

AN INTERVIEW WITH SANTA CLAUS.

"WHAT SHALL WE GIVE THEM FOR CHRISTMAS?"

The editor sat with his head on his hand regarding in deep thought a huge pile of newly opened letters on the desk before him. "What won't they ask next," he groaned. "You would think that each mother and father and grandmother knew their own boys and girls well enough; the aunts and uncles their nephews and nieces; and the boys and girls their own fathers and mothers, and sisters and cousins and aunts to answer for themselves such a simple question, but here they are all asking one poor editor, who has never seen one of them, for ideas to suit them all. However, sitting here sighing will never answer my questions and that is my work at present. Answer them I must. But how?"

Rising he opened the long window to let a breath of the frosty night air sweep into and freshen his somewhat musty, dusty little den, and behold a magnificent aurora lit the northern sky with a blaze of glory. A bright thought flashed into his tired brain.

"If I could only enquire of Santa Claus himself," he mused.

"Well, why don't you," answered a queer merry voice as from the telephone by his side.

"Why don't I," he replied, springing to the instrument from sheer force of habit, "why he won't be along here for weeks yet, and then it will be too late to get his answer into the Christmas Number."

"Don't wait for that," he heard again through the receiver which was now at his ear, "go now to headquarters."

"Headquarters!" he groaned "verily my friend, there are a few things out of the reach of the all-knowing editor, though you may not realize it. Even if I were to undertake a balloon expedition to his workshop at the north pole I could not get his answer to all my subscribers in time."

The voice in the telephone was silent for a while and then continued again more low. "There is a way, but I hardly know if he would—yes, I think he possibly might not object,—it is only used by him and his messengers when the rein deer are overworked, or by mortals in cases of emergency—still I think he would be willing this time."

"Won't you please explain," said the now rather excited man to the unknown, "Who are you and what are you talking about?"

"O, did I not tell you," replied the voice, "it's the Aurora Special Express which I notice is running to-night and making extra good time, I fancy, if one may judge by the blaze of the headlight which is coming nearer and nearer."

"Well, but," exclaimed the now thoroughly astonished man breathlessly, "how is that going to do me any good, and won't you tell me who you are please?"

"Never mind who I am now," returned the voice briskly, "I haven't time to tell you, but come to the window again and I will help you aboard before I leave."

As he was bidden, the bewildered man went again to the window and as he stepped outside he saw that now the aurora had filled the heavens with a light almost equal to the day, and some of the long rays slanted down to the very window where he stood.

"Here, give me your hand and jump aboard, quick," cried a voice, though no one was visible and, lo! he was lifted in the air, and borne through a blinding light, whither he knew not, and presto! before he had time to breathe again, he was in a glittering cave in the heart of a great crystal iceberg, and standing before the genial, fur-clad form of the great Saint Nicholas himself.

"Glad to see you, my friend," said the Saint, as he shook him warmly by the hand, "what can I do for you? But be quick please, for I am very busy and shall have hard work to get through before the twenty-fifth."

"What is good for Christmas presents for all classes and conditions of people, old, and young, rich and poor?" queried the edi-

tor, now come to his senses, and determined to be true to his record and not to be outdone by any one in brevity at least.

"H'm,—for all classes? My dear fellow that is easy enough—BOOKS."

"Yes, sire, so I have always thought, but it is so hard to choose."

"What is your occupation?" said the Saint, with an apparent sudden changing of the subject.

"I am an editor," said the visitor wonderingly.

"Would it help you out of your difficulty any," said St. Nicholas with a merry twinkle in his eye "if I were to tell you that I often distribute papers too?"

"Do you?" said the editor, with more animation, for the subject of increasing circulation was never far absent from his mind "what kind of papers?"

"Good ones!" was the somewhat short reply.

"Yes, of course," replied the editor, "but what sort of good?"

"Well, to come down to particulars, what is your paper?"

"The Northern Messenger."

"Oh, well, I have carried that around very often."

"Have you?" said the editor, with a pleased smile on his face. "And do you always take the same papers to the same persons every year?"

"Not by any means. If I come across one better than the one I took last year I take it and give the other up."

"And what if the one you took last year is still better this?"

"Give it again, and to many others too."

"In that case might I rely—"

"Can hardly tell yet," interrupted the saint cautiously, "until I see what you propose doing next year. Can you show me—say—your Christmas Number? In papers I usually go by that."

