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Angels Sang "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men"

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A Christmas Goose

By CHARLES BARON.

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CHRISTMAS is just as much Christmas at the Boon island lighthouse as it is anywhere else in the world.

And why not?

To be sure, the nearest land is ten miles away, and when the winter storms come the waves dash quite over the two acres of rocks out of which the sturdy lighthouse rises. There are no blazing rows of streets lined with toyshops there, no gathering of families, no Christmas trees loaded down with presents, nothing to be seen from the lighthouse but the changing water and unchanging rocks—water on three sides and on the fourth side a bluff barrier of rocks, with the world hiding behind it ten miles away.

"I DES I'S NOT DOT NUFFIN."

There are six children there, though, and a mother and father, and if they cannot make a Christmas then nobody can. Why, Baby Deb alone is material enough of which to make a Christmas, and a very rollicking, jolly sort of Christmas, too, but when to her you add Tom and Sue and Ann and Ike and Sam—well, the grim old lighthouse fairly overflows with Christmas every 25th of December.

If it is a lonely, old, one eyed lighthouse, has it not a chimney? And do not children there have stockings—good, long stockings? Indeed, they have. And does not Christmas eve see them all temptingly hung, so invitingly limp and empty, under the mantelshelf? And does not Christmas morning—very early, mind you—see six graduated, white robed ghosts performing mysterious ceremonies around six bulging stockings?

Ah, then, if you suppose that that cunning old gentleman Santa Claus does not know how to find a chimney, even when the cold waves are pelting it with frozen spray drops ten miles from land, you little know what a remarkable gift he has that way.

And the Christmas dinners they have there—the goose, the brown, crisp, juicy, melting roast goose! What would that dinner be without that goose? What, indeed!

But once—they turn pale at that lighthouse now when they think of it—they came very near having no goose for dinner on Christmas day!

It came about in this way. Papa—ah, if you could only hear Baby Deb tell about it, it would be worth the journey, but you cannot, of course, so never mind—Papa Stoughton, the lighthouse keeper, you know, had lost all his money in a savings bank that had failed early in that December.

A goose is really not a very expensive fowl, but if one has not the money of course one cannot buy even a cheap thing. Papa Stoughton could not afford a goose. He said so—said so before all the family.

Ike says that the silence that fell upon that family then was painful to hear. They looked at one another with eyes so wide that it's a mercy they could ever shut them again.

"No goose!" at last cried Tom, who was the oldest.

"No goose!" cried the others in chorus, all except Baby Deb, who was busy at the time gently admonishing Sculpin, her most troublesome child, for being so dirty. Baby Deb said "No doose!" after all the others were quiet.

That made them all laugh. No doubt they thought that, after all, so long as Baby Deb was there it would be Christmas anyhow, goose or no goose. So they were happy for a moment until the thought came that roast goose was good on Christmas even with Baby Deb, and then they looked dismayed again.

However, when Papa Stoughton explained how it was they saw it as plainly as he did, and so they made no more complaint. Only Tom fell a-thinking, and when the others saw what he was doing they did the same, the difference being that Tom was trying to think what he could do to get the goose anyhow and they were trying to think what he was thinking about so that they could think the same—all except Baby Deb, of course, who, being only four years old, gave herself very little concern about the thoughts of others. Her own thoughts took all her time.

Tom finally said "Ah!" under his breath and mysteriously vanished into another room after beckoning his brothers and sisters to follow him, which they did almost before they had fairly said "Ah!"

Baby Deb was there, too, somewhat awestruck at the mystery about her, but ready to lend the help of her wisdom if necessary.

"OH, PLEASE, DOOD LORD, SEND US A DOOSE!"

"We must have a goose," said Tom.

"Oh!" gasped his audience, moved by mingled amazement and admiration.

Tom looked at them with great firmness and dignity.

"Ever since I was born," he went on, "we have had a roast goose for Christmas."

Ever since he was born! It might have been a hundred years before, from Tom's tone and manner, and the audience was tremendously impressed.

"And," continued the orator, "we must have one now. We will have one now!"

They almost stopped breathing.

"I have a plan." They shuddered and drew nearer. "We all must combine!"

