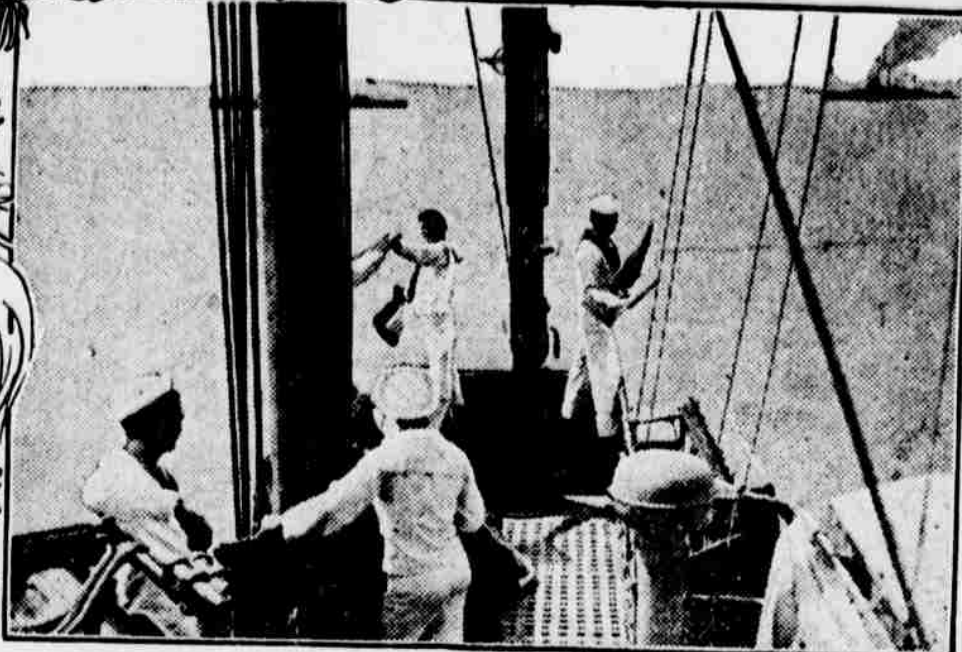


WHEN SANTA CLAUS BOARDS MAN-O-WAR

ABSURD as it may sound to every one, the bluejackets still believe in Santa Claus. That rotund, rosy-cheeked little old man pays as much attention to the thousands of boys on board the warships as he does to the thousands of, perhaps younger in years, boys and girls ashore. Instead of coming in a sleigh with reindeer and merry bells, he comes in a precarious-looking boat, fully armed and convoyed, with the boom of musketry and the loud blowing of horns. The blowing of horns is a universal custom with the boys of all countries and colors and with the bluejackets too.

On Christmas day Santy is the highest ranking officer of the fleet, and all flags are junior to his fur tree hoisted to the masthead. With his flag lieutenant, his aide and the rest of his staff, he cruises about among the ships distributing the gifts with which his argosy is laden. His method of doing this is fraught with as much red tape as was ever the greetings of the old admiral of the Dutch fleet in the time of Queen Bess. All the paraphernalia symbolical of austere rank and bounty that can be gotten together are used as adornments and no end of work is expended on the rig of the boat to be used, which is sometimes the wherry and sometimes the punt.

In order to hold to the traditional custom used in the time of Paul Jones and down through the years, the boat is rigged like a brig, that is, with two masts and yard arms crossing, with jib and staysail and spanker out astern. On the fore and after quarters they arrange large wooden tubes, in which are inserted small arms. These "spiggoty guns" com-



EXCHANGING CHRISTMAS GREETINGS BY FLAG SIGNALING



CHRISTMAS DINNER IN THE U.S. NAVY



BLUE JACKETS WRITING CHRISTMAS LETTERS

pose the saluting battery and heavy main battery also, and are manned and fired by the boatswain of "Der Prosit," who is a ponderous man in his official garb and daring in the way he approaches the ships, whose crews through the sides and answer the salute with a revolver shot from the poop.

The saluting takes place before "Der Prosit" is within hailing distance, and all hands have a laugh at the tiny sounds, strongly contrasted in their minds with the salute of the big guns which they are accustomed to hear. Next the boatswain gets up in the bows and resting one hand almost on top of the foremast and lifting a megaphone as long as himself to his lips, calls out at the top of his voice, "Ship, ahoy!" The quartermaster answers from the bridge, "Hello, hello! Der Prosit!" "Aye, aye," the boatswain returns. "Come alongside," calls the quartermaster. Then the admiral of "Der Prosit" rises in the stern, some ten feet aft of the boatswain in the bow, his head on a level with the topmast, and bawls out through his megaphone, "All hands fur-r-i sail!" With that the crew, consisting of one man, who also acts in the capacity of foghorn, gets amidships and climbs the mainmast, which ways to and fro as if about to capsize the entire craft, and pulls down all the sails. "The vessel is standing to," he then calls out to the boatswain, who reports to the admiral over the crew's head, who in turn reports to Santa Claus, sitting in the stern sheets at the tiller. All these orders are given and carried out in the most solemn manner, to the merriment of the ship's crew looking on from the rail above.

