

SERIAL STORY

SANTA CLAUS BROWN

BY MILDRED GILMAN

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CHAPTER I

IT was Christmas Eve, and the small town of Southbury glowed gaily with Christmas cheer. Festoons of holly were strung across the center of the street and lighted trees blazed along the walks. The snow was falling gently, whirling into soft white drifts. Street lights gleamed in the darkness.

Along the main street of the town, men were busy clearing the street with snow shovels, stopping occasionally to blow on their hands and stamp chilled feet.

By far the most festive place in town was Southbury's main department store, Donaldson's Palais Royale, its glittering windows filled with toys and games and Christmas trimmings. Last minute Christmas shoppers passed in and out through its doors, and hurried homeward along the snowy street, their arms full of packages. It was a good-natured crowd that hurried and jostled and called greetings to one another.

The snow shovels began to relax. They leaned on their shovels and joked with each other; all except one—a young man with an earnest, intelligent face, who went right on with his work. Jim Carter had but one purpose in mind—to shovel snow until he had enough money to give his three small children the kind of Christmas children should have. He looked up at the town clock. It was only 8:30. . . . he could shovel for hours and hours.

His comrades called to him. "Come on, knock off for the day, Jim. It's Christmas Eve!" "I'll be along in a little while," he answered, as the others slung their shovels over their shoulders and trudged off toward home.

Jim Carter stood for a moment before Donaldson's department store and gazed at its toy-filled windows. He found himself picking things out for his Pete, and Joe, and little Betty, impossible things with high price tags, that a man shoveling snow at 40 cents an hour can only look at, never buy.

And then suddenly he saw Betty, his 6-year-old daughter, skipping up the street with a group of playmates. He turned away and bent over his work so that she would not see him, but he watched them out of the corner of his eye as they all trooped into the big store.

"Going to see Santa Claus Brown," he told himself. "Bless their hearts, how the children all do love him."

BETTY and her little group of friends hastened to the toy department inside Donaldson's Palais Royale. To them it was fairyland; they stood wide-eyed with awe and wonder. Then one of them shouted,

"There's Santa Claus Brown!" They rushed over to a plump, jolly Santa who sat enthroned among the wonders of the toy department.

As the children approached noisily, a footwalk called: "Time to quit, Santa Claus Brown. You worked half an hour late last night. Better go home and fix up your own Christmas."

But Brown didn't even hear him. He was smiling at the children.

Betty asked him earnestly: "Are you the real Santa Claus, Santa Claus Brown? Are the others just phonies? Gosh, you look like Santa Claus. Or—are you just working for the real Santa Claus?"

Some of the children snickered, but Brown smiled down at her and answered seriously: "If you believe in me hard enough, I'm Santa Claus, Betty. If you believe hard enough you'll get what you want. What do you want, Betty?"

"I want a doll carriage for myself, and a sled for Pete and a tool set for Joe," the child answered. "So please be sure to bring them."

MR. DONALDSON, proprietor of the store, approached Santa Claus Brown. He was a pompous, small-town, big business type, bristling at all times with his own importance. The children became instantly silent at his approach.

"Brown, could you do me a big favor?" Donaldson's tone was a command. "Work a little later to-night! The wife has a party—her idea. They want you to put on an act for the youngsters. Ten dollars extra. Guess you can use it this time of year—eh?"

He slapped a condescending hand on Brown's shoulder. "After all, old fellow, you are Santa Claus. Every youngster in this town believes in you. You've been Santa Claus for almost 20 years—ever since your first came in and asked for the job, with that little girl of yours riding piggy-back. Where is that daughter of yours now, Brown?"

Santa's smile disappeared. Everyone in town kept asking him, "Where is that daughter of yours?" None of them realized how cruel the question was.

"She's—she's doing very well in New York," he answered politely. "On the stage you know. Keeps her on the go—doesn't have time to get back here. Always was ambitious for the stage."

"Children should have enough respect for their parents to come home once in a while," Donaldson was unsympathetic. Then he beamed with pride. "My son's coming back from college on the 8:10. Fine boy. Won't take over the business, though. Wants to

be a lawyer. Maybe that's just as well. Good profession, law." He paused. "Then you'll help me out tonight?"

"Sure. Might as well stay right here till you need me. You're keeping open till 9, aren't you?"

Donaldson nodded. "Have to help out these last minute fellows."

Santa Claus Brown turned back to the waiting children.

"Santa Claus will remember every last one of you," he promised. "Now you'd better run home to your dinners. Good night, children, and Merry Christmas!"

The children left reluctantly. "Good night, Santa Claus Brown," they called back.

"Do you suppose he's the real Santa Claus," Betty asked her friends in hushed tones as they went out to the street.

"Naw, there's no real Santa Claus," answered a little boy scornfully.

"Course there is," responded Betty, shocked.

Several of the children laughed. "Yaah—she still believes in Santa Claus," cried one, and the others took up the taunt. "Betty thinks there's a real Santa Claus, that comes down an honest-to-gosh chimney, and wears a red suit, and . . ."

"Children, what on earth are you doing?"

The children stopped, and looked around, surprised, as Alice Banks, their school teacher, came up behind them.

Alice Banks was a pretty young woman with frank blue eyes and a warm, pleasant smile. Her cheeks glowed, pink as a child's in the chill of the December day. But she was not smiling now. She looked down sternly at her pupils.

"I heard all that you said to

Betty," she said. "Now, stop teasing her!"

The youngsters muttered unintelligible apologies and then, with the surprising suddenness of youth, disappeared around corners and down side streets, leaving Betty clinging to her teacher's hand. The child's eyes glistened with tears as she turned her face upwards.

