

Jes' 'Fore Christmas.

BY EUGENE FIELD.*

Father calls me William, sister calls me Will,
Mother calls me Willie—but the fellers call me Bill!
Mighty glad I ain't a girl—ruther be a boy
Without them sashes, curls, an' things that's worn by
Fauntleroy;

Love to chawnk green apples, an' go swimmin' in the
lake;

Hate to take the caster-ile they give f'r belly-ache!
Most all the time the hull year round' there ain't no flies
on me,

But jes' 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Got a yaller dog named Sport—sick 'im on the cat;
Fust thing she knows she doesn't know where she is at!
Got a clipper-sled, an' when us boys go out to slide
'Long comes the grocery cart, an' we all hook a ride!]
But, sometimes, when the grocery man is worrit and
cross,

He reaches at me with his whip, and larrups up his hoss;
An' then I laff and holler; "Oh, you never teched me!"
But jes' 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Gram'ma says she hopes when I get to be a man
I'll be a missionerer like her oldes' brother Dan,
As wuz et up by the cannib'ls, that lives in Ceylon's isle,
Where every prospeck pleases, an' only man is vile!
But gram'ma she had never been to see a wild-West
show,

Or read the life of Daniel Boone, or else I guess she'd
know

That Buffalo Bill and cowboys is good enough for me—
Excep' jes' 'fore Christmas, when I'm good as I kin be!

Then ol' Sport he hangs around, so sollum like an' still—
His eyes they seem a-sayin'; "What's er matter, little
Bill?"

The cat she sneaks down off her perch, a-wonderin'
what's become

Uv them two enemies uv hern that used ter make things
hum!

But I am so perlite, and stick so earnest like to biz,
That mother says to father: "How improved our Willie
is!"

But father, havin' been a boy hisself, suspicions me,
When jes' 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

For Christmas, with its lots an' lots uv candies, cakes,
an' toys,

Wuz made, they say, f'r proper kids, and not f'r naughty
boys!

So wash yer face, and brush yer hair, an' mind yer p's
and q's,

An' don't bust out yer pantaloons, an' don't wear out yer
shoes;

Say yessum to the ladies, an' yessir to the men,
An' when they's company don't pass yer plate f'r pie
again;

But, thinkin' uv the things you'd like to see upon that
tree,

Jes' 'fore Christmas be as good as you kin be!

*From "Field Flowers," published for the Eugene Field Memorial Fund.

Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus on the Day After Christmas.

(Santa Claus in bed; Mrs. Santa Claus seated at his side, mending his coat.)

Mrs. S. C.—Why, Santa, that must have been a bad chimney, to catch and tear such a hole as this. I should think people might keep their chimneys in better repair; especially so near Christmas time.

Mr. S. C.—Yes, some people are very careless. That's how I came to lame Prancer, my very best reindeer.

Mrs. S. C.—You're very tired, aren't you, dear? I declare! your work is too much for any man to do alone. Next year I believe I shall positively forbid your going out at Christmas time.

Mr. S. C.—Oh, no, my dear; we couldn't disappoint the children, you know!

(Door opens; heavy mailbag is thrown in.)

Mrs. S. C.—Here comes the mail. There seems to be a good deal of it, as there usually is the day after Christmas. Read the letters to me, Santa; I want to know how the children enjoyed their presents.

Mr. S. C.—Well, here's the first one. (Reads.) "To Santa Claus: Why did you send me a fascinator with a blue ribbon, when I told you all the time that I wanted a pink one? Mary's is ever so much more stylish than mine, too. Annie Smith."

Mrs. S. C.—Well, I wouldn't bother to send her a fascinator with any ribbon at all in it next year.

Mr. S. C.—Here's another letter: (Reads.) "Santa Claus: That music-box you sent me wasn't any account. It is broken already. It won't stand thumping, and it didn't play but three tunes, anyway. I wish you'd take it back and get me a better one. John Brown."

Mrs. S. C.—I guess that music-box went to the wrong place.

Mr. S. C.—I guess it did. I've a mind to take it back and keep it myself. Now, let's try this one: (Reads.) "For Santa Claus: Why didn't you bring me something nicer than a velocipede? When people are ten years old, and other boys have bicycles, do you suppose they're going to be seen wheeling around such trundle-bed trash? James Tucker."

Mrs. S. C.—I'd give him a rattle next time. Dear me, Santa, can't you find any decent letter at all?

Mr. S. C.—Perhaps this one will be more encouraging: (Reads.) "Santa Claus, Dear Sir: Please do not send our son, grandson, and nephew any more tin horns. Respectfully, his mother, grandmother, and aunt."

Mrs. S. C.—Oh, Santa, Santa, don't read any more of those abominable letters! Didn't anybody write and