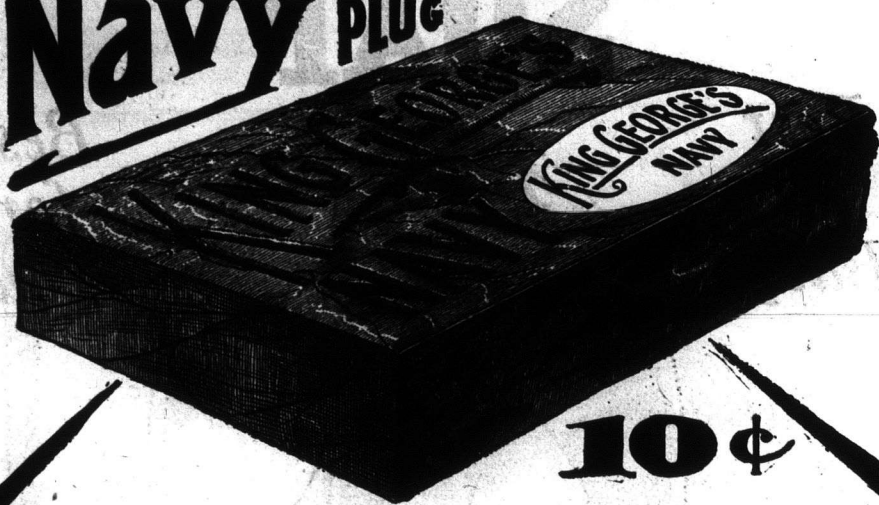


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How the Toys Looked for Father Christmas

By Murray Fisher.

IT was Christmas Eve.

The toys all sat on the floor in a large circle, and waited for Father Christmas. And while they waited they played "hunt the slipper" with the Wax Doll's shoe.

The clock downstairs struck twelve, and the White Monkey caught the slipper and gave it back to the Wax Doll with a smile. The Wax Doll did not smile. She was cross about them playing with her shoe, so she didn't even say "Thank you," which was rude of her.

"If you go on letting these children bump you about on the floor," said the Prancing Carthorse, "your nose will be as flat as a pancake."

The Wax Doll tossed her golden hair and stared at the ceiling.

She did not like people talking about her nose, because it used to be so beautiful, and she was new only last year.

"Be quiet," said the Jack-in-the-box sharply; "he will be here in a minute."

The Wax Doll and the Prancing Carthorse stopped immediately.

Most people obeyed the Jack-in-the-box, because if they didn't he used to throw things at them, and the kind of things he threw were generally hard.

So they all went on waiting for Father Christmas to come.

"I'm sure he is very late," said the White Monkey thoughtfully. "And I

Presently they met a Policeman who was nearly asleep, because he was tired; and the Jack-in-the-box asked him if he happened to be Father Christmas. But the Policeman looked very frightened, because he thought that he was dreaming, and he kept on rubbing his eyes and saying, "Oh! I never did! Lawks a mercy!" until the Jack-in-the-box got so cross that he called him a stupid idiot and went on.

The Wax Doll looked back, and the Policeman was holding up three fingers in front of him and saying "Two." She could not make out what he was doing it for, so she looked back again. And the Policeman was still holding up some of his fingers in front of his face and guessing how many there were; but he always guessed wrong.

So they still went on; but they couldn't see Father Christmas anywhere, and the Wax Doll began to cry because she was getting tired, and the snow made her feet wet. But the Jack-in-the-box went on asking everybody they met if they were Father Christmas, and they all looked very frightened and said they were not.

At last they met a Little White Fluffy Dog, and the Jack-in-the-box smiled and rubbed his hands, because he thought he had found Father Christmas at last. So he stopped and asked the Little White Fluffy Dog if he happened to be Father Christmas.

Now the Little White Fluffy Dog was rather a bad kind of dog, so he said that he was, and wondered whatever would happen next.



"The Wax Doll Tossed Her Golden Hair."

wonder what he is like! You can't see much of him when he is putting you down a long stocking."

The Jack-in-the-box stared angrily at the White Monkey, and began to look round for something to throw at him.

The White Monkey left off hurriedly and looked nervous.

"Silence!" said the Jack-in-the-box severely.

But still Father Christmas did not come, and presently the clock downstairs struck the half-hour.

The Jack-in-the-box got up and shook himself.

"It is no good waiting any longer," he said. "Something must be done."

"But what?" asked all the toys.

The Jack-in-the-box got up and shook and began to think. Presently he jumped up again. "Someone must go and look for him," he said.

The toys did not like the idea, but they didn't say so to the Jack-in-the-box.

"I shall go and look for him," he went on decidedly. "And the Wax Doll shall come too."

This made the Wax Doll jump and turn pale because she did not want to go out into the cold white snow and look for anybody and she said so.

But the Jack-in-the-box was very fierce, and he said that if she didn't come he would throw all the little box of red soldiers at her; and the soldiers looked very prickly, so she said she would go.

So they set off down the stairs and out into the cold wet snow. And they walked along hand in hand, because if they had not, the Wax Doll would have run home; and they looked everywhere for Father Christmas, but they could not see him.

And the Jack-in-the-box thought himself very clever at finding Father Christmas, so he shook hands and said that all the others were waiting to see what kinds of new toys he had brought with him for Christmas.

But of course the Little White Fluffy Dog had not brought any kind of toys with him, and he didn't know what to do, so he said, "Shh! Shh!" which made the Wax Doll begin to cry, because he said it in such a frightening way. And the Jack-in-the-box jumped and looked all round him.

Then the Little White Fluffy Dog was very confidential, and said, "I had to disguise myself, because I had an enemy running after me and it made me late. But I will get my toys and come with you." He rather liked pretending to be Father Christmas because it seemed to make the Jack-in-the-box so nice to him.

The Jack-in-the-box wanted to get home, so he said, "Oh, please get your toys and hurry up."

So the Little White Fluffy Dog went round the corner, and he entered a Post Office, and when the postmen were not looking he caught hold of a large parcel and took it back with him to where the Jack-in-the-box was waiting. He did not know at all what was inside, only he hoped it was some kind of toys. So they set off home.

When they got back, all the toys were still waiting for Father Christmas. So the Jack-in-the-box told them how he had found Father Christmas, and how Father Christmas had to disguise himself because of the enemies, and the toys all thought that the Jack-in-the-box was cleverer than ever.