

The Summer Santa Claus



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Isabel Yeomans Brown.



"THAT'S MY SHIP, I CHOOSED IT."

What Happened to Paul

OR

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BY

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What Happened to Paul
or
The Summer Santa Claus

PART 1st—About Edmond and The
Canary-Coloured Nightie.

NOW this is Edmond's very own story, but he has out-grown it just as he has out-grown the canary-coloured flannel nightie that used to be quite long enough to wrap his toes in when he lay in my arms, before the fire, watching the cheerful flicker, and weaving, weaving plans to lengthen out the golden minutes. Yes; he planned while he listened, for well he knew that it was already sleepy-time. If he did n't know, he had only to raise his eyes to "Chips" in his cage between the frilled muslin curtains; Chips, only a fluffy ball of feathers and two small sticks of legs, dreaming

bird dreams as hard as ever he could ; or to glance down at "Golden," lying on the tail of my wrapper ; Golden, a monstrous yellow fur ball, too fast asleep to purr, and dreaming whatever the sand-man brings to good pussies in that wonderful dream-bag of his.

Question after question would he ask, my over-grown canary, with the blue eyes and long legs curled comfortably up ; and I did not mind so very much after all, for to me too it was given to know that these were golden moments ; that the yellow nightie would not fit for long ; and when he had once out-grown it, just think, the story would not fit either. Chips would not be the same Chips. Golden would have become something very different, perhaps a champion warrior to be backed against the Toms of the neighbourhood by an Edmond,

who was not the very same Edmond that I held in my arms.

And so we are determined to give his very own story to all the little boys and girls that the canary coloured nightie still fits, and the story is called "What Happened to Paul; or, The Summer Santa Claus," and when it is all told you may still be wondering what did really happen and whether it was Santa Claus or not.

the following is a list of the
names of the persons who
were present at the meeting
of the Board of Directors
of the Company, held on
the 1st day of January, 1901.

THE STORY

YOU should have seen Paul. He was the happiest little boy in the world. He was six years old when all this happened, perfectly healthy, and the pleasantest sight imaginable. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he was all one lovely, rosy pink, except where his eyes glowed out, like deep, blue flames. Of course you will understand that the pink became rosier in his cheeks and, in his lips, was like bright scarlet cherries. His hair formed quite a contrast; it was pure white and curled all over his manly little head, and it was all the hat that ever he wore.

But boys never care about looks, and it was certainly not his pink flesh or his blue eyes or his white head that made Paul so happy. The fact is, he lived in just, what he

thought, the very loveliest place in the world ; the place where he could have the most fun of all ; and to explain this, I must tell you something about Paul's father, who died when his little boy was too young to remember anything about him, but not too young to have received from him two gifts : a brave, dauntless spirit, and a deep, true love for the great ocean and the stately ships that glide across it to distant shores.

Paul's father, big Paul, came from the country of the Sea Kings, Denmark. He, too, like his son, was tall and straight, strong and ruddy, with the same curls, only deepened to flaxen, all over his head. During his short life, he followed the sea, as had his father and his father's father, and he loved it as they had before him. How he came to the coast of New England and met Paul's mother, and loved the

quiet American girl better than any of the Sea King's daughters, how they were married and settled down in a tiny cottage on the sea shore, which was filled all the time with the sound of the surf, how big Paul used to kiss his wife good-bye and sail away in his fishing boat, how he sometimes stayed a long time, and when the wind blew and the sea ran high his young wife troubled lest he never return; all this part I must skip over quite quickly as it is only meant to explain why the sea sang in Paul's heart, as in a shell, and little waves, that he had never seen, were ever beckoning him.

When her sailor-man had been laid in his grave, within sound of his beloved sea, Paul's mother brought him to the little town, some miles inland, where his happy life began. (He could not remember the Baby-days, which was fortunate because they must have been rather

sad.) The house in which Paul and his mother lived was tiny, in fact it had just two rooms, one to sleep in and one to be awake in. It had no paint on the outside, but that did not matter at all because it was completely covered with vines, scarlet runners and morning glories, that had been planted, and wild cucumber that had planted itself; these covered it close all summer. In the winter it was almost buried in snow, so it's lack of paint did n't matter much then either.

