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MRS. SANTA CLAUS.

UNCLE SAM'S DEAD LETTER EXPERT GUIDES STRAY CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.

Sends out Many Presents to Children—Has a Remarkable Memory and Knowledge, and Deciphers the most Puzzling Addresses.

Tucked away in a little corner of the Postoffice Department at Washington behind a desk which has held a thousand interesting stories sits a charming white haired woman who is known the length and breadth of the land as "Mrs. Santa Claus."

The woman to whom this suggestively dear name has been given is Mrs.



MRS. "SANTA CLAUS"

Patti Lyle Collins, head of the "Opening and Unmailable Division" of the Postoffice Department.

Each holiday season brings to her desk thousands and thousands of "Santa Claus" letters and were she of the ordinary type of clerk, thinking only of the salary she draws twice a month, these letters might go into Uncle Sam's waste basket without so much as a thought for the writers.

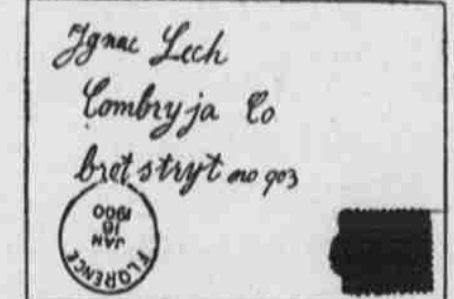
Not so with Mrs. Collins. Through her generous heart, her love for children and, possibly, with a memory or two of her own when she, too, believed in the real existence of the children's patron saint, this lovable woman attends first to her duties of returning the letters to their writers if this is possible and then she plays "Mrs. Santa Claus" to her army of little friends.

Christmas Presents to the Children

When such a thing is possible Mrs. Collins finds out the addresses of these children, sends them some little thing they have asked for and gets her friends interested in them until she has now earned the title which came to her so long ago merely through her associations with this part of Uncle Sam's postoffice.

This is rather the sentimental side of Mrs. Collins' work, but there is another and scientific phase of it which has made her invaluable to the Government. She is the official chirographical expert of the Department and through her efforts each year ninety per cent. of mail matter bearing manifestly indecipherable addresses finds its way to the person to whom it is addressed.

Mrs. Collins is a linguist and a deep student. Added to this she has stored away in her brain a fund of general



knowledge which enables her to solve problems which would puzzle a hundred other heads. Her knowledge of streets in various cities of Europe led to her compilation of a street directory of its countries.

The value of Mrs. Collins' work in ferreting out addresses is all the more notable when it is considered that each postoffice in all the large cities has a division especially set apart for deciphering illegible and otherwise puzzling addresses. So after this has been done letters which are still unclaimed are sent to the postoffice at Washington.

Knows All Languages.

Mrs. Collins has made such a study of this rather psychological work that she knows just what section of the country, even to the cities, in which various nationalities have settled. She can put her finger on the Japanese, the Chinese, Greeks, Spaniards, Italians and all the rest of them.

This particular talent has enabled Mrs. Collins to decipher many a letter which would have been otherwise un-

intelligible. Among the hundreds of such which she received the other day was one addressed to "Ygnac Lech, Combraya Co, brot stryct no 903, Ssanony Pan."

How many, or rather how few, people would have known how to go about locating this person. The letter was postmarked Florence. Mrs. Collins' own store of information told her that the Cambria Iron Works of Johnstown, Pa., was employing a large number of Italians and she set the letter on. Sure enough Mr. "Ygnac Lech" was there and received the letter which, without Mrs. Collins' assistance would never have fallen into his hands.

A facetious student at the University of Virginia wrote to a young society girl in Washington and addressed the envelope entirely in Greek. It takes greater obstacles than that to balk Mrs. Collins and the young woman received her letter as promptly as if it had been addressed in the most legible English hand. The list of such letters is almost unlimited in length. A Spaniard sent a letter to "Sr. Fernando Maya, Fuerte galen Colo" and it was promptly forwarded to Mr. Maya at "Fort Garland, Colorado."

Mrs. Collins is a charming woman and occupies a tiny apartment in one of Washington's fashionable apartment houses.

Senator Harris Balked.

Henry Clay Evans, late consul general at London, was once in Congress

POLITICAL TAXATION.

LEGISLATION LIKELY REQUIRING PUBLICATION OF ALL LARGE CONTRIBUTIONS.

Such a Bill, introduced last year, was looked upon as a crank measure—will be on a different basis this session.

