



"At Christmas Play and Make Good Cheer, For Christmas Comes but Once a Year."



A CHRISTMAS TELEPHONE.

By ALICE E. ALLEN.

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DOROTHY left her playthings in a heap on the floor. She pulled a chair to the telephone on the desk. She climbed into it. Her curly head reached the mouth-piece. She unhooked the receiver and put it to her ear, just as father did.

"Number?" said a voice so quickly that Dorothy jumped.

"Two-two-nine-six," she said clearly. That was what father said.

In a minute, close to Dorothy's ear it seemed, another voice spoke.

"Hello!" it said pleasantly.

"Is this Santa Claus?" asked Dorothy as much like father as possible.

"Yes," said the voice sweetly. "What is it?"

Dorothy hesitated.

"You don't sound just like Santa Claus," she said.

"Well, I am," the voice laughed. "But who is this—some little girl?"

"I'm Dorothy Grant."

"Dorothy Grant?" The voice seemed surprised. Dorothy hastened to explain.

"Dorothy Grant, 234 Park place," she said. "Don't you know me?"

"Oh," cried the voice, "of course I do now! But I've never seen you're Mr. John you have? You grant's little girl?"

"Grant's little girl, are you not, Dorothy?"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "But, you see, he isn't home. He isn't ever, 'cept Sundays and Christmas and Thanksgiving and such days. That's why I had to ask you. There isn't any one in the house 'cept Rhoda and Sofia. So Sofia's so old she's deaf. You aren't deaf yet, are you, Santa Claus?"

"Not yet," laughed the voice. "I can hear you quite well. Go on."

"Sofia takes care of the house and father, and Rhoda takes care of me. But they don't understand about Evelyn, and tomorrow, when father'll be here, it will be too late, 'cause tomorrow's Christmas. And you must give Christmas gifts on Christmas, mustn't you?"

"Yes," said the voice, "What is it you want, Dorothy?"

"It's about Evelyn. I didn't hear it myself till Rhoda told me today when she dressed me—that is, I didn't hear all of it. You don't know Evelyn, do you?"

"Why, no; I think not."

"I was just about sure you didn't, 'cause, you see, you've never given her a single thing, she says. And she's older'n me—a little. She's always been lame, but she's never been sick till now. Think of being sick at Christmas time! And the doctor says she must have fruit and nice things to eat. And she can't, you see, 'cause Rhoda says it took every cent there was saved to pay up the doctor."

"Where does Evelyn live?"

"It's 22 Monroe street. I've been there with Rhoda. And it's up ever and over so many stairs. I don't know how you'll ever get there. Are you so very stout?"

"Not so very. I climb stairs yet quite easily."

"I knew you'd help if you only knew about it!" cried Dorothy.

"What does Evelyn need most besides the nice things to eat?"

"She needs most everything," said Dorothy. "I thought her a Teddy bear with my own money. She just had to have him. But a dolly is quite necessary too. Don't you think so?"

"Very. And some picture books?"

"Oh! And a chair that won't hurt her back—a soft, comfy one."

"A pretty gown?"

"And some slippers—"

"And flowers?"

"Most anything you have left over!" cried Dorothy in great excitement. "Evelyn'd like anything, 'cause she hasn't anything to begin with."

"I see," said the voice gently. "We'll have a lovely Christmas for Evelyn now, isn't there something you'd like for yourself, Dorothy?"

Dorothy hesitated.

"There is—one thing," she said slowly. "I've never even told father. But I do want it dreadfully."

"What is it?" encouraged the voice.

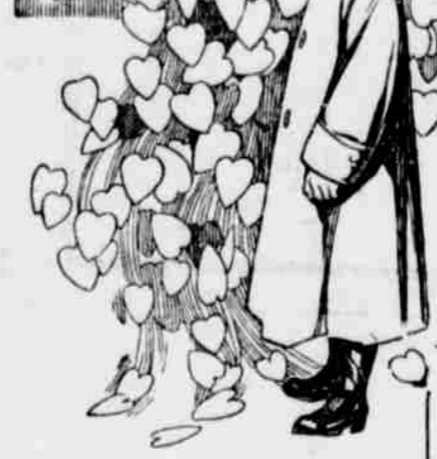
"I want—a mother all my very own," said Dorothy. "Barbara has one and Connie. And Maude has one and two grandmothers besides. Why, even Evelyn has a mother—a sick one—"



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HE took her one day in his automobile. And he was a magnate in iron and steel. Her very best gown was a cheap little lacy. But her face was as lovely and fresh as the dawn. He had horses and cattle and acres of land. And servants to wait on his slightest command. A house in the country, a palace in town. (But the eyes of his chauffeur were gentle and brown).



THIS captain of finance, he wooed like a king. So she did not say "No" when he brought her a ring. He showered her with presents of diamonds and pearls. And crowned her with roses, this fairest of girls. But the glittering jewels were soon pushed aside. And his roses, neglected, soon wilted and died. For the magnate was grizzled and wrinkled and old. And the locks of the chauffeur were yellow as gold.