The crew of "Der Prosit" then gets out oars and pulls alongside while on deck the real boatswain's mate pipes eight side boys to stand at the head of the gangway and salute the admiral and Santa Claus when they come aboard. The president of the United States only rates six side boys when he comes aboard, while Santy has his eight, besides his are petty officers while the president's are only good-looking apprentice boys. As the argosy draws alongside the boatswain pipes the long, low tune and three short blasts characteristic of the coming aboard of great men.

No less a person than the captain of the ship meets the admiral of "Der Prosit," his wife, Santy, laden with a huge basket full of presents, the boatswain and the crew, while the bugler sounds three portentous ruffles and the ship's company, assembled aft, stands at attention. Indeed the officers are all present, for they believe in Santy as well as do the crew. When the admiral's wife, some fair faced sailor with Manila rope hair and a tawdry skirt, swings aboard holding her train high and exposing a generous view of red stockings to the eyes of the sailors, a great laugh is evoked and a shout goes up, "higher, higher," or "Oh, you Kiddo!"

The boatswain in command of the crew shouts to his one man for, "Attention!" then puts him through a series of gymnastics of a peculiar and intensely funny character. The admiral, as if not thoroughly taking in the landscape, lifts a huge

pair of binoculars in the form of two quart wine bottles lashed together, to his eyes and makes a pretense of getting his bearings by scrutinizing the sailors about him. Presently he reports to Santy, who has deposited his basket of presents on the quarter deck, "Sir, I see we are now in the Cannibal isles."

Santy begins then to pick up presents and read the names aloud, giving them to the crew of "Der Prosit" and the admiral's wife, and even to the admiral himself, who distributes them accordingly, cutting many ridiculous capers.

The presents are of a type that bring laughter. They are gotten up and made by the friends of those to whom they are sent, with an idea towards characterizing the ambition, the whim or the standing jokes that mark the receiver. If the captain is a four striper he will probably get an admiral's star, unless he has some other whim by which he is more properly known. When he is presented with this he can only blush in the presence of everybody, and take his dose, as Santy is supreme on Christmas day.

But the greatest gift that Santy can bestow falls to the lot of those who, through some misfortune or slip, have come in line for punishment. It is customary for Santy to walk boldly up to the captain and ask him to "whitewash" the books. In the face of everybody and on Christmas day the captain can not very well refuse this request, although some captains have been seen to wince and cough before granting the immeasurable favor. The report book, in which all punishable acts are entered, is swept clean and the culprits are reinstated to first-class standing and enjoy all the privileges held by their more fortunate shipmates who have not fallen before the multiplicity of temptations that daily assail the man-o'-war'sman.

The event which forms a background for all this merriment is the regular "big feed," as the sailors call it. For the last week this has crept into their conversation. Pie, turkey and plum duff are the three great delicacies to the sailors, and they have more respect for them than for the three graces.

"What kind of a feed is the commissary gonna hand us?" one sailor asks of another. During this time of anticipation excitement runs high and the commissary is a very much respected person. In fact, he is never a retired person, for his billet is a hard one to fill to the satisfaction of every one who eats at the general mess. There is always some old tar or other who imagines himself to be slighted by the quality of his food, and the apprentice boys take from him the habit of complaining with very little reason on their side. Quarrels often result and have to be referred to the "mast," where the first lieutenant (first luff) settles the matter in favor of the commissary, so that the sailor arranges a private settlement with the commissary later on where the first luff has nothing to say about it.

The burden of the repast falls naturally upon the cooks and mess attendants. It is far from an enjoyable affair with them, although they are an

affable lot. The preparation of the potatoes is the work of a dozen men, since they must be extraordinarily nice.

The "skinners" arrange themselves astride a bench in range of a tub where one man sits and tosses potatoes continually. The tub is kept full by another man who dumps in from a sack carried down from the upper deck. So a cycle is made, the clean peeled potatoes going constantly into another tub, which is dragged into the galley and dumped into a great urn through which water is percolating. These are rinsed around by another mess attendant and dumped into other urns where steam is turned on, while another tub of peeled ones are being brought from the skinners.