Exposure of the practice of the great life insurance companies and other corporations, of making contributions to political campaign funds and of devoting large amounts of money to influence legislation will bring before the next session of congress the question of the passage of a bill similar to that introduced at the last session by Representative Bourke Cockran, of New York, and familiarly known as the "Corrupt Practice" bill. It may not be that this bill will be taken up and given the serious consideration which it was denied at the last session, but that a bill containing provisions of the same general description as those of the Cockran bill will be introduced and pressed to a vote is a moral certainty.

The Cockran bill provided that every contribution of more than \$50 to a national campaign fund should be reported to the clerk of the district court of the United States,

to the republican committees in the last three presidential campaigns, and John A. McCall, president of the New York Life Insurance Company admitted that he had contributed \$150,000 of the company's funds to the same committees. In fact the big companies have frequently been contributors to both political parties.

Public May Demand Legislation. There are two questions involved in any fair consideration of these disclosures. The first is the desirability of corporations taking such an active and influential part in political campaigns and the second is the morality of corporation officers making contributions on their own initiative out of funds that are really trust funds.

Of course a law can be made prohibiting campaign contributions by insurance companies or other corporations. This may correct the abuse or it may not. Laws are not always obeyed or enforced. There, for example are the laws of Moses. The world has been violating them for thousands of years. It might be considered fair if the directors of every insurance company, savings bank, trust company or other corporation handling the people's money, would adopt a rule forbidding absolutely all such contributions and holding every officer financially and morally responsible for its observance. Second, political candidates and committees could announce that they would neither solicit nor receive contributions. Public sentiment is rapidly crystal-

NEW PONTOON BRIDGES.

Collapsible Boats of Canvas Which Can be Carried by One Man.

The soldiers of the United States Engineers' Corps seem to have solved one of the greatest problems which are confronted generally in command of an army when about to give battle to the enemy, and it would take weeks, if not months, to construct even temporary bridges to allow the men with their heavy armaments to cross. The pontoon boat, of course, is well known to every reader of history, for this most useful

WHITE HOUSE XMAS DINNER.

THE ROOSEVELT FAMILY CELEBRATES IN THE GOOD OLD-FASHIONED WAY.

Always Have Huge Rhode Island Turkey Which is not Spoiled by French Cooks.—President Himself Does the Carving.

Old fashioned cooks and old fashioned cookery hold the fort in the White House kitchen at Christmastide. When the President and Mrs. Roosevelt give one of their great state dinners to eighty or one hundred guests, they usually entrust all the preparations to professional caterers, but when it comes to the dinner which



THE PRESIDENT'S TURKEY

auxiliary came into great use during the war of the Rebellion, the pontoon train, however, is a very cumbersome affair when the ordinary flat bottom boat with the necessary timbers and accessories are packed on to what is known as the "pontoon train." The German army recently adopted a sort of sectional pontoon boat which allowed of greater mobility to the train.

However, the soldiers of the United States Engineer Battalion have been drilling in the use of pontoon boats made of heavy canvass stretched over a wooden frame. These boats are water-tight and when assembled are capable of supporting six or more men. A boat may be taken apart and packed into a small bundle light enough to be carried by one man. Upon arrival at a small stream all that is necessary is for each man to unstrap his bundle, quickly put the boat into shape, and launch it into the water. The wagons which must necessarily carry the timbering and flooring of the bridge to be, can be sent forward with a much smaller guard than is necessary when the cumbersome pontoon train wagons, each carrying a boat or section, are in motion.

One Good Use for Millionaires.

Regret has been often expressed regarding the threatened extinction of many species of wild animals.

Of late, however, some of the world's millionaires have begun to devote their attention to the task of preserving them, and numbers of wealthy men have established or endowed parks and private zoological gardens, in which buffaloes, antelopes, giraffes, gnus, and other dwindling species are carefully cherished. In some cases herds of bison are kept, after the fashion of deer, on the estates of great landowners.

Nor are Europe and Asia behindhand. Large preserves of big game are to be found in France and Germany, and in England the Duke of Bedford has made a wonderful collection of wild animals at Woburn Park. It comprises many rare animals, including waterbuck, gnus, sable antelopes, and some almost extinct species of deer.

Strong on Details.

"Rastus, where's that rake?"
"De rake's wid de hoe, Marster."
"Well, then, where's the hoe?"
"Marster, de hoe's wid de rake."
"Well, Rastus, confound it, where are they both?"
"Dey's boff toggeder, Marster. Pears like youse pow'ful tickler 'bout details 'd maw'nin'. You leave de regulatin' of 'dat to me, Marster, and I'll look out fo' yo' interests."

Time to Move.

Oh that I were where I would be,
Then would I be where I am not,
For where I am, I would not be,
And where I could be, I cannot.