Behind the house was a broad, shallow pond, and all the shore around it was covered with nice, flat chips of convenient size to be made into ships and set sail to every port in the world. Now that was what made Paul so happy, and who wouldn't be? Besides, he was never bothered about clothes, never sick, had a lovely mother all to himself and, if he was

hungry, and this often happened when his mother was at work, there was always some bread and molasses on the kitchen table. He played by the water, or he played in the water, for it was nowhere deep enough to drown him, and the bottom of the pond, like it's edges, was covered with smooth pine chips, all left over from an old mill that used to stand near-by until it was wiped out by a fire, before Paul's time.

Of course Paul had some troubles, but they were, after all, very small as compared to the joys that filled his life. It would have been pleasanter to have his mother at home all the time, but that could not be. She had to go almost every day to work for people in order that the bread and molasses might be on the table. She was very clever and could sew and bake, scrub, wash and iron simply beautifully,

besides being a gentle lady with accomplishments quite above many of the people who employed her as "help."

When she sang, everybody was delighted, for her voice was sweet and liquid, but it was for her boy that she sang the very best of all. When she came home, after her day's work, and gave him his good warm supper, listening, meanwhile, to his account of the wonderful things that had happened during her absence. When, at last it came near sleepy-time, she would gather him into her strong, motherly arms and sing him the songs he loved best, "The Three Fishers", "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep", "The Sailor's Wife", or "Baby Mine", and she could go through them all without a tremble in her voice, she was so brave and sure that she would find her sailor again.

Paul's only other trouble was called "The Rent," and he didn't understand it very well,

only his mother had to put money away, and be very careful, indeed, to have enough, and then, once in three months, old Mr. Vickers came down the road and she gave it all to him and asked him to mend the post of the little verandah and the hole in the fence, and he grumbled and wrote something on a piece of paper which he gave to her and went away again.

Now, once every month Paul was given ten cents for being a good boy, while his mother was at work. He did not have to save it, oh no, but could go right up to Mrs. Mulligan's and buy just whatever he liked most of all. Sometimes it was very hard to tell, there were so many lovely things, big glass alleys, whistles with long chains, maple sugar cakes with scalloped edges, tops, sheets of soldiers or man-o-war's-men, to be cut out

and fitted with paper backs to make them stand up, pails painted blue and quite distinctly marked "For a Good Boy," which certainly was Paul, jumping jacks, and I can't begin to tell you what else. Oh yes! there were boats and ships, which Paul would have preferred to all the rest, only he had had them once or twice and found them unseaworthy. They would not balance properly, and any boy, with a true sailor's heart, would prefer the chips.

Well, one beautiful June day, Paul, the same happy careless laddie, in check shirt, very short blue cotton breeches, bare feet and head, stood before Mrs. Mulligan's enticing window, his ten cents clasped tight in his fist. He looked and it took him one moment to realize—then he saw—and his little heart swelled almost to bursting. Before his eyes, in all its pride and glory, in the very middle

of Mrs. Mulligan's window, was a fine *full-rigged clipper ship*, complete to its minutest detail.

“Lightly was she rigged,
And strongly was she sparred,
She had bow-lines and bunt-lines,
Topping-lift and yard.”

Any sailor could see that she was right.

How could Paul *know* when he was so small? I will tell you. Just as the destined captain of the champion seven can tell a good hockey-stick, straight and true, free from deceptive knots and cross-grains, however young he be, so this coming captain of a noble Atlantic liner, saw a good ship, and knew it.

His heart thumped against his checked shirt, which was, fortunately, of very strong material or it might hardly have stood the strain, and his blue eyes fairly blazed as he

began to talk aloud, paying no attention to a big, white somebody who had come up and was standing beside him. "That's my ship," he said, "That's her prow and that's her stern. She has lots of sails, with too many names. I don't know all those names. That's the main-sail and that's the flying jib-boom. They are all flying. She's going very fast. Whoop! She's racing. There's a sailor," and there was a tiny sailor carved of wood and painted, and two other figures beside, strange to say of a very stiff wooden lady and a little girl, who stood quite straight, on the deck. "There's a sailor," said Paul, and, puckering his brows, "Those must be passengers, and I'm going to be the Captain. That's my ship," he raised his eyes to the big white Somebody and made him a sharer in the good news, "I choosed it."

