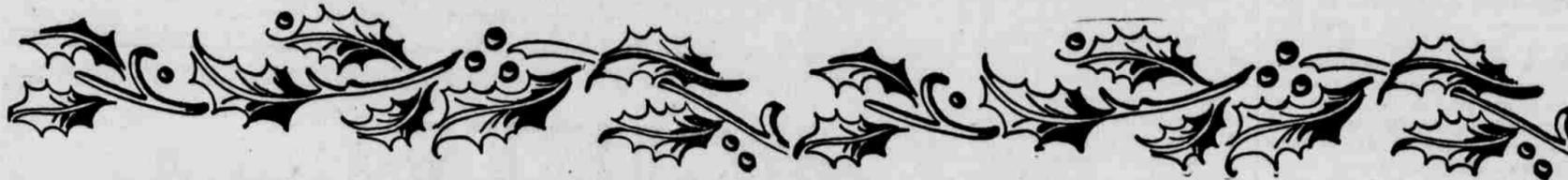


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There Is a Santa Claus

(Editor's Note: Following is an editorial which originally appeared in the old New York Sun in 1897 and was an answer to a letter written by an 8-year old girl to the Sun. It is considered one of the classic editorials in American journalism and was written by Francis P. Church, a member of the Sun's editorial staff.)

The letter from the little girl follows:

"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,
"115 W. 95th St."

Following is the reply that was printed in the New York Sun, and although it is 41 years old it is forever new each year when the Christmas season rolls around:

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think 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 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 Virginias. There would be no child-like 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 children fill the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get 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 com-

ing down, what would they 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 neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

"You 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 nor the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can brush aside that curtain and view and picture and supernal beauty and glory beyond. It is all real! Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives, and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