OH, youth unto youth is forever the same. As the torch to the tow, as the moth to the flame. So the jewels and ring, with a message contrite. Went back to the elderly wooer one night. And silent and dark stood the automobile. With no lights o'er the bonnet, no hand on the wheel. For a maiden in lacy and a lover in leather. Waiked Christmas eve to the parson's together.

Mine died, you know, when I came. And I would like another one."

"Yes," said the voice.

"I'd like a pretty little one with dimples, like Connie's mother. She isn't hardly ever real cross, even when Connie tears her gown. And she kisses Connie real often, and puts her to bed every single night, and tells her stories. But most any kind would do if father liked her. She'd have to stay here, you know."

A mischievous little laugh sounded in Dorothy's ear. But in a minute the voice said:

"Is that all, Dorothy?"

"Yes, thank you," said Dorothy, as father had taught her.

"You dear, quaint little thing!" cried the voice. "May I come to see you soon?"

"Why, of course, Santa Claus," said Dorothy.

"But wasn't Santa Claus funny to ask that, father?" asked Dorothy. Father had surprised her by coming home before her bedtime, and she was telling him all that had happened.

"Of course he's coming. Doesn't he always? Why should he ask if he could?"

Father chuckled.

"What number did you ask for, Dolly?" he said.

"Two-two-nine-six," said Dorothy.

"But wasn't Santa Claus funny to ask that?"

Father gave a long low whistle. Then he asked:

"Was Santa's voice deep and gruff?"

Dorothy shook her head.

"It was low and sweet, and every little way it had laughs in it," she said.

After Dorothy had gone her happy way to dreamland Mr. John Grant went to the telephone.

"Two-two-nine-six," he said.

In a moment there came to him a voice, low and sweet, with laughs in it.

"Is this Miss Annie Claus?" he asked.

"Yes. And this is Mr. Grant?"

"Yes. You had a conversation with my little daughter this morning, Miss Claus?"

"Yes—bless the child! How did she know me and my number?"

"She didn't, but—bless the child—she tried the only number she remembered and found you. She was trying to get Santa Claus!"

"Santa Claus?"

"Yes."

Annie Claus laughed.

"I understand now," she cried. "That was why she asked if I were deaf yet and stout. How funny and sweet and dear of her! Well, thanks to her and to Evelyn, I've played Santa's part and had the loveliest Christmas I ever had so far."

"It was good of you, Annie," said John Grant.

"Good?" Annie Claus questioned.



"One would do anything for Dorothy," "Would one?"

"Anything one could," amended Annie in suspicious haste.

"You have Evelyn's gifts ready?" asked Mr. Grant.

"All ready. You should see—"

"And Dorothy's?"

"The one thing she wants—she told me, Annie. Is it ready?"

"Not quite."

"But, Annie, tomorrow is Christmas, and Christmas gifts must be given on Christmas."

A mischievous little laugh rippled over the wire.

"Dorothy stipulated that in the selection of her gift her father must be pleased," said Annie Claus.

"That needn't bother you. You have



known his preference for a year and more, haven't you?"

"Yes, unless he has changed his mind."

"He hasn't, Annie, and never will. Don't you believe that?"

"Yes."

"Come over to my Christmas tree tomorrow night, you and Dorothy. Evelyn will be here. We'll talk things over."

"Thank you; we'll come without fail. But Dorothy—and Dorothy's father—will be sadly disappointed if Dorothy's gift isn't ready."

"Perhaps it will be."

"Annie—really?"

But Annie Claus had rung off.

Eight Millions For Toys.

The real amount of cash money paid out in the United States alone for toys that on Christmas morning gladden the hearts of American children is conservatively estimated at \$8,000,000. This means about 30 cents apiece for the something like 12,000,000 of five to twelve year old children. The children of no other country have so great an amount expended for toys for them.

A CHRISTMAS OF LONG AGO

By MARCIA FIELD

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DEAR COUSIN JACK

Pray come to spend The Holly days with your true friend. In Hopes that Weather will permit. To your good Parents Pa has writ. And you and Ned and Frank can ride Your Ponies by the Chariot's side.



I am excited to say that Nan Expects such Sport with Cousin Fan. She has a Doll from London Town. With an Egg and Tabby Cow. She is so proud! But, Jack, we Boys Can think of better Things than Toys.

What merry games, what generous cheer. What jingles sung, what cider clear. What "pudens"—Dicky spelled it thus—What nut brown turkeys odoriferous. What big mince pies in spicy cove. In Christmas season long ago!

As round the hearth the circles smiled What leg tires raised 'neath mantle's dield. Where, figuring forth the Scripture tale. Thus Jonah fed the azure whale! What singing sounds, what genial glow. In Christmas season long ago!

What stories told as snug they sat By Cousin Thos or Uncle Thst. Till Dicky vowed to go to sea. But Jack a soldier he'd would be. 'Til for the King and make a show In scarlet coat, long, long ago.

All peated, like accents in shifting fire. And sailor Dick grew up aquire. While strange the change the swift years bring. Bold Jack fell fighting 'gainst the King. All vanished like the melting snow Of Christmas season long ago.

And begs his love. Pray answer quick. Your faithful, loving,
COUSIN DICK.

P. S.—There came gill Gingerbread From England in a Box; for Ned There's a Dragon, for Francis, too; But, Jack, I'll save King George for you.

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