

### Letters to Santa Claus

**W**ITH the approach of Christmas each year the Santa Claus Association of New York, which each Christmas tries to answer the requests of thousands of poor children who would otherwise receive no presents Christmas morning, receives hundreds of letters each day from all parts of the United States and Canada.

Below are a few of the hundreds of letters received by the association. The first is from a little girl in the Bronx:

Dear Santa Claus—Do you live far? Would you please come up my house Christmas day? I, Rose, ten years of age, wants a doll; John, seven, wants a engine; Alice, about five, wants a doll; Beatrice, just more than three, wants a set of dishes, and Andrew, not two yet, wants a Teddy bear.

P. S.—I hope to get what I ask for. I am very poor, and my father is not working. Your little friend, ROSE

This letter was received from a little girl whose home is on the west side not far from Times square:

Dear Santa Claus—I heard about your great kindness to poor children, and I hope you will be good to us. I have a little cripple sister and a baby sister and brother. My little cripple sister is only five, and my papa has been out of work all summer. I hope you will answer soon and won't forget us. Your little girl friend, HARRIET

A six-year-old lad whose home is in a distant part of Brooklyn sent this letter to the general postoffice. The letter was forwarded to the Santa Claus association:

Dear Santa—I want a nice small train, not a expensive one, that's just strong and will last long time. This is all I want, and we can't afford nothing this winter. Yours truly, DONALD

This letter has been received from a child whose home is in a small town in the northern part of Ontario, Canada:

Dear Friend Santa Claus—I am a very little girl, not ten years old, and both my parents are very poor, and they said they couldn't bring me nothing this Christmas, and what I want is a pair of ice skates and, if you can spare them, also a pair of hockey boots. Your little friend, MABEL

Little Miss Mabel's seven-year-old sister, Ethel, also asked for a pair of skates and added that she would consider the gift "a very beautiful and likewise a precious one."

Most of the letters are pathetic, of course, but the association also receives some very ludicrous requests.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS TREE.

This is a custom practiced by a Sunday school where the children are all of the wealthy class, but it is a plan that many schools may like to try. On the platform stands a beautiful large tree made gay with ornaments and lights, but totally devoid of presents. The classes assemble, each pupil bringing a gift, marked "for a girl" or "for a boy," with the age of the recipient written on, too, so those who make the distribution will have some idea which is the package to give to "who."

The gifts are carefully wrapped and made just as "Christmas" looking as possible. When the class roll is called responses are made by each class going forward and laying their offerings beside the tree. In return each child is handed an orange and a small box of candy, this treat being usually provided by some wealthy parishioner who is fond of the children and who does not work regularly in the Sunday school.

Christmas carols and a short service follow, and the next day the presents are taken to the city mission or some special charity. Toys and books that are in perfectly good condition are accepted, but only such articles as may be offered without compunctions of conscience to one of God's little ones. This general clearing house is a splendid idea, and the children learn the lesson of passing on what has given them pleasure. A dear little mother says that her children were interested all the year in trying to keep their toys "nice" for the sake of the "other child's Christmas."

The Christmas candle! What a charming sound it has and what a "homey" picture it conjures before us of the many who will attend its burning on Christmas eve! All of us know the legend of the Christmas candle. If it burns clear down to the socket good luck and prosperity will attend that household throughout the year.

### DON'T UNDERDO CHRISTMAS.

Better Overlavishness Than Niggardiness at Holiday Season.

The things we do at Christmas are touched with a certain grain of extravagance, as beautiful in some of its aspects as the extravagance of nature in June.

It is the children's carnival, the mid-summer of charity to the poor, the springtime of good will to men; the time of the year when heaven opens and angels come down to sing to sailors on the ocean, to old country folks in the long reaches of new colonies, to people in hospitals, poorhouses, in mansions and "the huts where poor men lie," the time when the atmosphere is just right for clear burning fires, and it would be something of a shame for the wind to send the smoke down any chimney as it does a week before or after; when there is a goodly smell abroad, as if the frankincense the wise man brought on a day long ago to temper the taint of a stable had got into this whole world of ours, as a trailing cloud of the odors of spiced bread; when the poorest platters and mugs take a touch of fine recklessness by reason of the thoughtfulness of those who have bread enough and to spare; when the Christmas tree grows all radiant and fruitful, as no other tree which blooms through the year, for it bears at least twelve manners of fruit, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

I would not, therefore, insult Christmas by underdoing it. The man who then does most for his fellow men, according to his means, does best. We can give the tramp who comes to our back door a royal cup of coffee Christmas morning with a good grace, though we have to see that he does not run away with the spoon.

They are wide pages the angel opens in the book of life at Christmas, and when we do our best we cannot do it quicker than he can write it down.—Rev. Dr. Robert Collyer.

### CHRIST'S COMING.

Well May It Be Celebrated With Joy and Thanksgiving.

Well may the great event which Christmas commemorates be everywhere devoutly celebrated with joy and thanksgiving. Well may its anniversary be everywhere hailed as a time of special gladness, a time when every heart shall expand and every hand be generously open; when enmities shall be forgotten and universal good will prevail; when gifts from friend to friend shall abound, and especially gifts from those who have an abundance of this world's goods to those who are scantily furnished with them.

Christmas commemorates the coming of our Divine Lord to earth, to bring light and joy and gladness and to "give gifts to men," even the greatest and most precious of all gifts—the gift of salvation. We rejoice in the making and receiving of earthly gifts. How much more should we give evidence of joy in the acceptance of the greatest of spiritual gifts!