"Where's your money?" asked the Somebody quite gruffly. Sunshine broke all over Paul's confident little face as he opened his palm and revealed his ten cents. "Hum!" said the Somebody, and gleamed through his spectacles at it.

Now Paul had no time to particularly notice what this Somebody was like, for, though he looked at him and talked to him, his eyes saw nothing but the ship. He remembered him, though, afterwards, and wondered and wondered if he could have been—but as you are to guess I will describe him to you right off. He was big and jolly and fat and, when you looked in his face, he reminded you at once of Santa Claus, but there were some very important differences. Santa Claus, in his pictures, and when he comes to give the presents off the tree, at

Christmas, is always dressed very warmly, in scarlet and fur, to keep out the cold. Now this Somebody was all in white, to be as cool as possible, and carried, moreover, a large palm leaf fan in one hand while the other held a white parasol, lined with green, open over his shoulder. He had on a speckless linen suit, white shoes, a broad hat covering his silver-white hair. His eyes were kind and twinkly, just like Santa Claus, but he wore gold-rimmed glasses and his beard did not go all round but was only under his chin, with long, soft mustaches drooping over it, all silvery white, of course.

All he said was "Hum."

"I'll go and get it now," said Paul.

"I'll wait," said the Somebody. And Paul went in. Mrs. Mulligan rose from her chair behind the counter when he entered the

shop. She was kind and fat, and was known in the village as "Mother" Mulligan, on account of her large family of boys, who were all grown up now and, every one, gone to Sea.

"Now, what do you want, Paul?" she asked pleasantly.

"The ship," said Paul, putting down his ten cents and holding his two arms out to receive it.

Mother Mulligan understood at once, and it hurt her to see the hungry determined blue eyes.

"Is it the one in the window, Paul? My dear your ten cents would never pay for it. My Danny carved it out when he was at home resting from his accident. I'm sure I don't know how much it is worth. He said, before he went, that I could sell it to the right boy

(and that's you, sure, Paul) for one dollar, but that's ten times as much as this."

Paul waited a full minute to take in the meaning of her words. Just the shadow of a cloud came over his clear gaze.

"It's mine. Can't I have it?"

Mother Mulligan felt sorry enough to cry. "See Paul," she said, "may be if you run to your Mother, she'd give you the money, in advance you know, and you could pay her back by being good for nine more months."

Paul squared his little shoulders.

"No, it's the Rent time," he said.

"It's the what?" Mrs. Mulligan was puzzled, "Oh, the rent. Old Vickers. I'd a sight rather you had the ship than that grandson of his. He destroys more in a week than you get in a year."

Mother Mulligan mumbled a little and fussed around, while Paul stood, stiff and tense, awaiting the issue.

"It's no use, Paul," she said, as kindly as possible. "I can't give it to you. It is n't mine to give. Just save up and, when you have seventy-five cents, if it's still here, I'll chip in the other quarter and let you have it. Now run home dear."

Paul could not move. Surely this had not really happened.

"It has right sails," he said, "and it goes very fast. Can't I have it?" At last there was a pleading question in his words.

"The money's for tobacco for Danny," mourned Mother Mulligan. "Now, run home, Paul. Be a good boy. I'll leave it in the window till it's sold and you can look at it."

A good sea-man knows how to obey orders. Paul got out of the little shop, someway, and a big dark something seemed to be gathering around the brave little heart that had hammered such a merry refrain.

The Somebody was still there fidgety and anxious. "You didn't get it?" he said.

"It's ten times as much as other things," Paul told him.

"My, that's a lot, a whole dollar?"