"Tell me, Miss Banks," she begged, "is there really a Santa Claus?"

(To Be Continued)

Baby's Father Never Saw Her



Mrs. Marie Conway Lloyd, widow of a British naval officer lost when the British submarine Thetis sank last June, is pictured with her three-month-old daughter, Anne Marie, as they recently arrived in New York. The baby was born three months after Lt. Comdr. Conway Lloyd's death.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia

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"I'm taking care of him for a friend—that is, I thought she was a friend."

ORGAN OF HEARING

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured is an _____ of the body.

6 It is called the _____.

8 Its external part, the auricle or _____.

13 Wasp.

15 Resembling the rainbow.

17 To assist.

18 Corner.

20 To recede.

21 Hops kiln.

22 Astral.

24 Drunkard.

26 Street.

28 Public taxi.

30 Neat.

31 Fuel.

32 Constant companion.

34 Knob.

36 Torpid.

37 Wine vessel.

38 To sink.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

11 Indian viceroy.

12 Indefinite article.

14 Makes lace.

16 To harvest.

19 Glow.

21 Its chain of small bones.

22 Supports.

23 Redeemed.

25 The ear drum.

27 Exposed.

29 Beat of arteries.

31 Diamond.

32 Dance step.

33 To drink dog-fashion.

35 To purchase.

36 To bake meat.

3 Sand.

4 Conjunction.

5 New England.

6 Domestic slave.

7 Streamlet.

8 3,1416.

9 Fish.

10 Coffee beans.

11 Fish eggs.

VERTICAL

1 Sound of surprise.

2 To bake meat.

3 Sand.

4 Conjunction.

5 New England.

6 Domestic slave.

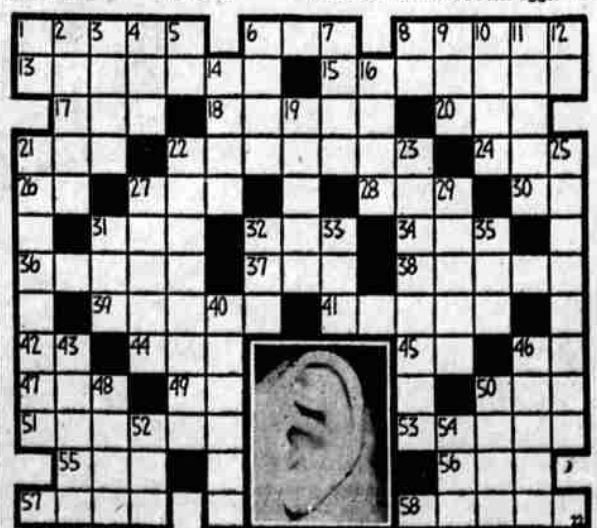
7 Streamlet.

8 3,1416.

9 Fish.

10 Coffee beans.

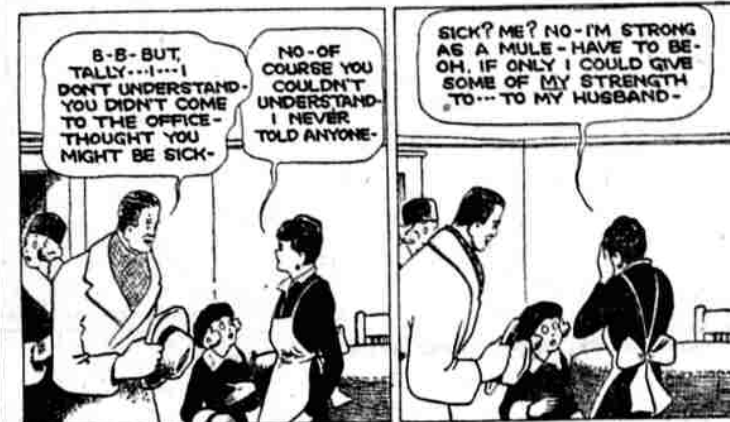
11 Fish eggs.



OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS



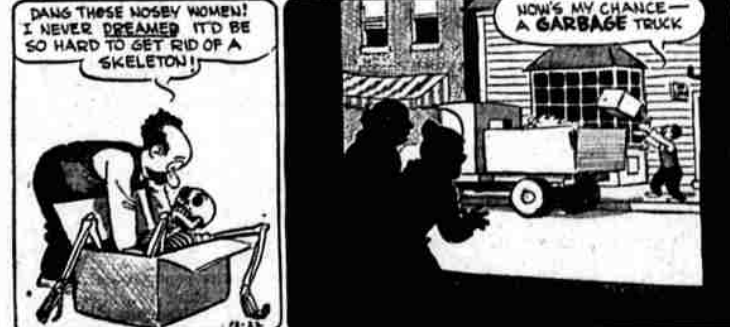
LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



WASH TUBS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



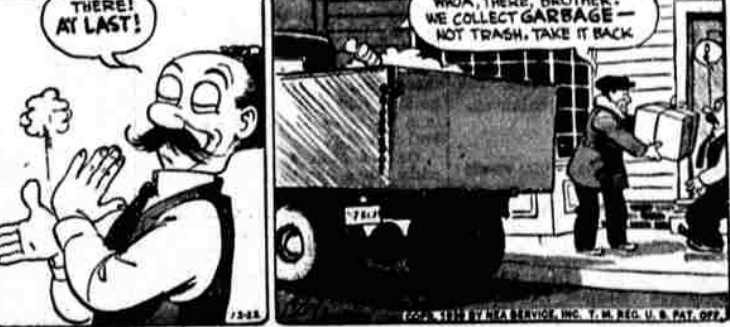
BY HAROLD GRAY



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE



BY MARTIN



BY V. T. HAMLIN

