

SANTA CLAUS MUST STAY

Views of Well-Known People.

Few Fathers or Mothers Would Deprive Their Children of the Joy They Find in the Belief.

Christmas Day is essentially the children's holiday. There is no day of the year so completely given to them, and the customs and usages so typically descriptive of the occasion are thoroughly identified with childhood's hopes and joys.

The Christmas story, letter or verse writer never fails to allude to the stockings which hang beside the hearth, the Christmas tree laden with toys and sweets and glittering with myriad fancy lights which rival the children's eyes as they flash and sparkle with happy anticipation.

In every nation and in all times the legend of Santa Claus has been related to the children. It originated with the Germans, who told the little ones of the kind St. Nicholas, who came with good things for the deserving and a whip of furze for the naughty. The legend of Santa Claus, which in these end-of-the-century days we still tell to the little tot at our knee, is one of the sweetest relics of the old times—one that we can hardly dare associate with the fin de siècle child. What with dancing classes, juvenile parties and good clothes, the children of fashionable people are being carried from our sight by the awful Pied Piper of society. It is possible that the twentieth century child will laugh to scorn the idea of a Santa Claus riding over the roofs in a reindeer sleigh and performing athletic feats in chimneys. There is a strong desire on the part of some people to eradicate Santa Claus fables.

Shall Santa Claus be given up?

A SWEET MEMORY.

"One of the sweetest memories of my childhood," said Mrs. Russell Sage, "is the dawn of Christmas morning, when in nightgown and bare feet I used to steal down the stairs as still as a mouse and go to the fire-place, where my stocking was hung under the mantelpiece. I used to take down my stocking to see what Santa Claus had brought me. I would take the stocking and hug it tight in my arms, then I would stand in front of the stove and look earnestly to see if Santa Claus had left any trace of his coming or dropped any toys in his flight. I shall never forget how I first learned that Santa Claus was a myth and that it was the loving father and mother who filled the stockings. I had been quite ill the day before Christmas and a bed had been made for me on a lounge in the sitting-room so that I might be near my parent's room, which opened out of the room where the stove was. I was restless and wakeful and when my mother filled the stockings I saw her. I said, 'Why does not Santa Claus come? Is the snow too deep?' My mother told me all about it."

"There is so much that is beautiful in the legend of Santa Claus," said Mrs. Platt, wife of ex-Senator Thomas C. Platt, "that I do not see how one could very well bring up one's children not to believe in it. I think it is far sweeter to teach children that a good spirit fills their stockings than it is to have a Christmas tree. I was brought up to believe in Santa Claus and so were my children, and if there is any harm in this innocent deception I fail to see it. I do not believe it ever harmed any one. I hope no stern dealer in facts will ever dispel it from the lives of the coming generations."

Mme. Emma Eames, with her husband, Julian Story, and their pet parrot, presented a picture of domestic bliss last evening in their pretty parlor at the St. James Hotel.

DELIGHTFUL TO RECALL.

"Do I believe in teaching children the existence of a Santa Claus? Well, indeed I do," said the fair songbird. "If I had children I would tell them the legend of Santa Claus as soon as they were able to understand anything. I would not thank any one for undecieving them. How well I remember my delight as a child in hanging up my stocking on Christmas eve. I would not let any one hang it for me; I thought I knew the best place for it. How I used to bed down and not to sleep a

wink all night that I might see the good old saint when he came with his pack of toys! I suppose I managed some nights to keep awake as much as a half an hour. One night I suppose I must have dreamed of Santa Claus, but it was a very vivid dream, for I declared the next day I had seen him come out of the stove door all ashes and soot, a little old man with a bag of toys on his back. I persisted in declaring I had seen Santa Claus until I was a big girl, and no matter what any one said to me nothing could shake my faith in his existence."

Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy, surrounded by a crowd of hungry office seekers, looked like any one but a believer in fairy tales.

"Yes, indeed," he said; "I fully believe in teaching the little ones to believe in Santa Claus; he is the children's patron saint. I believe to deprive children of the belief in their stockings being filled by good old St. Nick would be to rob them of half the pleasure of childhood."

NATURAL TO CHILDHOOD.

Lillian Russell was clad in the gorgeous attire of a Grand Duchess when I saw her in her dressing room at Abbey's Theatre. She became, for the moment, the sweet, loving mother of every day life, and spoke with the tenderest feeling of her remembrance of the days when Santa Claus was an actual living human being, who rewarded all good children at Christmas time by filling their stockings.