Baby's First Christmas.

Long, long ago the Wise Men, we are told,
Laden with Myrrh and frankincense and gold,
Journeyed afar, and found the Shepherd's fold
On the first Christmas Day.

And now both young and old, with shining eyes
Gather to watch their Baby's glad surprise,
His cotillion, his joy, his gleeful cries,
On his first Christmas day.

Oh Baby, Baby, may thy life be sweet;
May God-sent angels guide thy little feet;
May every day to come be as complete
As thy first Christmas day.

from Tennessee and knows all the eminent men of that State. He was telling a good story the other night of Col. Sandford and Major Saunders, prominent business men of the Knoxville region. They were once on a Pullman coming this way. It was hot and they sat in pajamas far into the night. An old man came in, lighted a cigar, smoked and said nothing. They did not recognize him, and kept on talking about the miserably poor representation, their State had in Congress. "It is a pity," said one of them "that a State like ours should have such poor worthless men at Washington. Our senators are no good, old Harris is played out and Josiah Patterson is the only man in the House that amounts to anything." At this remark the stranger arose and in a tone of thunder began to hurl invective and abuse at the two men. "It is about time I was taking part in this conversation," he yelled and went on to tell a few warm things to the astonished party of two. When he had subsided a bit one of them asked, "But who are you to get so mad about it?" "Who am I? Well, I am Senator Harris, ding you, and I have much more to say to scoundrels like you." Both men were amazed and they hastened to apologize. They all became friendly, and the old man often told the story on himself.

Criminal penalties were provided for violations of the law.

Looked Upon as a Cockran Oddity.

The bill was treated with derision last winter, both by the daily press and by gentlemen of the House of Representatives, the Senate and Third House. It was worth a laugh, people said. There was very little corruption, they averred. The idea that corporations employed legislative agents and disbursed huge sums of money for or against certain bills was moonshine doled out by sensationalists to gratify the morbid fancy and the appetite for scandal of a peculiar class of people.

The legislative inquiry into the affairs and conduct of the Equitable Life and Mutual Insurance companies at New York seems to have placed the matter of campaign contributions and legislative disbursements in other than a humorous light. It matters not whether the corporations come forward voluntarily with their contributions to campaign funds or whether they are solicited and hounded by campaign collectors until they contribute—the result is the same.

Vice-president Gillette of the Mutual Life Insurance Company testified that his company contributed \$22,500 of the policy holders' money

izing into the conviction that corporate contributions should either be made impossible or else required to be made in such public fashion that they would be robbed of their baneful effect.

Foot's Farrago.

Foot, the comedian, when a young person of either sex applied for a position, seldom refused outright, but gravely handed them the following lines, and asked them to commit and repeat them to him correctly in ten minutes. If repeated with no error, he promptly took them for trial.

That there could be no collusion with those who applied later, he frequently changed the order of the lines and the proper names:

So she went into the garden to cut a cabbage leaf to make an apple pie and at that time a great she-bear coming up the street pons its head into the shop. "What, no soap? So he died and she very impudently married the barber: and there were present the Fenicians, and the Joblilles and the Garvilles and the great Panjandrum himself with the little round button at the top, and they fell to playing the game of "catch as catch can," till the gunpowder ran out the heels of their boots.

The popularity of "Triby" for a time exceeded that of any novel published, with the possible exception of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

is pre-eminently the home meal of the year the French chefs have to give way to women who know just how to prepare the generous wholesome dishes that an American citizen looks forward to finding on his dinner table on the joyous holiday. President Roosevelt also shows a fondness for carving the turkey himself.

A good old fashioned Christmas dinner, moreover, with all the essentials from turkey to plum pudding is a regular institution at the White House during the present administration. Perhaps President Roosevelt, with his assertive good health and his family of lively young folks, are particularly well qualified to appreciate a rousing yule-tide feast, but whatever be the reason certain it is that during the Roosevelt regime the Christmas repast has become one of the most important as well as one of the jolliest meals of the year.

To Be Family Reunion.

President Roosevelt and his family follow the general policy of all previous occupants of the White House in observing Christmas as a family festival. This year it will have special significance as a reunion, since of late months the junior members of the Roosevelt household have been scattered as never before, by reason of their attendance at different schools and colleges. The Roosevelt Christmas, while a family affair, is by no means confined to the immediate household. The Roosevelt children have long been allowed to entertain their numerous cousins on Christmas and other relatives are likewise in attendance, while the President and Mrs. Roosevelt usually ask a few personal friends to also join the party.

Christmas dinner at the White House is served in the evening and the President arouses an appetite for it by

(Continued on next page.)



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