

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

BY AUNT BECKY.



Dear Girls and Boys:

There is no use of me writing to you this week. You are all too excited waiting for Santa Claus and would not take time to read this page, I am sure. I hope his pack will be very heavy, with lots of lovely things stowed away for all my girl and boy readers, not only those who so kindly write me letters, but for all the little folks who take pleasure in reading this page. I appreciate sincerely the kind wishes expressed in the letter in this issue, and beg all my little friends to accept my heartiest wishes for a very very happy Christmas.

Your loving
AUNT BECKY.

Dear Aunt Becky:

I was sorry to see only one letter in the corner. I hope all the cousins will write you for Xmas. I will write and tell you what Santa brings me. I sometimes get lonesome while my sisters are away at school. I have a pretty little black dog, her name is Nip. I have lots of fun with her; sometimes she will jump into bed to play with me. Wishing you a Merry Xmas and a happy New Year. I remain,

Your loving nephew,
JOSEPH.
Granby, Dec. 18, 1905.

Dear Aunt Becky:

Just a few lines to ask you if you will accept me for your niece. I go to school and like it very well. I study English and French grammar, geography, history and arithmetic. My best friends are Katie Keogh and Maggie Casey. I have but two sisters. The eldest, Rosa, is married and lives at St. Michel, and Minnie, a school teacher, resides quite near home. I was received child of Mary on the 8th December, feast of the Immaculate Conception; the reception was very pretty. As this is my first letter I will close wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

LAURA B.
Sherrington, Que., Dec. 19, 1905.

Dear Aunt Becky:

There is no doubt that you must be wondering what has become of your niece from Sherrington. I have been so busy with school studies, and have not many spare minutes to myself. We had a musical and tragical concert the 8th December, feast of the Immaculate Conception, in the town hall, given by the young men of the parish for the profit of the church; it was a success. My brother had a part in the French play, called the Conscrit. I am anxious to try my skates, as are many other boys and girls. I hope Jack Frost will favor us in time this year. I hope Santa

Claus will not forget to fill our stockings at Christmas. I will close for the present, wishing you the compliments of the season.

MAY O'M.
Sherrington, Que., Dec. 19, 1905.

NEAR BETHLEHEM.

The Field of the Shepherd, near Bethlehem, is visited each year by many pilgrims from Russia. Lady Elizabeth Butler, in her "Letters from the Holy Land," mentions seeing some of those pilgrims when she was in Palestine. Her own words will best tell the story.

"A group of some twenty Russian pilgrims arrived as we came to the Field of the Shepherds. We saw them in the grotto of the sheepfold, each holding a lighted taper and responding to the chant of their priest—a man whose head would do admirably for a picture of Abraham. Indeed, the members of our party all called him 'Father Abraham.'"

"The Russians wore fur coats, high, clumsy boots, and heavy caps. One man told us that he had come from Tabor, and had been two years making the journey. He assured us he could manage the return in no time, only ten months or so."

"Their devotion was most edifying, and was entirely devoid of self-consciousness. Great pedestrians as we are, how many Englishmen would walk for two years to visit this sheepfold? (Lady Butler was thinking of her own countrymen, but we fear there are not many Americans who would make a two years' journey on foot to visit the scene where the angels announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds.)"

"After the service for the Russian pilgrims, 'Father Abraham' fell asleep under an olive tree, with his hoary head on a stone which he had cushioned with sack leaves. When he awoke we had a long talk with him about his church. The old patriarch reminded us of the days when the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph journeyed from Nazareth across this very country. He sat on a stone under a large olive tree, and often pointed heavenward as he talked of his faith. Back of him could be seen Bethlehem."

"We had a quiet night in our tents, and the next morning, after we breakfasted, we rode along a track in the field of Boaz, knee-deep in corn, and with minds full of memories of the Bible stories of our childhood."

