

## OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

BY AUNT BECKY.

## SANTA CLAUS.

It's a merry old man  
I'm setting to rhyme,  
And he comes when he can—  
At Christmas time—  
With everything from a rattle to a  
ring—  
Oh, hark to the sleighbell's chime!  
His reindeers race o'er housetops  
tall  
And over the hilltops steep;  
But they never grow weary—no, not  
at all—  
And he never goes to sleep.  
With dolls and drums down the  
chimneyhe comes—  
Sing ho for his reindeer leap.  
And he fills every stocking  
From tip to toe;  
And it's awfully shocking  
To wake you know,  
Simply because it's old Santa Claus.  
Hurrah for the Old Man of the  
Snow!  
—John Jordan Douglas.

## TWELVE LOST CHRISTMASSES.

Twelve years without any Christmas celebration! What a time to live in. Yet that was the lot of English children during the years that Cromwell was in power. The celebrations of Christmas, with mistletoe and holly, the yule log and all the rest are merely survivals of various celebrations of the winter solstice that were held in pagan times. The Puritan always objected to Christmas as a heathen feast and when Cromwell came into power they succeeded in forbidding the celebration of Christmas as a feast. In 1644, parliament ordered that December 25 be strictly kept as a solemn fast and that all people should pass the day in humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their ancestors had hitherto committed on that day by eating boar's head, drinking ale flavoured with roasted apples, devouring plum pudding and romping under the mistletoe.

## HOW MISTLETOE GROWS.

Mistletoe, at the present time, figures almost solely at Christmas festivities. It grows in our southern and midland counties as a parasite on certain forest trees, such as sycamore, lime, poplar and elm, but rarely is it found on oak. It is probably propagated largely by birds, who are very fond of the berries. Bird-lime is made from mistletoe berries.

## LONG AFORE I KNEWED.

Jes' a little bit o' feller—I remember still—  
Uet to almost cry for Christmas,  
like a youngster will.  
Fourth o' July's nothin' to it! New  
Year's ain't a smell;  
Easter Sunday, circus day—jes' all  
dead in the shell.  
I ust, though—at night, you know—  
to set around and hear  
The old folks work the story off  
about the sledge and deer  
And Santy shootin' round the roof,  
all wrapped in fur and fuzz—  
Long afore  
I knowed who  
Santa Claus wuz.  
Ust to wait and set up late a week  
or two ahead;  
Couldn't hardly keep awake ner  
wouldn't go to bed;  
Kittle stowin' on the fire and mother  
sittin' here  
Darnin' socks and rockin' in the  
skreeky rockin' cheer;  
Pap'd gap' and wonder where it wuz  
the money went  
And quar' with his frost heels and  
spilt his liniment,  
And me a-dreamin' sleighbells when  
the clock'd whir and buzz,  
Long afore  
I knowed who  
Santa Claus wuz.  
Size the fireplace up and figure how  
Old Santy could  
Manage to come down the chimney  
like they said he would;  
Wish that I could hide and see him  
—wondered what he'd say  
If he ketched a feller layin' fer him  
that a-way.  
But I bet on him and loved him,  
same as if he had

Turned to pat me on the back and  
say, "Look here, my lad,  
Here's my pack: jes' help yourself,  
like all good boys does,"  
Long afore

I knowed who  
Santa Claus wuz.  
Wish that yarn wuz true about him  
as it 'peared to be—  
Truth made out o' lies, that un's  
good enough for me!  
Wish I still was so confidin'—I  
could jes' go wild  
Over hangin' up my stockin's, like  
the little child  
Climbin' in my lap to-night and beg-  
gin' me to tell  
'Bout them reindeers and Old Santy  
that she loves so well.  
I'm half sorry for this little girl  
sweetheart of his—  
Long afore  
She knows who  
Santy Claus is.

## IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

The world is indebted to the late  
Charles A. Dana, editor of The New  
York Sun, for settling the vexatious  
question once and for all time. His  
answer to the question asked him  
by a little girl has the charm of  
perennial freshness. Here is the  
letter she wrote to him and the  
answer he gave:

"Dear Editor—I am 8 years old.  
Some of my little friends say there  
is no Santa Claus. Papa says: 'If  
you see it in The Sun, it's so.'  
Please tell me the truth, is there  
a Santa Claus?"