"I did not think of Santa Claus as a fairy or a spirit, but as a sort of father who came about at Christmas time," said he. "I taught my little daughter to believe in Santa Claus, and I would not give the happiness of seeing her unload her stocking on Christmas morning for all I possess. Even now she brings her stocking and has a Christmas tree besides, and the last thing I do before retiring on Christmas eve is to fill that little stocking and hang my contributions with those of her grandma and aunties on the tree."

David Christie Murray thus briefly expresses his faith in the Santa Claus legend:

"If I had my way every child should believe in Santa Claus. Every child should believe in fairies, elves and all benevolent small people. I hate the modern utilitarian mechanisms which are killing the graceful imaginations natural to childhood."—*New York Recorder*.

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

A Little Meditation Appropriate to the Holy Season.

We are not counting the moments until Christmas will come. They fly too fast for us to count them. But we are in the mood to go back to the times when the moments were counted. We have in our minds the preparations we made for the Christmas that came when we were young and how we enjoyed it.

We remember well the wreaths we formed from the palms we strung and how we talked of festooning the altar. While we worked we listened to the stories that were told by the older heads around which we clustered. These were of the early days when churches were few and miles upon miles betwixt them. They told how they prepared for the Christmas then and how they longed for the feast that would see a priest of God with them. They told us how only the fearless and strong could brave the storms until their eyes could greet the glimmering lights in the church afar. They gave us almost the very words filled with thoughts born of the times, which cheered the weary on their way—the Babe in its cradle, the manger.

We were fond of the stories they told, and the memories of old, and we will always cherish the thoughts that then came to us. We did not talk, we listened and thought, and loved them and their stories for the faith that was in them. "What though the walk was long and the road was rough? It was easy and short when we thought of Calvary. What though the fierce wind blew and pierced us? We thought of the Infant in the Crib and did not feel it."

We listened to their word and we began to think, what shall we do to show such love for the Infant Jesus? From the lips of our parents we had learned how we should try to make the Infant in the Crib love us. We thought of the Mother of God and holy St. Joseph, and how they dragged their weary way over the rugged path to Bethlehem. They met every now and then with the crowds which passed but none of them knew the Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary. Her thoughts were not of the affronts she received, she was speaking with her soul to the Infant in her womb and bowing her head in submission. The time was come when the Only Begotten was to be born into the world—the place was prepared where she was to adore Him. We thought of the repulses that were received each time St. Joseph begged, "Shelter us from this night so cold!" and his eyes spoke of the love of his heart for our Immaculate Mary. And we sighed as we thought of each repulse and our hearts loved on the better for it. They pass the last house and of a man whom they meet St. Joseph again humbly asks, "Where shall we find shelter?" This poor man looks at Joseph and Mary and stops just long enough to point over to the cave. They enter it and what do they see? There is little place for them to rest. Only room for the beasts, but here at last is welcome for them. The rich and the poor, yes, the poorest of the poor, may find shelter in the company of man, but when God was born of His Mother He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. When, as prelude by the Prophet Isaiah, the constellation of the virgin marked the hour of midnight,

the "Alma Mater Redemptoris" brought forth into the world Him whose generation was from eternity. He came as the sun bursts through the lighted clouds and warms into new life every creature. Mary cast her eyes upon the folds of her dress as she knelt in prayer and she stooped to gather in her arms the Infant with its tiny hands outstretched to her.

There are signs in the moon and the stars, but they are the signs of joy and gladness which proclaim to the world "Peace on earth to men of good will." God said, "Let all the angels adore Him," and millions and millions of the heavenly choirs came and went and the heavens and the earth heard "Gloria in excelsis Deo." The rich and the noble, the poor and the poorest, all except the shepherds, are wrapt in slumber. Some of the angelic hosts, doing the will of God, stop in their heavenward flight that their song may be heard by the lonely Jew, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people." They looked up, were amazed, but knew well the meaning of what was said to them. Then they began to say one to another, "Let us go over to see those things that are accomplished." As they drew near with a straggling of their flocks, they saw, and believed, and hastened to adore the Infant Jesus. The storm-wet cave in its manger for a crib gives shelter to Him whom the heavens and the earth can not contain. Let us not sleep with those who slept the first Christmas night, but let us watch with the shepherds of the lonely hillside that we may meet the smile of the Infant Jesus.—S. S. M., in *Catholic Columbian*.

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