"Our course lay southeast, as we wished to visit the far-famed Greek monastery Mar Saba, where the monks live lives of extreme penance, even denying themselves the natural beauty of the country."

Lady Herbert, in "Oradde Lande," gives an account of this monastery, which is named after Saint Saba. "At one time," writes Lady Herbert, "there were over 11,000 monks con-

nected with this monastery. Here Saint Jerome came before he settled at Bethlehem, and here Saint John of Damascus ended his life of penance and prayer. The Anchorites, in the early days of the Church, who lived at Mar Saba, spent their days more as angels than as men."

This monastery was destroyed by the Saracens in the twelfth century, but it has been rebuilt and is now occupied by Greek monks. Such places remind us of how Christians love the land where our Lord Jesus dwelt. On the one side of Mar Saba is Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born; on the other side Jerusalem, where He died.

FAIRYLAND GEOGRAPHY.

"Well," cried Peggy Phillips as she ran into the house a few days before Christmas, and flung down her bag of school-books, "thank goodness, there'll be no more geography lessons for nearly two weeks. Just think of it, mother, I'll have almost a whole fortnight without a single thought of that horrid, horrid geography!"

"Don't you like geography, my child?" asked her mother abstractedly, for Mrs. Phillips was checking off her Christmas list, and at that moment was not deeply interested in her daughter's educational tastes.

"Deed I don't!" declared Peggy, "so Mr. Geography, you can just go in there and study yourself for a while," and she threw the offending atlas into a cupboard.

Unimpeded by geography lessons, the days flew swiftly by, and in an incredibly short time it was Christmas eve.

When Peggy's bedtime arrived that eccentric child astonished her parents by begging to be allowed to sit up all night.

"Why, Peggy," exclaimed her mother, "how absurd! Indeed, you can't sit up all night. What put such a thing into your head?"

"I want to see Santa Claus," said Peggy, eyeing her mother's face closely.

"But," said Mr. Phillips, "Santa Claus won't come if there's anyone around. Don't you know, Puss, he always waits until 'not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse'?"

"Yes, father, but I want to sit up and watch for him. If he doesn't come, I'll have to do without presents, that's all, but I want to see what happens."

"You couldn't keep awake," said her mother, "and it's all nonsense, anyway. Go off to bed."

"Please let me," begged Peggy. "Mayn't I, father? I want to, awfully."

"Why, if you want to so much," said Mr. Phillips, after a glance at his wife, "I don't know as there's any law against it. A nice little girl like you ought to have her own way on Christmas eve, if ever."

"Oh, goody! goody!" cried Peggy delighted at having won her cause.

"You can both go to bed, and I'll sit right here by the fireplace and watch my stocking."

So she had her way, and somewhat earlier than their usual hour Mr. and Mrs. Phillips retired, leaving their small daughter curled up in a big puffy arm chair, her bright eyes fixed on a long, lanky stocking that hung from the mantel.

Several times Peggy felt quite sleepy, but she bravely battled against any such foolishness, and opened her eyes quickly and wide whenever she felt their lids drooping. After she had waited a long time, and it seemed as if it must be nearly morning, she thought she heard a slight sound, which seemed to proceed from a funny little old man who stood before her, holding a large square book.

"Who are you?" said Peggy, for as he had no pack on his back she thought he couldn't be the one she waited for.

"Oh, I'm Santa Claus, all right," replied the funny little old man, "but I've come to the conclusion that children should be given what they need rather than what they want; and what you need most is a lesson in geography."

"Oh," exclaimed Peggy, "anything but that!"

But her words seemed to produce no effect on the little old man, who was already drawing up a chair in which to sit by her side.

Having scrambled up into the chair he proceeded to open the big book and rest it on Peggy's lap and his own.

"I don't know much about this earth you live on," began Santa Claus, "but I have here a Geography of Fairyland, and I intend to give you a pretty thorough lesson about that place."

"Oh, do you live in Fairyland?" asked Peggy, her eyes brightening at this sort of geography.