"Yes," said Paul, and forgot all about him immediately, as he proceeded to do what was left to him and devoured the ship with his longing eyes. The big white man did not go, but stood quite near Paul and seemed to brush against him once. He made a couple of little chuckling noises, which Paul heeded no more than he did the factory whistle blowing for

noon. Presently the school children began to pass in twos and threes, and among the very first was Henry Vickers with a couple of companions. He cast a careless eye, over Paul's curly head, at the shop window and suddenly came to a stand-still, with a great shout, "Gee, fellows, look at the dinky ship," he yelled, shoving Paul aside to get in closer. "I'm going straight in to get it. You fellows wait here." And through the door he bolted.

The dark Something that had been gathering around Paul's happy heart suddenly drew in closer, clutching it, and, at once joy fled, for the thing was called Sorrow.

The waiting boys did not hear the first great sob that burst from him, for he was already running as fast as he could toward home. He wanted but one thing, and that was a place to hide. His short legs fairly flew,

in through the gate, past the door, without one thought for the good lunch on the table inside, past the pond, to the little grove of oaks and evergreen beyond. It was quite quiet there, and one could be very much alone ; besides it was dark like the Sorrow at his heart. He threw himself, face downwards, upon the carpet of last year's leaves, with little spikes of grass poking through, and sobbed and sobbed as he had never done before in all his life.

At first it was only for his ship. His ship, surely his, and yet not his. He loved every rope, every mast and spar. Oh his ship ! His poor ship. Then, little by little, it came to be his Mother too—her comfortable arms, her kind face. Oh Mother, Mother, if you were only here. So he sobbed it all out to the unconscious leaves and blades of grass.

You must not blame him or think him a coward for crying, but just remember that he was only six years old with no one to comfort him.

We need not dwell upon this sad time. It fortunately did not last very long. The grief was such a great big one and the boy so little, that they could not stay together, and by and by Paul began to feel quieter and the sobs only came at long intervals.

At last he lay very still for several minutes so that you might have thought he was asleep, but he was sure that he remembered raising his head and resting it on his palms while he looked at the brown leaves and little blades of grass around him.

Just then the trees began to hum in a very gentle, soothing manner. When he looked up he could see that their branches waved to and

fro, keeping time to the tune, as mother's rockers did when she sang to him. This did not seem so surprising to him as you might think it would, but he did find it very pleasant. It gave him a feeling as if something good were going to happen. A bird hopped down from the very top of a near-by tree. It came quite precisely, one branch at a time, just as if it were coming down stairs. Finally, resting upon the lowest step, which was a mere twig, it regarded Paul very intently, with its head, first on one side and then on the other. When it had taken a good look and turned its head several times, it said, in a perfectly natural manner, "Sweet dreams," and began to go up stairs again with great dignity.

Paul had to laugh then. That was just what mother said to him, every night, when she tucked him up, before he went to sleep,

and to hear it from a little brown bird, in the middle of the day, was too ridiculous. Unfortunately the bird heard him, for she skipped several of the top steps, and took a little fly to her nest where he could hear her chirping indignantly. Still with chin in his chubby fists Paul began to study the leaves more closely. They seemed to be of peculiar shades and to swim as he looked at them. At last he noticed one rather quieter than the rest. It was just a large brown oak leaf and quite neatly fitted with a pair of small hinges fastening it to the ground.

"I suppose it is to keep it from blowing away," said Paul, aloud. "It reminds me of the trap-door to our cellar. Perhaps it is a trap-door. I had better open it and see." He reached over, and with some difficulty, for it was far harder to raise than most leaves, pulled

it up, and found beneath it something that fairly dazzled him with its brilliance. It shone like a miniature sun at noon. Paul had to wait a minute, with his hands over his eyes, before he looked again. This time it was not quite so bright, so he could examine it closely. It was round, it was silver, it was new. It had, on its upper side, a proud eagle, with its claws full of arrows and leaves. It was, it was, a silver dollar!

The little heart was happy again now, and it didn't take Paul long, I can tell you, to get that dollar, and put it in the pocket of his blue trousers, where it felt quite warm, like a cooky just out of the oven. Just as it disappeared from sight he heard a tiny little voice say, "The sun has gone down," and as it came from the direction where the dollar had lain he thought he would investigate.

