

He was standing quite still. I felt he was waiting for me, so I went straight to him and I knelt down before him. I don't know what made me. I suppose I had some notion about kneeling to a saint.

"Please, Santa Claus, I'm truly and really sorry. I'll call you next Christmas; indeed, I will," I said. And I almost sobbed, I felt so ashamed, for I saw just the things I wished for on that tree—a pair of skates and a doll's carriage.

"The old man had a long, white beard and did not speak very clearly. Papa said afterward he supposed he talked German. But he put his hands on my head and said: 'Be true and brave, little one!' And when I looked up he was gone. I ran and called the others. Mamma brought you at once; but papa did not come for quite a long time, and I was afraid he would not see my wonderful tree before the lights were put out."

"Oh! wasn't it just lovely!" sighed Lily. "And you believe in Santa Claus now, Mary; don't you? Katy Dermott says she doesn't."

"Yes, I believe in the dear old saint. You see what he'll do for you, darling. Perhaps he's met mamma on her way home."

The elder sister tried to speak confidently; but how her faith faltered and hope died as she realized that the next day would be Christmas Eve, and there was not an extra dime to buy a present for the sick child. But she would not enlighten the little one. There was time yet. Could not she herself do something to earn a present for Lily?

Mrs. Hartley came in just as Lily, soothed by the story and the hope of a visit from Santa Claus, had fallen asleep.

The mother had been teaching music and had taken home some fine sewing, that she had finished that day; but there was no good news. The lady had not left the money for her. She was to call again.

"Let me go this evening, mother, dear, just this once."

"Alone, at night, Mary?"

"Oh! it is Christmas time and every one is so kind. I will keep in the brightly lighted streets. Do, mother, and then we can get Lily a present to-morrow."

"Well, child, go, if you will. She might go out to-morrow, and then all chance would be gone."

So Mary was off, a secret purpose, formed to guard against any further disappointment, making her heart beat loud with fear and nervousness.

"It is for Lily. I must be her Santa Claus, as dear papa would be, if he were here. O God, help me! Help me to be brave."

She walked rapidly on to the row of elegant houses where she was to call. She knew them well. How pleasant and home-like the second one looked, with children romping in the parlour! Now she walked slowly, trying to decide. Which should it be? The house where the children were or that next one? That was almost dark, but for the glow from the grate-fire, which shone through the window. A man was sitting looking at the fire. Would he care to hear

"Carol, brothers, carol!"

The girl was startled at her own voice, it sounded so loud. What if some man should come up the stoop

and speak to her! But she was singing for Lily; she must be brave.

Inside, Mr. Linn sat thinking of the past, wishing he could live it over again; the days when he was a poor boy and had to work hard to "earn money for Christmas." Now there was money, but where was the delight that a half dollar gave him forty years back?

Ah! if their little one had only lived! That baby that had only seen three Christmas nights! Hark! Some one is singing outside—the very carol baby had learned to sing in baby fashion the last Christmas she was with them:

"At the merry table,  
Think of those who've none."

What a sweet, clear voice for a street-singer, and what expression! There were tears in that voice. He would listen at the door.

The front door was open, the singing suddenly ceased, and Mary Hartley stood trembling, almost fainting before Mr. Linn.

"Why, bless my soul! A girl! A—young lady, I really believe! Come in, my dear, come in. I want you to sing again. I will call my wife."

"Here's a child for Christmas, at any rate," he muttered, as he pulled Mary into the warm parlour and hurried off for his kind old wife. She trotted down, full of sympathy and interest; but Mr. Linn would have no questions asked until Mary had finished her carol. It was the truest kindness, making the young girl feel she had something to do.

"That was just lovely!" said Mrs. Linn, "and you were very good to sing it. But you must not sing in the street. It is bad for the voice and not safe, my dear. You don't think it so, do you, father?"

"No, indeed; but this girl's voice has not been used in the street before, I'll venture to say. Why, bless my soul, mother, she's fainting."

In a moment Mary's wraps were loosened, she was laid on the sofa, the good couple noting the little refinements of dress which betokened a lady's daughter, even though so poor, and her story was listened to with tender sympathy.

"So that Lily might believe in Santa Claus! My dear, you are a perfect godsend. I don't mean it irreverently. I'm just aching to be Santa Claus myself. Now, keep your secret. Go straight home and tell Lily that Santa Claus is surely coming."

The old people would not hear of Mary walking home. She must go in a cab, at least, to the corner of her block. So, while Mary called three doors off for her mother's money, Mr. Linn found a cab and stood ready to take her home on her return to their house. Mary was in haste to be off, lest mamma might worry.

It was hard work to keep her secret; but not at all hard to keep alive the spark of hope which burned in Lily's heart that Santa Claus might visit their little home. The child would believe in Santa Claus, in spite of all, and now Mary, to her mother's great astonishment, was firm in her belief.

"Your dear father would be satisfied with you now; but I fear you will be grievously disappointed," she said to Mary.

"Oh! wait and see," was all Mary's answer.

It was nine o'clock on Christmas Eve when a knock came at the Hartley's door. Lily was up and dressed, and Mary persuaded her to open the door.

"May! mamma! He's come! It's Santa Claus himself. Oh! did you know papa is gone and we have so little? Oh! you dear, good Santa Claus!" cried Lily, dragging in a portly old gentleman, who fairly staggered under a load of bundles and baskets, while some things were laid at his feet.