"Virginia O'Hanlon."  
Virginia, your little friends are  
wrong. They have been affected by  
the skepticism of a skeptical age.  
They do not believe except they see.  
They think that nothing can be  
which is not comprehensible by their  
little minds. All minds, Virginia,  
whether they be men's or children's,  
are little. In this great universe of  
ours man is a mere insect, an ant,  
in his intellect, as compared with  
the boundless world about him, as  
measured by the intelligence capable  
of grasping the whole of truth and  
knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa  
Claus. He exists as certainly as  
love and generosity and devotion  
exist, and you know that they  
abound and give to your life its  
highest beauty and joy. Alas! how  
dreary would be the world if there  
were no Santa Claus. It would  
be as dreary as if there were no  
Virginitas. There would be no childlike  
faith then, no poetry, no romance,  
to make tolerable this existence. We  
should have no enjoyment except in  
sense and sight. The eternal light  
with which childhood fills the world  
would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You  
might as well not believe in fairies!  
You might get your papa to hire  
men to watch in all the chimneys  
on Christmas eve to catch Santa  
Claus, but even if they did not see  
Santa Claus coming down, what  
would that prove? Nobody sees  
Santa Claus, but that is no sign  
that there is no Santa Claus. The  
most real things in the world are  
those that neither children nor men  
can see. Did you ever see fairies  
dancing on the lawn? Of course not;  
but that's no proof that they are  
not there. Nobody can conceive or  
imagine all the wonders there are  
unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's  
rattle and see what makes the noise  
inside, but there is a veil covering  
the unseen world which not the  
strongest man, not even the united  
strength of all the strongest men  
that ever lived, could tear apart.  
Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, ro-  
mance, can push aside that curtain  
and view and picture the supernal  
beauty and glory beyond. Is it all  
real? Ah, Virginia, in all this  
world there is nothing else real and  
abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God!  
he lives, and he lives forever. A  
thousand years from now, Virginia,  
may, ten times ten thousand years  
from now, he will continue to make  
glad the heart of childhood.

I would seek unto God, and unto  
God I would commit my cause.  
—Bible.

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## LITTLE ODDITY

By the Author of "Served Out."

CHAPTER XII—A MEAN RE-  
VENGE.

"Mine Herr Papa," Bonny said, a  
morning or two afterwards at  
breakfast, "shall I come and sit on  
your knee, 'cos I want to tell you  
something?"  
"Come, then, Johann, and tell  
it."

"I nearly goin' to be berry angry  
wid you, 'cos you bad man to me.  
You shut up your mouf all tight, like  
this, and not show me your big  
teef, and make a berry solid face at  
me, and that's what. Berry ugly  
solid face, I tell you. Liese says it's  
solid, too."

"Solemn, Herr Papa," Liese in-  
terposed. "Johann was watching  
you all day yesterday, to see when  
you would laugh again."

The professor smiled, just a faint  
smile, that came and went quickly.  
Bonny eyed him critically the while.  
"It isn't good like that, is it,  
Liese?" he asked reprovingly.

"Perhaps Herr Papa doesn't feel  
inclined to laugh," Liese replied.  
"But he isn't naughty," Bonny  
said, "and I isn't naughty, and  
you isn't naughty, and little mudder  
isn't naughty, so we haven't got to  
be solid, and I don't like it. If Herr  
Papa makes angey forehead, I'll  
make angey forehead too, and all  
make angey foreheads, and all be  
naughty, and never laugh any more.  
But I'll kill bad man doctor some  
day—yes, I'se sure I will."

"What for will you kill him,  
Johann?" the professor asked. "What  
has he done that you should say  
so?"

"Oh, I know. He did bring you  
solid face and never take it away  
again. I seen old man doctor before  
in other house. They all bad, nasty,  
angry forehead, spiteful faces,  
that's what they are, and make all  
the peoples berry ill and dead, and  
you'll be ill and dead too, like my  
other mudder."

The professor glanced at his wife.  
It was the first time that Bonny  
had spoken of his previous life.

"Poor mudder! she died, then,  
and left little Johann all alone?"  
he asked.

Bonny took no heed.  
Presently he said to the professor,  
"I must see you big teef again."

"Well, Johann, I was thinking  
about a man who was a great and  
wonderful musician."

"That's Herr Papa," Bonny in-  
terposed promptly.

"No, no, very much greater than  
Herr Papa. He made the most beau-  
tiful music in the world, and he  
loved his music more than anything  
else."

"More than Herr Papa?" Bonny  
asked eagerly, catching hold of the  
long brown beard.

