

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

It is a pretty German custom, which is being more and more introduced into this country, that of having a Christmas Tree. It is an evergreen, pine or spruce, planted in a tub or pail, on whose branches are hung the presents for the little folk. It is lit up with a number of wax tapers, which make it look quite fairy-like at night. The children in the picture, I dare say, think that never was there so beautiful a tree, or one with such beautiful fruit as that shown in the cut. We see Noah's arks and dolls, and toys and presents of all sorts, besides those which they have already plucked from its branches. I hope my little friends will all have lots of good things on their Christmas Tree, or in their stockings, or wherever good Santa Claus pleases to put them, and don't forget to hang up the baby's stocking, too. And now, God bless you all and give you the happiest Christmas and New Year that ever you have known.

## THE REAL SANTA CLAUS.

E. RYERSON YOUNG, JR.

Early Christmas morning James and Edward knocked at the door of their sisters' room and shouted:

"Merry Christmas, Mary! Merry Christmas, Flossie! Come, let's go down and see what Santa Claus has put into our stockings."

These stockings were hung up in the dining-room downstairs. In this room there was a big wood-stove, which was lit only on very cold days. Father and mother had said that as there was no fire in it, Santa Claus would choose that way to come into the house.

So the boys and girls had arranged their chairs around that stove, and on them had hung their stockings. To save Santa Claus trouble, Edward had opened the stove door.

The girls quickly joined their brothers, and they went down together to see what Santa had brought them. Edward and Flossie made a run in the dark for their chairs and stockings, while James and Mary got a lamp, and after lighting it,

carefully placed it on the table. Edward soon had his mouth full of candies and raisins, and was riding a big, handsome rocking-horse. He had also received a bright red sled, and this he had in front of him on the rocking-horse. Flossie had a piece of candy in one hand, in the arm of which she held a doll, and was fixing up a doll's carriage with the other hand. Mary was rejoicing in her gifts of a ruff and a pair of gauntlets of real fur, just what she had sent to Santa Claus for. James was also in glee be-

"Oh, but he's a little man and a fairy."

"There's some soot on one of the handles of my doll's carriage," said Flossie. James carefully examined this evidence. Sure enough there was a scrape at the edge of the handle, and some soot. This somewhat shook his unbelief.

Edward became interested in the question, and investigated the stove for evidence.

"Yes, he did," he shouted. "Santa Claus did come down through the stove. See! Here's some bits of broken candy he dropped in the ashes." His little head was in the stove door, and his fingers were in the ashes.

"And here's a toy that was scraped off his pack," he called out from inside the stove.

James looked at the candies, which Edward had found, and also the toy. He was greatly puzzled. Santa Claus might be real after all. He was still doubtful, but he said:

"Well, I'm going to show my presents to mother, and I'll ask her."

"I'll show mamma all my presents, and papa, too," added Flossie, gathering up her things and crowding them into her doll's carriage.

"And so will I," said Mary.

"And so will I," said Edward.

So, in the dawning light of Christmas morning, the happy four, loaded with their Christmas gifts, burst into the bedroom of their parents.

After the first happy greetings of "Merry Christmas," James nestled up to his mother's side and told her of his doubts. His mother drew her boy's dark, curly head to

herself. She slipped her arm around his neck, and printed a kiss upon his brow. Then she said:

"The best way for you to settle your doubt is to be a Santa Claus yourself. Any one who will do a kind act, who will make somebody happy, and yet not let the person who is blessed know who did the kind deed, is a real Santa Claus."

A merry Christmas to all our readers.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

cause he was the recipient of a pair of nickel-plated steel skates. After examining their own gifts, they began showing them to each other. Edward was not satisfied until he had given Flossie a ride on his rocking-horse. James, however, threw a bomb-shell upon their fun by saying:

"I don't believe in Santa Claus. He couldn't bring Edward's rocking-horse and Flossie's carriage down the chimney and through that stovepipe."