"Oh!" in chorus.

"Do you want goose, Sue?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"You, Sam?"

"Yes."

"Ike?"

"Do I? Well!"

"Ann?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Me, too," said Baby Deb, with great earnestness, for it was clear to her that it was a question of eating, and she did not wish to be left out.

"Of course you, too, you deary dumpling," said Tom. "Now, then," he continued when order was restored, "what shall we contribute? I'll give my new sailboat. That ought to bring 50 cents."

His new sailboat! Why, he had only just made it and had not even tried it yet. Oh, evidently this was a time of sacrifice! Who could hesitate now?

"I'll give my shells," said Sue heroically.

"My sea mosses," sighed Ann.

"You may take my shark's teeth," said Ike.

"And my whale's tooth," said Sam.

The sacrifice was general. The lighthouse would yield up its treasures.

"All right," said Tom. "Now let's tell father."

And father was told, and for some reason he pretended to look out of the window very suddenly, but he did not. He wiped his eyes, and Mamma Stoughton wiped her spectacles and winked very hard and said:

"Bless their hearts!"

For, you see, these parents were very simple hearted folk, and it seemed to them very affecting that the children should make such sacrifices to procure the goose for Christmas.

"And what does Baby Deb contribute?" asked Papa Stoughton by way of a joke.

"I des I's not dot nuffin," was Baby Deb's reply when the matter was explained to her. "'cept 'oo tate Stulpin."

Oh, what a laugh there was then, for if ever there was a maimed and demoralized doll it was Stulpin. But Baby Deb was hugged and kissed as if she had contributed a lump of gold instead of a little bundle of rags.

Papa Stoughton and Tom were to go out to the mainland the first clear day to buy the goose; but, alas, a storm came on, and they were forced to wait for it to go down. It did not go down. It grew worse and worse. The wind shrieked and moaned and wrestled with the lonely tower, and the waves hurled themselves at it and washed over and over the island, and no boat could have lived at all in such weather.

If a goose be only a goose, no matter, but if it be a Christmas dinner—ah, then!

Yes, they had good reason to feel dismal at the lighthouse. It was no wonder if five noses were fifty times a day flattened despairingly against the lighthouse windows. Yes; six noses, for even Baby Deb was finally affected, and, though she did not know the least thing about the weather, she, too, would press her little nose against the glass in a most alarming way, as if she thought that pressure was the only effective thing.

It took some time for Baby Deb to realize the importance of having a goose for Christmas, but when she had grasped the idea she became an enthusiast on the subject. She explained the matter to her dolls and was particularly explicit with Stulpin, with whom, indeed, she held very elaborate and almost painful conversations.

One thing became very certain. There was very little prospect of clean weather within a week, and it lacked only three days of Christmas. The others gloomily gave up hope, but not so did Baby Deb. The truth was she had a plan, and you know when one has a plan one has hope too.

Mamma Stoughton had only recently been having a series of talks with Baby Deb on the important question of prayer, and it had occurred to Baby Deb that the goose was a good subject for prayer. It was a very clear case to her. The goose was necessary. Why not ask for it, then?

STEP BY STEP, PATTER, PATTER.

The great difficulty was to find a secret place for her devotions, for the family very well filled the lighthouse, and Baby Deb understood that prayers ought to be quietly and secretly made.

The place was found, however. Just in front of the lighthouse was a broad ledge of rocks, generally washed by the waves, but at low tide, even in this bad weather, out of water. The other children had been forbidden to go there because it was dangerous, but no one had thought of cautioning Baby Deb. So there she went and in her imperfect way begged hard for the goose.

Christmas eve came, and still there was no goose. Baby Deb was puzzled; the others were gloomy. Still Baby Deb would not give up. It would be low tide about 7 o'clock. She knew that, for she had asked. She would make her last trial. She had hope yet, but as the others knew nothing of her plans they had absolutely no hope. To them it was certain that there could be no Christmas goose at their house that year.