"Not complete," said the editor, "but we have just got our prospectus out giving our Premium List for 1888, and have got the proofs of the individual pages, but I cannot show you the complete paper yet," and he took a long roll from his pocket and spread out the loose sheets.

"Never mind, I can form a fair idea from these, I think. I am not an editor, of course, but then I know a little about everything, you know. Let me see," he mused to himself; "well, really, this seems to be a genuine Christmas number. This carol now will do nicely, especially for Sunday-schools. And I like all the pictures too."

"But do you know that what takes my attention as much as anything is that full-page portrait of myself. Do you know some of the superior young people of this advanced 19th century are actually having the assurance to whisper to one another that I am all a myth. Dear me! children in the good old times were not so wise. I really do like to give them what they most want, as far as I can, and of all the presents I distribute none afford me more satisfaction than good books and papers, and I don't know but I shall be glad to include yours again this year. Now, if you only had some good books for them too."

"You have not seen this sheet yet, sir," replied the Editor. "Here is a statement of what we propose doing in that line."

"What is this? A premium list? I don't think I am familiar with that—let me see—oh yes, books as premiums for new subscribers. Why that is a good idea! 'Not new' you say? So much the better. If the boys and girls are slightly familiar with it they will take it up all the more readily and I think I may fairly promise you this, that if the boys and girls will only work with me, let me know if they want it, and which of their friends they would like should have it it will go into a great many homes where it has never been before."

"Thank you very much," replied the Editor, "my object in preparing that Premium List was to make it easy and profitable for them to give the rest of their friends pleasure."

"All right then," said the saint as he rose to end the interview. "I like to distribute good papers, for while books teach my children through the past, papers educate them through the present as books cannot do, and in reading the news of to-day the history of yesterday is learned never to be forgotten."

Saying this, and with a hearty grip of the hand, he waved a farewell, and turned to superintend the loading of one corner of his capacious sleigh with the Christmas boxes

already filled. And the Editor as he reached the outside of the iceberg, intending to look around a little and make a few notes as to the appearance and inhabitants of this strange land of the north, found himself suddenly whisked into the air, before he had had time to see anything but the glittering walls of the berg from whence he had just come, and shot down a blazing pathway of light, and in less time than it takes him now to tell it, he was seated in his dusty sanctum shivering with the cold (for he had forgotten to shut the window when he left) and writing without loss of time to his subscribers Santa Claus' answer to their questions.

And what he would like to know now, while he begs the printer to leave him just a line to wish all his friends old and new a Merry Merry Christmas, is HOW MANY OF THEM THIS YEAR ARE GOING TO HELP SANTA CLAUS.

Question Corner.—No. 23.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Where was it prophesied that Christ should be born in Bethlehem?
2. What prophecy was fulfilled when Herod put the young children in Bethlehem to death?
3. What prophecy was fulfilled when Joseph and Mary fled with the Christ child to Egypt?
4. What prophecy was fulfilled when the angel said to the shepherds "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all people?"

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS IN LAST NUMBER.

SCRIPTURE CHARACTER.

Barzillai.

- 1, 2, and 3. 2 Sam. xvii. 27-29.
- 4 and 5. 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35.
6. 2 Sam. v. 37.
7. 1 Kings ii. 7.

CORRECT ANSWERS RECEIVED.

Correct answers have been received from Annie J. McEllan, Eliza J. Main, Hannah E. Greene and John C. Elliot.

THE WEEKLY WITNESS.

The *Weekly Witness* has now a regular circulation of over 34,000 copies. This year an effort is being made to increase that number. It contains all the news nicely condensed, the markets, good stories, a very valuable Question and Answer department, including medical, horticultural, veterinary legal, agricultural, and poultry and pets departments under the charge of recognized authorities. The answer to one question alone is often worth many times the cost of the paper for a year. The price of the *Weekly Witness* is ONE DOLLAR. For twenty-five cents a grand picture in oil colors is sent. It is entitled "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Competent judges who have seen it say it is well worthy a position in every home. His Excellency the Governor General on receiving a copy sent this letter:

CITADEL, Quebec, 1st Oct. 1887.

GENTLEMEN,—

I am desired by His Excellency, the Governor-General, to acknowledge and thank you for the handsome picture which you were good enough to send to him on the 21st ult.

Lord Lansdowne is very glad to have it in his possession.