The dollar, he found, had neatly and exactly covered a round hole, which seemed to go "right down into the earth. It looked very interesting and somehow reminded Paul of the kaliedoscope that he got on Christmas, so he applied one eye to it, and looking down saw a lovely sight.

The hole widened out as it grew deeper, so it was not quite like the kaliedoscope after all, and it's bottom was a beautiful little ocean. Tiny waves, with little white caps, chased each other across it's surface, and occasional breakers tossed restlessly. Sea gulls flew low over the water, following the wake of a trim ship, which slid across, with all sail flying.

Paul gave one gasp of recognition. "It is my ship," he said in an awe-struck whisper.

On the deck, the sailor was busying himself, quite naturally, with a coil of rope, while

the lady and the little girl walked up and down enjoying the bracing air ; and, strange to say, the lady held over her shoulder a white parasol, * lined with green, and the little girl had a large palm-leaf fan.

It was evidently the lady who had spoken, and her voice was very like his mother's, only smaller. She raised her head and looked up to where the silver dollar had been, the place filled by Paul's blue eye at present, and said, anxiously, as she gathered her little girl closer, "The sun has gone, dear, there is a cloud up there that might rain," and she pointed with her parasol right up at Paul's eye.

Oh, how Paul did laugh. There was no danger of that cloud raining then. He laughed as hard now as he had cried before. Indeed, he laughed until he rolled over and over, and as he paid no attention to the direction that he

took, he presently rolled over a stick that had a sharp and uncomfortable edge. Paul started, lay quiet a moment and then sat up, rubbing his eyes. What were these on his cheeks? Tears, surely, and yet he was hardly done laughing. What was it all about? Was he sad or was he glad? He sat very earnestly trying to think it out. He had come to the grove miserable, that was certain, and had cried. He was rather ashamed of that part now, but his cheeks felt stiff, and he had rubbed a tear off with his hand, so that was proven beyond question. Then he had seen, had he not, the bird that hopped down and wished him sweet dreams? Then he had found the little trap-door, and seen all the rest, unless, unless, that was only a sweet dream, and Paul's heart sank at the thought.

Presently he considered, "If the little trap-door really *is*, I am going to find it," and he

jumped right up on his feet, and began to examine all the fallen leaves that lay around. Alas! he could not find a single one neatly fitted with a pair of hinges.

"It must have been all a dream," thought poor Paul, and turned to go home, sadly remembering that he was hungry as well as sorrowful and lonely. He had gone but a few steps, before something else occurred to him. A last proof to which he could put the whole. "Yes," he said, "I remember plainly; I put it in my pocket, in my right pocket." He dived down anxiously. "And here it is!" he shouted, pulling out a beautiful brand-new silver dollar. It took him one minute to realize his good fortune, and then he added, almost in a whisper,

"So it was all true, after all."

Do you suppose Paul waited for lunch after that. No, Sir. He reached Mulligan's

from the grove, under the influence of joy, quite as quickly as he had reached the grove from Mulligan's when sorrow ruled instead. It was not quite all joy with Paul yet, however. How could he feel sure that his ship was still there. Indeed, when he neared the window and gave a quick glance at it, there was no ship to be seen.

Little Paul would not allow his heart to sink, for surely that bright dollar in his hand could work wonders. He hurried into the shop, panting and breathless. "My ship," he almost gasped, as mother Mulligan advanced with her kind smile.

"Why, Paul, here it is," she said, handing it out from under the counter. "I thought you would have been after it long ago. I put it out of sight, so no other boys would come trying to buy it, like the Vickers boy did, and

have to be fired by the gentleman in white. He said it was your ship, that you spoke for it first, and that you would surely come back for it in a little while."

Paul listened, wondering, and for a moment forgetting his precious armful.

"How did he know I was coming," he asked.

Mother Mulligan wagged her head in a way that looked very mysterious and interesting, smiling all the time.

"Who is he"? coaxed Paul. "Tell me."

She leaned far over the counter until she could whisper in Paul's ear, and what she said was :

" Santa Claus."