Seven o'clock came, and Baby Deb crept softly from the room and downstairs. She opened the great door just a little bit and slipped out into the darkness—really did slip, for it was very icy on the rocks, and she sat down very hard. However, she was very chubby and did not mind it. She crawled cautiously around to the big rock, the keen wind nipping her round cheeks and pelting her with the frozen drops of spray. She knelt down.

"Oh, please, dood Lord, send us a doose! We wants a doose awful. Won't you, please, dood Lord?"

Thud fell something right alongside of her.

"Oh, what's dat?" she exclaimed, putting her hand out. "Why, it's a doose!" she cried, with a scream of delight, as her hand came in contact with a soft, warm, feathery body.

She forgot to give a "thank you" for the goose, but she was thankful, though not so very much surprised. She really had expected it.

It was a heavy load for Baby Deb, but she was excited and did not notice it. She made her way into the lighthouse, and, step by step, patter, patter, she went upstairs and burst, all breathless, into the sitting room, crying exultantly "It's tummed, it's tummed!" as the great goose fell from her arms upon the floor.

Well, if you think they were not surprised you know very little about the Stoughton folks. What they said nobody knows. They all talked at once, but by and by Papa Stoughton had a chance to be heard.

"Where did you get it, Baby Deb?" he asked.

"Why, I p'ayed Dod for it," answered Deb in the most matter of fact way.

"DOD'S DOOSE IS DOOD."

"P'aid Dod!" exclaimed Papa Stoughton.

"P'aid Dod!" chorused the family.

"'Es," responded Baby Deb convincingly. "Dod—ze dood Lord. I p'ayed to him. He sended it to me dess now."

More questions and more of Baby Deb's explanations revealed the whole story. Funny folks, those Stoughtons, but they spent the next ten minutes wiping their eyes and hugging and kissing and making up new pet names for Baby Deb.

Papa Stoughton did say to Mamma Stoughton that night as they were going to bed:

"A wild goose. It was blinded by the bright light and broke its neck by flying against the glass. And, after all, who shall say the good Lord did not send it?"

At all events, not a word of explanation was said to Baby Deb, and no one contradicted her when she said at dinner next day:

"Dod's doose is dood."

Charles Dickens on Christmas.

"It is a wonderful thing," wrote Charles Dickens, "the period of Christmas! I wonder how many hundreds of thousands of parents have discovered at Christmas time, under the magic of the season—through some little, little thing done by son or daughter—that those they thought estranged from them, by those things which come between, still loved them with a memory more tender than they had dreamed of.

"I wonder how many sons and daughters, under the magic influence of Christmas, have had their hearts softened so as to be moved by some little manifestation of love by father or mother, which they would have thought little of, perhaps despised, at any other season."

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CHRISTMAS ON THE POLLY.

By FRANK H. SWEET.

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IT was the good ship Polly, and
she sailed the wintry sea,
For ships must sail though
fierce the gale, and a precious freight had she.

'Twas the captain's little daughter
stood beside her father's
chair
And illumined the dingy cabin with
the sunshine of her hair.

With a yo heave ho and a yo heave
ho!
For ships must sail
Though fierce the gale
And loud the tempests blow.

The captain's fingers rested on the
pretty, curly head.
"Tomorrow will be Christmas day,"
the little maiden said.
"Do you suppose that Santa Claus
will find us on the sea
And make believe the stovepipe is a
chimney just for me?"

Loud laughed the jovial captain and
"By my faith," he cried,
"If he should come we'll let him
know he has a friend inside!"
And many a rugged sailor cast a
loving look that night
At the stovepipe where a lonely little stocking fluttered white.

With a yo heave ho and a yo heave
ho!
For ships must sail
Though fierce the gale
And loud the tempests blow.

"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT SANTA CLAUS WILL FIND US ON THE SEA?"

On the good ship Polly the Christmas
sun shone down
And on a smiling little face beneath
a golden crown.
No happier child he saw that day on
sea or on the land
Than the captain's little daughter
with her treasures in her
hand.

For never was a stocking so filled
with curious things.
There were bracelets made of pretty
shells and rosy coral strings,
An elephant carved deftly from a bit
of ivory tusk,
A fan, an alligator tooth and a little bag of musk.