I am, gentlemen, your obt. servt.,

HENRY SCREAFIELD, Capt.

Gov.-Gen.-Sec.

Messrs. John Dougall & Son, 321 St. James street, Montreal.

Address your orders to John Dougall & Son, Montreal, P.Q.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Our subscribers throughout the United States who cannot procure the international Post Office orders at their Post Office, can get, instead, a Post Office order, payable at Rouse's Point, N. Y., which will prevent much inconvenience both to ourselves and to subscribers.

TWICE ONE IS TWO,

and twice 45,000 subscribers to the *Messenger* is 90,000. If each subscriber obtains one more the total will be 90,000.

And don't forget to mention to your friends when they subscribe that a new outfit of type has been secured, and that when the *Northern Messenger* carries abroad its New Year's Greetings it will appear before them, as befits the auspicious occasion, in an entirely new dress.

ONE DOLLAR A HUNDRED.

One dollar a hundred is the price for which this special Christmas number of the *Northern Messenger* will be sold. It recommends itself as a pleasure giving little paper and those who want to give pleasure to others might do worse than send parcels. There are many Sunday-schools to which this number would be a welcome Christmas gift, and a dollar or half a dollar spent in their service would reap its reward.

CLUB RATES.

THE CLUB RATES for the "MESSENGER," when sent to one address, are as follows:—

1 copy,	- - - -	30 cents
10 copies	- - - -	\$ 2 50
25 copies	- - - -	6 00
50 copies	- - - -	11 50
100 copies	- - - -	22 00
1,000 copies	- - - -	200 00

JOHN DOUGALL & SON, Publishers, Montreal.

MONTREAL DAILY WITNESS, \$3.00 a year, post-paid. MONTREAL WEEKLY WITNESS \$1.00 a year, post-paid. WEEKLY MESSENGER, 50 cents; 5 copies to one address, \$2.00. JOHN DOUGALL & SON, Publishers, Montreal, Que.

ONE YEAR FREE!

THE "NORTHERN MESSENGER"

WILL BE FORWARDED

ONE YEAR FREE

For Five New Subscribers at 30c each.

90 LOVELY SCRAP PICTURES.—Agents' Canvasing Outfit Cards and Novelties, with private terms. Also, 25 large Rich Embossed Motto and Verse Chromos. Your name on each for only 10c silver. Address EUREKA CARD CO. Bolton, Que.

YOUR

MAME neatly printed on 25 New Floral HIDDEN NAME CARDS, and 32c Book of Agent's Samples sent post-paid for 30 cents. RAY CARD CO., Clintonville, Conn

DEAR LITTLE BABIES,

how we all love you. What a pity some mothers of delicate constitution are unwise enough to attempt to suckle their own children, instead of using Lactogen Food, which contains the same constituents as the milk of a healthy mother. It also furnishes perfect nutrition to invalids.

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING. EPPS'S COCOA. BREAKFAST.

"By a thorough knowledge of the natural laws which govern the operations of digestion and nutrition, and by a careful application of the fine properties of well-selected Cocoa, Mr. Epps has provided our breakfast tables with a delicately flavored beverage which may save us many heavy doctors' bills. It is by the judicious use of such articles of diet that a constitution may be gradually built up until strong enough to resist every tendency to disease. Hundreds of subtle maladies are floating around us ready to attack wherever there is a weak point. We may escape many a fatal snare by keeping ourselves well fortified with pure blood and a properly nourished frame."—*Civil Service Gazette*.

Made simply with boiling water or milk. Sold only in packets by grocers, labelled thus: JAMES EPPS & CO., Homoeopathic Chemists, London, England. SOLE AGENT FOR CANADA: C. E. COLSON, Montreal.



75 Cent saws of Beech have been sawed by one man in nine hours. Hundreds have saved 5 and 6 cents daily. "Exactly" what every Farmer and Wood Chopper wants. First order from your vicinity secures the Agency. No Duty to pay, we manufacture in Canada. Write for Illustrated Catalogue sent FREE to all. Address: POLYING SAWING MACHINE CO., 308 to 311 S. Canal St., Chicago, Ill.

THE NORTHERN MESSENGER is printed and published every fortnight at Nos. 321 and 323 St. James street, Montreal, by John Dougall & Son, composed of John Redpath Dougall, of Montreal, and James Duncan Dougall, of New York.