
- Vaseline Jars, mounted sterling silver, 40c, 60c, 75c, \$1.25.
- Puff Jars, \$1.25, \$3.00, \$3.50, \$4.00.
- Smelling Salts, 40c, \$1.50, \$1.75.
- Mirrors, sterling silver, \$6.00, \$7.50, \$8.00, \$9.00.
- Hair Combs, mounted sterling silver, 60c, \$1.00, \$1.35.
- Thimbles, sterling silver, 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1.00.
- Manicure Sets, sterling silver, in cases, \$7.00, \$8.50, \$12.00.
- Leather Purses, to carry on 2 fingers (at est style), \$1.25, \$2.75, \$3.50.
- Leather Purses, 75c, \$1.50, \$1.75, \$2.75, \$3.50, \$5.00.
- Leather Purses (silver mounted), 75c, \$1.50, \$2.50, \$3.50, \$4.50, \$6.00.
- Leather Travelling Cases, containing eight pieces, \$4; containing 11 pieces, \$5; containing 15 pieces, \$12.

FOR A GENTLEMAN.

- Hat Brush, mounted sterling silver, \$2.50.
- Clothes Brush, mounted sterling silver, \$3.50, \$4.00.
- Hair Brushes (Military), \$5.50 per pair.
- Cigar Cutters, sterling silver, \$1, \$2.75, \$3.50.
- Match Boxes, sterling silver, \$2, \$2.50, \$4.50.
- Ebony Military Brushes (per pair), \$3, \$3.75.
- Ebony Military Brushes, in leather case, \$5.
- Silver Mounted Walking Sticks, \$1.50, \$2.25, \$3, \$4.50.
- Silver Mounted Walking Sticks, real ivory handles, \$4, \$6.50, \$9.
- Leather Cigarette Cases, \$1, 1.50, 1.75, 3, 4.
- Leather Cigar Cases, \$1, 2, 3, 4.50, 6.50.
- Leather Wallets, \$1, 1.75, 3, 4.25.
- Leather Bill Holders, \$1.25, 2.00.
- Leather Travelling Cases, containing 6 pieces, \$3.75; containing 8 pieces, \$6; containing 12 pieces, \$9; containing 18 pieces, \$15.
- Sterling Silver Pencil Cases, 75c, \$1, 1.50, 2.50, 3.50.
- Rolled Gold Pencil Cases, \$1.25, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00.
- English Pocket Flasks, \$1, 2, 3.50, 5, 8.50, 15.00.

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