Not a tar aboard the Polly but felt
the Christmas cheer,
For the captain's little daughter was
to every sailor dear.
They heard a Christmas carol in the
shrieking wintry gust,
For a child had touched them by her
simple, loving trust.

With a yo heave ho and a yo heave
ho!
For ships must sail
Though fierce the gale
And loud the tempests blow.

Carlotta Grisi complained to Rossini that Giulia Grisi's success as a singer obliged her to fall back upon the dancer's profession.

"What would you more, my child?" he replied. "Giulia has stolen the nightingale's voice, but she has left you its wings."

"It's awfully late," I remarked to my friend after an extra long whist bout at the club. "What will you say to your wife?"

"Oh, I shan't say much, you know," was the reply; "'Good morning, dear,' or something of that sort. She'll say the rest."

The Truth About Santa Claus.

I write myself down as one who still believes in Santa Claus. Don't you? Are you one of those very literal folk who have their doubts whether they ought to let their children cling to the beautiful old myth?

Without imagination, without dreams, without poetry, this old world of ours would be a very wearisome place. Its road would be steeper than it is—much like sleighing over bare ground would our progress be as compared with sleighing over deep, hard packed snow.

The poetic myth of the old saint, with his reindeer and his jingling bells and his bulging pack of toys and bonbons, has charmed a thousand generations. The stocking hung by the chimney on Christmas eve, the children staying awake until sleep pounced on them like a strong man armed, the presents filling them from top to toe in the morning, the rush of the bare feet hurrying fast across the floor, the merry uproar, the bubbling laughter, the shouts of joy—the whole of this family pageant belongs to dear Santa Claus. We owe it to him. Gradually, as the golden mists of childhood clear before the sun and the "trailing clouds of glory" fade, our small men and women discover that Santa Claus is not one, but ten thousand; that he is better than they knew, being just the spirit of love, good will and beautiful unselfishness that makes the world a beautiful place to live in now and makes it a good starting point for heaven by and by. For you and me there is hope that we may do our duty in this world lovingly while we keep the child heart and believe in Santa.

WAYNE HOLT.

Christmas Family Advice.

To Papa—Remember the myth of Santa Claus, to keep it holy.

To Mamma—Don't worry about the molasses candy getting on the parlor rug. Christmas comes but once a year, and the stores will sell you a parlor rug any day.

To Miss Belle—It is not necessary to stand under a bunch of mistletoe if you look at him the right way.

To Little Willy—Don't be envious of Jimmy Jones because Santa brought him a cannon. Next year you may get a disappearing gun. (It will disappear mysteriously shortly after you begin to make a noise with it, and maybe mamma can explain.)

To Baby—Be good, dear child, and let who will be clever.

Old Folk at Home Remembered.

A good many hundred thousand dollars have been shipped home to Europe for Christmas, through the banks, by foreigners employed in America. This year, probably because of the high rates of wages, the banks have been busier with this class of exchange than usual. The bulk of the drafts go to England and Ireland. Servants send most of this money, and none is apparently so poor or ragged that he or she has not at least the equivalent of a pound sterling to send home to the old folks.

Peacocks For Turkeys.

Peacocks formerly took the place of turkeys on the Christmas table.

Church and Clergy.

The insurance upon St. Paul's cathedral, London, is about £95,000, or in the neighborhood of half a million dollars.

The Collegiate Dutch Reformed church of New York city has increased the salary of Rev. Dr. David B. Burrell, its senior pastor, to $15,000, with the promise of a pension on retiring.

Rev. Bertrand Martin Tipple, formerly pastor of Embury Memorial Methodist Episcopal church, Hartford, Conn., and for some years pastor of the Methodist church at Stamford, Conn., has been chosen to take charge of the work of the Methodist church in Rome, Italy.

Short Stories.

Bullets were formerly made of stone.

One town in Spain has one hunchback to every thirteen inhabitants.

Eleven years ago about 200 automobiles were made and used in the United States. Next year, builders predict, the number will be 200,000.

Electric engines will haul the ships through the Panama canal when the big ditch is completed. This will prevent serious accidents and collisions. The electric engines will run on special tracks on the bank.

Children Cry
FOR FLETCHER'S
CASTORIA