### Origin of Gift Giving.

It is believed by many that our custom of giving gifts comes from an old custom of priests putting on board of all outgoing ships a box for alms. This box was opened at Christmas time and masses said for the giving of alms, and it was called a "Christ Mass" box. From this has come our custom of giving boxes and gifts.

### Christmas All the Year.

Doubtless children wish that Christmas would last all the year, and in a nobler sense it might and ought to dispense its blessings throughout every season. We should not be content with only an annual melting into tenderness toward our brethren, but should perpetually cultivate the spirit of unselfishness and practical love.

### Christmas Holly

The greater part of the holly that is used for Christmas decoration in the western part of the United States comes from southern Arkansas and Texas, where the "American holly" attains a greater size and a more perfect form than anywhere else in this country. It grows there to a height of from forty to fifty feet.

The native hollies, some of them evergreen, others deciduous in habit, are as a family of considerable interest at this time. The group of plants to which these belong, known botanically as the flex family, some of which are shrubs and some of tree size, is widely distributed through the tropical and temperate regions of the globe. About a dozen of its members are native to eastern North America; five attain to the dignity of trees. Four of these belong only to regions southward of New England, but one brings its northerly range to the vicinity of Boston.

It is evergreen in habit, like its English cousin, which it resembles also in general appearance and particularly in its leaves, which are rather oval in shape, though small at both ends, with edges coarsely toothed and armed with sharp spines, stiff in texture, wavy and picturesque in surface and effect and of a dark glossy green color.

In the autumn the trees show rich clusters of red berries gleaming through the foliage in the most cheerful manner. They may, in fact, take the place in some degree of the delightful British plant, which most unfortunately will not endure our climate, though one sees its plump form flourishing in the most rugged health around the wooded shores of Loch Lomond, in Scotland, and that is nearly as far north as the middle of Hudson bay, in British North America.

### Christmas In the Army

**W**HETHER at home or in the Philippine Islands, Christmas is observed in the homes of the United States army officers and enlisted men with families, just as it is among civilians. The bachelors who wear side arms generally see to it that the table at the officers' mess and that the club quarters have their supplies of holly. At most of the army posts all duties except the necessary guard and fatigue are suspended.

Interesting Christmas tree exercises are held, with presents for old and young. Santa Claus is generally impersonated by an officer, and at some of the posts the children are entertained with moving pictures of Christmas pantomimes and with Christmas music.

There used to be a custom in the army of going along the line on Christmas morning and looking at the gifts every one had received. The married people went to the bachelors' quarters, almost every one taking some little remembrance. In the far western posts in the old days homemade candy or cakes were made and presented. The wives of the officers every Christmas used to send to the enlisted men of their husbands' companies large plum cakes.

Extra good rations during the Christmas holidays are now a special feature at the most isolated of the army posts in the United States or among the foreign possessions. The choice viands now served are in marked contrast with those obtainable in the old days of roughing it on the frontier.

Years ago canned goods from the commissary had to be depended upon, and the meat consisted of beef. Hunting parties were made up, in which case there was a treat to buffalo or antelope. Christmas boxes were eagerly awaited from relatives and friends in the east. The day before every officer and enlisted man who could go to town did so to meet the stage with the precious boxes.

At some of the isolated western posts dinners were given to friendly Indians, and it was an event of a lifetime to see scouts, squaws and papooses, gaudily dressed, doing justice to a spread of turkeys and other good things.

### Church Decorations Are Old.

The decorating of the churches with greens is a custom of which the origin dates back to days before the Christian era. At the feast of the Tabernacle the Jews gathered palm and olive branches and other greens to decorate their temples, and the heathen used such decorations for many of their festivals.

### CHRISTMAS IN 1813.

We are among those who have been accustomed to hail the return of this day as a day devoted to the purposes both of religious and social duties. Having in the morning performed our devotional exercises in grateful recollection of him who brought life and immortality to a benighted world and who has taught his followers by the simplest and purest yet most sublime and salutary precepts how to obtain present comfort and future happiness, we may in the after part of the day meet our friends and relatives in social converse.

From the morning's devotion and the evening's innocent recreation let us learn to practice those benign principles which teach us to check asperities and to banish prejudices, to cultivate neighborly affections and to cherish those amicable sympathies and charities, both moral and political, which should distinguish us as Christians in deed as well as in name. By a sincere endeavor to perform these duties—and every Christian ought to perform them—such of our readers as shall be permitted by Divine Providence to celebrate another anniversary of the Messenger of peace and good will to men may in the year 1814, with humble confidence, believe that they become wiser men and better members of society and hope for admission into another and a better world.—An Editor's Greeting to His Readers a Century Ago.

Mince pies were known in England in the sixteenth century as "nut on pies," the other ingredients being much the same as today. Later they were called "shred pies" and "Christmas pies," as in Herrick's poems. He refers to the old practice of setting a watch on Christmas eve over the great store of mince pies made for the morrow's feast.

### Arrested on Wife's Complaint.

Centralia, Wash., Dec. 23.—Sunday night Mat Wirsdorfer, proprietor of the Lennox hotel, was arrested on a charge of assault perpetrated by his wife. Later Wirsdorfer had Ray Wheeler arrested on a felony charge. Yesterday afternoon Justice Charles Hoss dismissed the case against the hotel man and continued that against Wheeler until tomorrow. Mrs. Wirsdorfer's two sons are witnesses against Wheeler.

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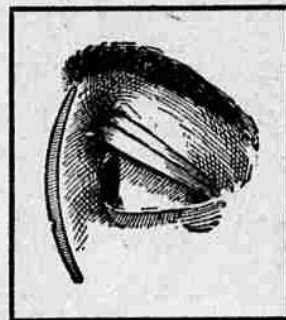
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