Mary, laughing heartily, pulled in a box of groceries. Santa Claus dropped his bundles and parcels and hurried off; but he said to Lily, in very good English:

"I must be off, my dear!" There were presents of all kinds. Dresses, or, rather, stuff for dresses, a shawl, gloves, books, groceries, fruit, turkey, pies, and a note for Mary. This said:

"We want so much to have a real Christmas that we must have you all at our house for Christmas dinner. Tell Lily I'm a half-brother of Santa Claus, and that he asked me to invite you all.

"Very respectfully,  
"GEORGE LINN-CLAUS."

When Lily heard of an invitation to visit Santa Claus' half-brother, she fairly screamed with delight and thought wonders would never end. Mrs. Hartley had to be told the truth, but for a long time Lily fully believed that (though it was not generally known) Mr. Linn, their kind, devoted friend, was actually Santa Claus' half-brother.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

"CHRISTMAS is coming!" the children cry,  
Clouding the weeks that are hurrying by;  
Dear little children, who live at home,  
And do not guess what it is to roam  
From morn to night, with stockingless feet,  
Up and down through the ice and sleet.

"Christmas is coming!" thinks little Tim;  
But what can the Christmas do for him?  
His home is a cellar, his daily bread  
The crumbs that remain when the rich are fed,  
No mother to kiss him when the day is done;  
No place to be glad in under the sun.

That wonderful old fellow, old "Santa Claus,"  
Who never is idle a moment, because  
He is kept so busy with piling the toys  
Into the stockings of girls and boys,  
No wonder he sometimes forgets, you know,  
Into the homes of the poor to go.

But, dear little children, you understand  
That the rich and the poor all over the land  
Have one dear Father, who watches you,  
And grieves or smiles at the things you do.  
And some of His children are poor and sad,  
And some are always merry and glad.

Christmas will bring to you many joys—  
Food and plenty, frolic and toys;  
Christmas to some will bring nothing at all;  
In place of laughter the tears will fall.  
Poor little Tim to your door may come;  
Your blessings are many—spare him some.

The Christmas bells will sweetly ring  
The songs that the angels love to sing,  
The song that came with the Saviour's birth,  
"Peace, good will, and love on earth."  
Dear little children, ring, I pray,  
Sweet bells in some lonely heart that day.

A GREENHORN went to a menagerie to examine the wild beasts. Some gentlemen present expressed the opinion that the orang-outang was a lower order of the human species. Hodge did not like the idea, and expressed his contempt for it thus: "Pooh! he's no more human species than I be!"

ADVENT SONG

DOWN through the vanished ages,  
Along the shores of time,  
We hear "the old, old story,  
Like some melodious chime,  
Millions of silent voices,  
Have sung the glorious hymn,  
Glad eyes have caught its rapture  
Whose light in death is dim.

The old the grand old story,  
Of our dear Saviour's birth,  
The light, divine and holy,  
Which cheered the darkened earth  
Jesus, enshrined in glory,  
Oh! fair and wondrous child,  
Upon whose infant brow  
The earth and heaven smiled.

To-day we stand with shepherds,  
Beneath Judea's skies,  
We hear from angel voices  
Triumphant strains arise.  
We watch the star whose beauty,  
Doth guide us onward—where  
With deepest awe and wonder—  
We find Messiah there.

Within a lovely manger,  
Is cradled his dear head  
In poverty and suffering  
His infant tears were shed:  
Oh earth! is this the welcome  
To your Redeemer given!  
Is this your royal greeting,  
Christ, the King of Heaven!

"GIRLS" AND "YOUNG LADIES."

BENJAMIN F. TAYLOR, the poet, has written a letter to a young girl at the Lowville (N. Y.) Academy, in which he mixes up poetry and good advice in equal doses most charmingly. What Mr. Taylor says will bear repetition.

I call you a girl, but it is not the fashion any more. The girls are gone, and there is nobody left but young ladies. I like girls best. There used to be a flock of Carolines in Lowville, and as fair a flock as ever wore muslin. There were Caroline Collins, Caroline Northup, Caroline Davan, and ever so many more. There were Cornelias, Janes, Elizabeths, Marys and Paulinas. They were all girls, and they never scorned the title. Now they would be Carries, and Nellies, Lizzies, Mamies, Jennies and Cornies, and young ladies withal, every daughter of them. Let us not end our names in "ie." Let us not forget that affecation is the art of being a fool according to rule. Let us learn to work worsted cats of impossible pink, if we must, but let us know how to make Indian pudding and a golden loaf of corn bread as well. Let us all talk French if we can, but let us avoid "slang" as we would pestilence and famine. Pure and undefiled English never sounds so musically as it does from the unadulterated lips of a genuine girl. Let us learn the exquisite art of keeping young. You read of Roman rules. I think I have heard Tyre, Tadmore and Thebes mentioned once or twice, but there is nothing so ancient in all this world as an old dilapidated heart. It is everybody's duty, especially every girl's, to keep young. Now to you and your classmates:

Dear girls, I pray you read the Book of Ruth,  
That old love story, beautiful as truth;  
Of one who lives in everlasting youth,  
And say with her to Truth, "Forever true."  
"Thy God my God, and thy people mine!"  
So shall you keep in loving step with time,  
And life's sweet cadence prove a perfect rhyme,  
And when at last the song is done,  
And level shines the dying sun,  
Another dawn will show its early light,  
And bid "good morn," though you have said  
"good night."