"More than everything. But a  
dreadful thing happened to him.  
When he sat down to play, no  
sound greeted him. The music was  
there, but he could not hear it."

"He's a stupid. Tell him to play  
louder."

"But he did play louder and loud-  
er every week and still he heard less  
and less."

"I know," Bonny cried excitedly.  
"Old man doctor with a spiteful face  
stick a thing in his ear, and his  
ear berry killed and dead for ever  
and ever."

The professor made a big enough  
mouth now; for he sat back in his  
chair and laughed one of his tre-  
mendous ha-ha-ha's. Bonny watch-  
ed him delightedly.

But his face quickly grew grave  
again.

"The poor man was very sad when  
he could no longer hear his beloved  
music," the professor went on. "It  
makes me feel sad when I think of  
him. What would you have done,  
Johann, if you had been that poor  
man?"

Bonny thought a minute. Then  
suddenly he broke out fiercely. "I'd  
kill the bad man doctor what put  
the thing in his ear, and I'd smash  
the 'music' all up 'cos he didn't  
play loud enough. And then—and  
then, I'd be dreafully angry till old  
man doctor made me well again."

"It is impossible for the little one  
to comprehend," Madame Bruder  
said. "You must think no more  
of this thing, but hope and pray,  
mine husband. Come what may,  
let us have happy cheerful days to  
look back upon."

"Liese," he uncle asked, "if you  
were that poor man, what would  
you do?"

"I think," Liese answered, "I

would go out to tea every night  
with kind friends—everybody would  
be kind, I am sure—and try to for-  
get it. And then, when I was alone,  
I would sit and remember all the  
beautiful music I had ever heard,  
and all the kind things people had  
said."

"Yes, I believe you would, my  
little Liese; and you shall teach us a  
lesson, which is to speak always  
kind words to one another, lest some-  
day the ears of any of us should be  
shut, and we should have only the  
memory of words to cheer us, and  
we will also be as happy as ever  
we can. Therefore, my little ones,  
we will come now and play one of  
Papa Haydn's trios, and after that  
we will go in the meadows and en-  
joy ourselves."

So the three went into the pro-  
fessor's music-room to their music,  
while Madame departed to the house-  
hold management, which no German  
house mistress ever neglects.

These hours of study were plea-  
sant enough. Liese, who showed  
great aptitude, was beginning to  
play the piano very well, and Bon-  
ny, who had quite yielded his stub-  
born will to the professor's guid-  
ance, was making marvellous pro-  
gress. A great reward had come  
to him. The Herr Papa bought  
his own violin, and Liese sat down  
to the piano, and then they all  
played together. Bonny found that  
the notes he had been learning came  
in so beautifully with those of the  
piano and the other violin that they  
took quite a new meaning for him,  
and he was wild with delight. He  
felt so grand when he heard the  
beautiful sounds mingling together  
in such delicious harmony that he  
thought himself almost as good as  
those grown-up men who came to  
play with the professor, who looked  
so wise through their spectacles,  
and used such funny words among  
themselves.

Perhaps there was never a kinder  
or cleverer teacher than the pro-  
fessor. He had quite won Bonny's  
complete obedience, as well as his  
unbounded admiration. The child  
made such astounding progress that  
the professor himself was astonish-  
ed and delighted. His hearing, cer-  
tainly imperfect, showed very little  
alteration for better or worse, and  
the professor, who had at first  
been so cast down about it, tried  
to persuade himself that the doc-  
tor might have been mistaken, and  
that it would always remain as it  
was: that Bonny was to be the ex-  
ception which is to be found to  
every rule. And if any other  
thought would sometimes force it-  
self on his mind, he remembered  
Liese's words, and told himself that  
the little one should at any rate  
have as much enjoyment of his ears  
as was possible.

He had consulted another doctor,  
who had told him very much the  
same thing as the first one; so his  
faith in the doctor of Madame's  
choice had revived. He came oc-  
casionally to see the child, but Bon-  
ny would never go near him, and for  
the present he took little notice,  
only trying to ingratiate himself  
into Bonny's good graces by sweets  
and smiles.