"I didn't say so," replied Santa Claus, who had a teasing twinkle in his eye, "but don't ask questions during lesson time. Just sit still and attend to my lecture."

With this Peggy folded her hands demurely in her lap, and her strange teacher went on:

"Fairyland is a large and beautiful country, which lies just beyond the ends of the earth. It is situated between Wonderland and Nonsense Land, and is divided into many States and Territories. Its climate is perfect. In Fairyland it never rains or snows, and is always bright and sunny."

"Even at night," interrupted Peggy, who was incapable of remaining still for very long.

"Oh, the nights are all Arabian nights," replied her teacher, "and so, of course, they are devoted to storytelling."

"How lovely!" said Peggy.

"After the climatic conditions," Santa Claus went on, "comes the geology of Fairyland. The mines of the country are enormously rich, and precious stones and gems of all sorts are found in their depths. This is fortunate, for many jewels are needed to decorate the crowns and robes of all the Kings and Queens and Princes and Princesses who live there."

"Yes, indeed," said Peggy, greatly interested, "and even their palaces, for Aladdin's wonderful palace is adorned with jewels, isn't it?"

"Yes, and many of the other palaces are, also. And often they are built of beautiful onyx and colored marbles and porphyry and granite—oh, the geology of Fairyland represents untold riches!"

"I'd like to live there," said Peggy.

"Next," said the little old man, frowning over his spectacles like a real professor, "we'll consider the geographical features. These are much like those of your own country: high mountain ranges, rivers, and a great many large forests."

"Yes," said Peggy, "about half the fairy-stories I've read tell about people going through a forest."

"Of living in one," added Santa Claus. "Well, the forests are thickly inhabited. Then there is the great sea, where the ships of the rich merchants sail; and there are also numerous inhabited islands."

"Cruise's, I suppose," said Peggy. "Yes, Robinson Crusoe's, and many others."

"Tell me about the people," said the little girl, who dearly loved stories of adventure.

"Later on we'll talk of the people," said Santa Claus. "You must take your lesson as it is in the book. Next comes vegetation. The flowers of Fairyland are wonderful. They are of such bright colors and of such large size as can be found nowhere else. And, of course, there are many trees, but they are mostly Christmas trees. So many of these are required, you know, to supply the earth each year that Fairyland folks raise whole forests of them. Bean-stalks grow there too, and often attain enormous heights."

"Are there animals?" asked Peggy, who didn't care much for trees.

"Yes, indeed; bears abound, and so do cats. There are also queer beasts that have no name, and are different from any animals you are acquainted with."

"Yes, I know," said Peggy, "like Beauty's Beast, you mean?"

"Yes, like that. And there are dragons, which are fearful monsters, that breathe forth fire and flame. And dear little birds who can talk as well as sing. Oh, the animals in Fairyland would make a fine Zoo."

"Now tell me about the people," begged Peggy.

"Well, the people are a queer race. There are princes and princesses, but there are many poor, but beautiful, men and maidens; then there are ogres and ogresses, and fairies, and gnomes, and dwarfs, and giantesses. There are strange beings called Genii, and there are a lot of wood-choppers, and shepherds and swineherds."

"Add magicians?" cried Peggy, getting excited.

"Yes, magicians, and wizards and witches and all sorts of magic people."

"It's perfectly wonderful," said Peggy.

"The manners and customs are not like your own," said Santa Claus, "the houses are never like this; they're either grand palaces or poor huts. And many of the robbers and dwarfs live in caves."

"Ugh," said Peggy with a shudder, "they're harmless enough," said her visitor, "and often they do kind acts to travellers and wayfarers. Next we'll consider the mode of conveyance. People in Fairyland rarely have carriages, except the royal families and Cinderellas; most of the citizens use magic carpets or seven-league boots to travel in."

"How convenient," said Peggy, "I'd like to live there."