When they are done the ship's cook himself, who paces to and fro in the galley all the while, mounts upon the nearest urn with his, and taking a great six-foot masher proceeds to pound them into a white flakey mass fit for a king.

But this is not all he has to do, either. The turkeys are browning in the long ovens and he and his three assistants have continually to open the doors, probe with long forks into the swelling breasts and ascertain when to take them out.

The mess tables are all numbered so that each sailor knows just where to go when he gets down through the hatchway, and he doesn't waste any time getting there on this occasion. It is indeed a singular and lively scene on the gundeck at this period. Every man's plate is heaped to the brim before him and all apply themselves with a daring and disregard for mere stomachs that would make a dyspeptic wince and turn his head. Dozens of tables dangle from hooks between parallel columns of sailors, who seem only restrained from eating each other alive by the films, vacillating boards which support the food.

When these ravenous appetites have been slaked and even those who have the dilating powers of an anaconda are put at rest, or in pain, as the case may be, some of the "old shellbacks" will begin to grow reminiscent and tell of the Christmases they have spent in lands where there were no turkeys nor anything else fit for the "big feed."

Says old Pete, the sailmaker's mate: "I mind the time down in Darien, when the steward had nothin' in the storeroom but a ton of crusty hard biscuits full of bugs, so when y' busted 'em with the handle 've yer knife they went whimpy nifty in every direction—under yer plate, behind yer cup, up yer sleeve and around the mess pans. But, mates, that was a Christmas fer yer life! We couldn't eat the buffalo meat, it was that much like bolt rope, so we drunk or coffee and engaged ourselves in bug races down the table. By tryin' all the bugs out we got some speedy ones. And they was speedy. I had one that could trot down that table—trot, mind y'—like it was Maude B herself. The devil of it was the bloody bug wouldn't keep in the course between the plates. She'd break for a hole near the finish. I bet big money on 'er, though, and after loosin' 20 bones by her duckin' out of it when she was two whole plate lengths ahead, mind y'. I figured I could head her off the next time and win anyhow, so I put up 50 bones—50 good cold plunkers on that skinny little runt of a bug, and strike me blind! you ought a seen that race! Go! That cussed little bug slid down that mess table like it was on ball bearings. I headed 'er off at the hole with a piece of tack and she run clean again the bottom board of the table an' butted 'er brains out, kicked over on 'er back stone dead. But that race! Whew! I raked in the coin from the captain of the hold Christmas! Well, strike me, fellers! That was some Christmas even if we didn't have any eats."

HER CHRISTMAS GIFT BY DOROTHY DIX

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IT was Christmas eve, and Alice Maitland sat alone in her luxuriously furnished boudoir, putting the finishing touches on the gifts she was to bestow on the morrow. She tied the last bit of scarlet ribbon about a jewel box with mathematical precision, tucked a bit of holly under the bow, and pushed it away from her with impatient weariness.

"There," she exclaimed, surveying the heap of packages that littered the table and the couch; "there, thank goodness, that's done! I've done my duty by my family and remembered every one that is likely to remember me, and I have worn myself to a frazzle, and brought on paresis trying to find things for people who already have everything there is. Let me see," she continued, taking up the packages one by one and checking them off with a smile that was half sad, and half cynical.

"Let me see—here is a silk smoking jacket for Uncle Joseph, that he will never wear, and the Sevres cups that Aunt Maud coyly hinted would be an



"I Don't Believe I Have Forgotten Anybody I Love."



"I Don't Believe I Have Forgotten Anybody I Love."

acceptable reminder of the blessed season to her; the string of pearls that Adele has been openly admiring for months, and a check for Jack for his college larks—one's relatives aren't bashful about letting one know what they want, and that is a comfort, at any rate, at Christmas.

"Then, um-um-um, a gold bangle for Mayme Winslow that she will take right down to the jeweler's to appraise, and a tortoise shell and ostrich feather fan for Sally Stinton; she'll be sure to send me something, though she hates me, the little cat, and a couple of bronzes for dear old Mrs. Bullion, through where she'll put them in that overcrowded house of hers I'm sure I don't know, and—oh, things for the servants, and steins and etchings for the men who have been nice to me—and—er—I don't believe I have forgotten anybody I love, or who holds a kindly thought for me."

She paused abruptly, pushed the gay litter of costly trinkets away from her with disdainful hands, and with a sudden rush of tears, buried her face in her arms on the table.

"Yes," she murmured brokenly to herself, "there is one that I have forgotten, and he is the one in all the world that I have remembered most, and to whom I would give all if I dared," and then she sat still.

"Why do you not send him some little trifle, just a token that you have not forgotten the old days?" suggested her heart.

"Never," said Pride.

"Even casual acquaintances may exchange gifts at Christmas," urged her heart, speciously.