So the time passed rapidly and  
happily away. In the Christmas  
holidays the professor took the  
children into the gay capital, and  
showed them all sorts of amusing  
entertainments. One that especially  
delighted Bonny had in it a sort  
of simple Simon, who was always  
in the wars throughout. Liese was  
almost inclined to cry at the tricks  
they played on him, while Bonny  
shrieked with laughter, which came  
to a climax when some boy tied  
some squibs to his coat-tails and  
slyly lighted them. Off went the  
squibs, carrying the coat tails high  
up into the air with them. The man's  
bewildered capers highly amused  
Bonny, who clapped his hands and  
screamed with glee at every appear-  
ance of this hero during the rest of  
the performance without the coat-  
tails.

A few months later on the Berlin  
doctor declared that it was abso-  
lutely necessary to make an examina-  
tion of Bonny's ears. Nothing  
could induce Bonny to go near him,  
so the Herr Papa had to hold him  
while the instrument was used,  
Bonny darting the angriest of glances  
at the doctor whenever he could  
get the chance.

It is just as I thought," the doc-  
tor said gravely, "I do not find  
any improvement."

Bonny glanced from one face to  
the other, and understood perfectly  
that something bad was being said.  
With an angry glare he darted from  
the room.

"Johann, what is the matter?"  
Liese cried, when he came tearing  
into their play-room with a red  
and furious face.

"Herr Papa berry cruel bad man.  
He lets the spiteful face hurt me, he

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does, stick thing in my ear, he did,  
and make me dead and killed, and  
I shall be berry angry soon. Naugh-  
ty Herr Papa."

"Little Johann!"  
There was the professor standing  
in the doorway, with such a look of  
love and sorrow in his kind face.

In a moment Bonny's countenance  
changed. He ran to the outstretched  
arms, and with his little arms clasp-  
ed tightly round the professor's neck  
lay there sobbing.

"Herr Papa, dear Herr Papa, you  
isn't naughty; you berry good, and  
I do love you; send the bad man  
doctor away, he mustn't kill my  
ears, you mustn't let him, that's  
what I do tell you," Bonny cried  
spasmodically.

"He will try to make you very  
new, better ears, little one," Herr  
Papa said to him soothingly.

"Herr Papa, bad man doctor took  
poor man's ears away, and he never  
heard his beautiful music any more,  
so he couldn't laugh and show his  
big teef. You telled me, you did."

"You haf got it all wrong. Lis-  
ten to me—"

Just then a smile broke over Bon-  
ny's face. He slipped down from the  
professor's arms and darted away,  
his anger and grief apparently for-  
gotten.

"Poor little one!" the professor  
said to himself with a sigh, "what  
will be your fate? If this blow  
falls, I fear me that quick heart will  
be soured and broken. It is bad for  
me, but it will be more bad for my  
little child who loves all sweet  
sounds so passionately. Truly, I  
would give my own ears to save his  
to him."

"Herr Papa, look at Johann,"  
Liese exclaimed. "What is he do-  
ing?"

The professor went to the win-  
dow where Liese had been standing,  
watching the gardener at his work.

At the end of the garden stood  
the doctor, bending over something  
which seemed to absorb all his at-  
tention. That was nothing to as-  
tonish either Liese or the professor,  
for they knew very well that the  
doctor loved poking about after  
grubs and chrysalises, and other such  
creatures, both for their own inter-  
esting qualities and also as bait  
for the fishing which his soul loved.

But the funny part was that Bon-  
ny was creeping about behind him,  
and dodging after every movement of  
the doctor, and just when Liese  
called out, she thought she saw a  
little flash of flame very near the

doctor's legs.

"What is it, Liese?" the professor  
asked. "I see nothing but our good  
friend hunting for worms."

Bonny had cleared off, and there  
really was nothing. Liese felt quite  
stupid.

But not very long afterwards the  
doctor came tearing along the gar-  
den with a most unearthly yell, his  
spectacles bobbing up and down as  
he ran. Liese flew to the window.  
Behind him was a little column of  
smoke and some flames.

Liese tore out of the room after  
her uncle. They encountered the  
doctor in the hall, white and scared,  
and diffusing round him an alarm-  
ing odor of brimstone. Big flames  
were creeping up his back.

"Take off your coat," the pro-  
fessor said calmly, and the doctor  
began mechanically to obey, clapping  
his hands frantically to those parts  
of his body where the heat was  
making itself felt. Presently the  
coat lay on the stone floor, quietly  
smouldering, the color began to  
rush back into the doctor's face, and  
something that was no longer fear  
into his eyes, as he stood in his  
shirt sleeves, contemplating the  
ruined garment.

"I never put a box of matches in  
my pocket," he cried angrily. "This  
is most diabolical trick!"

RT to be continued)

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