"But you'd get nothing to eat except black bread and porridge. Unless, indeed, you were of the royalty; they have sumptuous feasts served on gold platters."

"What do they know of the arts and sciences?" asked Peggy, whose own geography lessons were haunting her brain.

"Of the industrial arts they practice only farming and spinning," replied Santa Claus, "unless woodchopping can be considered an art. Of the sciences, alchemy and magic are their favorites. And now I'll draw you a map of Fairyland."

Peggy shuddered at the idea of map-drawing, but as she saw the neat careful map grow under Santa Claus's nimble fingers, she began to think map-drawing must be interesting after all, and she leaned forward to see better.

"And would you believe it? Just that leaning forward woke her up, and she found it was morning—Christmas morning—and her stocking hung by the fireplace, crammed as full as it would hold."

"Oh, I've been asleep!" cried Peggy.

"Indeed, you have," said her mother, smiling down at her. "It's queer taste for a little girl to prefer an armchair to her own little white bed."

"Yes," said Peggy, rubbing her eyes, "but I've had such a real dream; and, mother, I think I shall always love my geography lessons after this. I think geography is a very interesting study. And fairyland is a wonderful place; I'd like to live there."

A RAINBOW TRAVELLED.

In southwestern Wisconsin I was living on an east and west ridge of high ground sloping both to the north and south. South of me was farming land, visible as far as three and a half miles. North was timber, also on the east and west was timber for one-fourth mile.

There had been a shower of rain about 4 p.m. in midsummer, and it was still "drizzling" when I went out into the clearing looking south to see about the weather. I noticed just west of me over the timber a

The Bad Cold of To-Day MAY BE PNEUMONIA TO-MORROW.

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full sized rainbow with its north and near me. It seemed strange to see a rainbow at that time of day to westward, so I took particular notice of it, and it seemed to move eastward. I could tell by the color of the foliage on the trees just to westward.

In a few moments the colors appeared on the open ground coming eastward and approaching where I stood, at first about one hundred yards away, then closer and closer, till I saw them (the colors of the rainbow) all about me, and by extending my hand I could see them between my eye and my hand. The same rate of travel being kept up soon put the colors to the east of me, and on they moved to the end of the field, eastward, and there again colored the foliage on the trees to the east, and the circle of the bow appeared smaller as it receded, and after a few moments more it was the usual customary rainbow in the east.—John M. Irmen, in Scientific American.

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

O Lord, there sit apart in lonely places, On this, the gladdest night of all the year, Some stricken ones, with sad and weary faces, To whom the thought of Christmas brings no cheer. For these, O Father, our petition hear;

And send the pitying Christ-child very near!

Lord, there be toiling ones, on whom life's burden Presses so ceaselessly, they have no time To snatch for a brief hour rest's blessed guerdon, Or swell by one faint note our Christmas chime. For these, O Father, our petition hear;

Send thou the lowly Christ-child very near!

And there be tempted souls this night, still Such desperate warfare with all evil powers; Anxious of peace, while the dread strife is raging, Sound but as mockery through their midnight hours. For these, O Father, our petition hear;

And send the tempted, sinless Christ-child near!

O Lord, some sit by lonely hearth stones sobbing, Who feel this night all earthly love denied. Who hear but dirges in the loud bells throbbing, For loved ones lost, who blessed last Christmas-tide. For these, O Father, our petition hear;

And send the loving Christ-child very near!

For those who from disease of body languish; For those who weep for children gone astray; For those whose sore hearts hide in secret anguish, Some grief which shrinks from the clear light of day, For all who suffer, our petition hear, And send Thou Christ, the Comforter, most near!

There is nothing equal to Mother Graves' Worm Exterminator for destroying worms. No article of its kind has given such satisfaction.

My God, said a saintly person, give me each day a little work to occupy my imagination, a little suffering to sanctify my soul, some good work to satisfy my heart.—Golden Sands.