"He would cast my gift back at my feet," said Pride.

"Christmas," said her heart, "is the time of peace on earth and good will towards men. It is a time when old wrongs should be forgotten, when old wounds should be healed, when broken ties should be mended, and hearts estranged should be reunited. Why do you not kiss and make up, as children do?"

"What!" cried Pride, "and be flouted once more?"

"You were very tired of the old, empty life, with its monotonous rounds of insipid gaiety," went on her heart.

"You were that loneliest and most forlorn of human beings, a great heiress and an orphan. All your life you had had everything you wanted, except the thing you wanted most of all—sincere and disinterested love. Your father and mother had died before you could remember them, and you had been left to the care of a cold uncle and aunt, who thought that they had done their entire duty towards you by seeing that you were properly fed, clothed and educated, and implanting in you a distrust of every human being who came about you.

"You never knew the joy that other girls had of being liked for themselves. When suitors came you were told they were fortune hunters. People, in speaking of you, never praised you for any charm of your own, or any grace, or accomplishment. They always said that you were rich, and you wondered sometimes if they knew how their words hurt, or how it must seem to a girl to come to believe that there was nothing about her that could win love—that she must buy it with the money she hated.

"Finally you began to realize that your whole nature was being warped by your environment, that your soul was being atrophied, and so you ran away from it all. You persuaded dear old Mrs. Bullion to take you away as her hired companion to a little quiet place, where no one would recognize you. You wore plain little cotton gowns, and snobs who would have flunked before the rich Miss Maitland snubbed and ignored you, but there was a man who saw the woman's heart under the shabby gown, and the woman's brain under the common hat, and he loved you, and asked you to be his wife. "We shall be very poor," he said, "for I have my way yet to make in the world, but, please God, we shall fight the battle out shoulder to shoulder."

"You remember," went on her heart, "how, with your head upon his breast, and his arms around you, you planned out the future—the little house, with the rose above the door, the dear little economies, the struggles, and the final success, and you drank deep of the cup of joy, for you knew life had made you rich at last, for you were loved for yourself alone—loved as a woman would be when a strong man trembles at her touch, and his smile grows soft and tender only for you. Then, at last, came the time when you had to tell him that you were none other than the rich Miss Maitland—"

"And he went white as death while he listened, and said that had he known it he would never have asked you to be his wife," interrupted Pride.

"But it was then too late," triumphantly cried her heart; "he loved you, and nothing—not money, nor position, nor anything, could change that. You came home," continued her heart, "and your worldly wise uncle and aunt called him a fortune hunter, and said that he was going to marry you for your money. You did not believe them, but, by and by, as you plunged into the old life, with its sordid strivings, and selfishness, and disbelief in all that is high and true, the old distrust began to creep up and poison life again."

"He should have trusted your love," said Pride; "he should have known that you were merely playing."

"His life," said her heart, sadly, "had not taught him how to play. It had all been hard, bitter seriousness, and so when he saw you smiling into this other man's eyes with the counterfeits of the look you had worn when your head lay upon his breast, he thought that you were faithless and loveless, and that you—you who had so much—had come down out of your high estate to rob him of the little he had, and to make life worthless."

"Then," said Pride, desperately, "he came and flung back your promise in your face and told you that he was ashamed to have loved so poor a thing."

"Love does not go at any man's bidding," sighed her heart; "you saw him the other day. He looked ill, and worn, and poor. Tomorrow will be Christmas day—"

"Think—" began Pride; but Miss Maitland had risen up with a look on her face of great and exceeding joy.

"Think, I can think of nothing but my love!" she cried.

The next morning Miss Maitland arose early, and spent much time at her desk printing a large placard in bold and unmistakable letters. This done, she donned a simple little gray gown, much affected by her the summer before, and over this she threw a long cloak. An hour later she directed her astonished coachman to drive her to a certain building on one of whose upper floors a struggling young lawyer was, at the moment, engaged in devouring with his eye the photograph of a comely young woman. As she reached his office, door Miss Maitland's courage wavered and sank, but, taking a death grip upon it, she hurriedly passed the office boy, and before she knew it was in his presence.

"Alice!" he cried, starting to his feet; but she did not wait for him to speak.

"Tom," she said, hurriedly, "I—I have come to bring you a little Christmas present," and with that she dropped the enveloping cloak aside, and pinned upon her breast was a large placard with the inscription:

FOR TOM.
WITH ALICE'S LOVE.

"You darling," he murmured, folding her in his hungry arms.

"It's so hard to know what to get for a man, so I just thought I'd bring myself," she said, hypocritically; "but oh, Tom, please don't send this present back, and change it." But he stopped her mouth with kisses.