

RING, CHRISTMAS BELLS!

Within the broad eternal sky The East Star waits to glorify Each timid, sunlit, rosy ray That ushers in the coming day!



Sing of Christmas! Aye, the song is old, All the story long ago was told, Angels sang in chorus when 'twas new, Children sing to day, in chorus too.



I WISH WAS SINGLE AGAIN!

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S. CLAUS LETTER.

BY ANNIE ISABEL WILLIS.



MR. SIMON CLAUS sat in his perfectly appointed library, through whose windows came a flood of sunlight, increased by reflection from a dazzling snow outside.

DEAR MR. S. CLAUS—Kitty is awfully bad, this is to tell you so you would bring her a good Christmas. If you could bring something that would make her well I'd like it if not bring something she can play with to forget laying still.

THE letter ran thus: DEAR MR. S. CLAUS—Kitty is awfully bad, this is to tell you so you would bring her a good Christmas.

Just then "the little woman" came softly in. She was a complete contrast to big, fat, haired, big eyed, Saxon husband being petite and graceful, with a head as big as a lily on her slender neck, and her brown eyes that were, like her husband's, full of sorrow.

"The doctors have gone," she said. "They will be back this afternoon."

"How is she?" the man asked. "The same. I wanted you to know. She is very ill, Simon. I believe they have little hope."

"I was cowardly to come off here," he said huskily, "but I could not bear it. Oh, my baby! My only child! If money could make you well!"

"We cannot depend on money now," said the wife very sweetly and solemnly. "There is but one place to look for help."

There was a short silence, and then the lady's wandering eyes caught sight of the soiled paper lying in front of her husband. She took it up and read it mechanically.

"That's a singular letter," he said, as he saw her reading. "I don't understand it."

"He was writing to the children's patron saint of Christmas, don't you see," she said. "Santa Claus? I wonder, now I think of it, that you have never before had letters intended for him. Probably because the dears who write them throw them into the chimney place or do not put good stamps on them. I will see to this, but come, let us go up stairs."

"And," she added, leaning over to kiss him before she rose, "let us have mighty hope and faith for the result of the consultation."

"The room which they entered was an exquisite setting for the jewel it held, the most precious one in the wealthy merchant's possession—his only child. She lay like a flower among the rose colored hangings and furnishings, but no reflection of her hue could bring color into the pale face lighted by large brown eyes and short gold curls.

Three of her ten years had been spent in pain, which instead of making her selfish had done the very opposite, and she was eager and loving with the little services she could render, especially to the poor whom her mother helped.



SHE LAY LIKE A FLOWER.

That afternoon the physicians returned to say they could do no more for the child. The spinal trouble must, sooner or later, end her life, for there was no remedy known to them.

"Goodby, Dr. Montague," said Margaret. "Will you care very much if I have another doctor? I'm going to get a new one, and he will cure me."

"When did you send the letter, Joe?" "Two days ago, Kitty."

"Did you put a real true stamp on it?" "Yes, and dropped it in the post box. It'll go all right, Kitty. Don't worry or you'll make your head ache."



"IT IS MY DREAM." "Well, I won't," said the child patiently. "I have to go out now," continued the boy. "It's time for my route."

They kissed each other, and then the twelve-year-old departed to sell evening papers, while the afflicted eight-year-old tried to go to sleep to pass away the time until the older sister and head of the family should come.

Number 9 Gunnison alley was always cheerless in cold weather, and the top floor back was especially cheerless, for Mary Worell was out sewing every day, and had to do her own housework at night.

There was little fire in the stove this afternoon; the stove needed blacking and some ashes had fallen over the hearth. The principal article of the scanty furniture was the bedstead on which Kitty had lain for two years.

CLAUS, replied: "A friend, do Joe and Kitty Worell live here?"

"Yes, but the key is in Mrs. Mullins' room at the end of the hall. I'm locked in."

"When Mr. Claus had let himself in she looked up at him without fear, the excitement of a guest making her cheeks flush. "So you're keeping house alone today," he said.

"Yes, I do every day, most, and they look me in because I can't get up and walk. They're afraid somebody might come in that shouldn't."

"Why can't you walk?" he asked. "Well, you see, my back aches all the time and my feet don't go right. Once I'll and most ever since I have had a lame back. But Joe knows some one that can cure me."

"Ah, yes, I came especially to see Joe. Where is he?" "Out selling papers. He'll come by and by. He's my awful good to me and Mary. Mary's my big sister. She's out to work. Joe's going to save all the money he can to get that doctor. And I guess I'll tell you a secret," she went on.

"Joe wrote to Santa Claus and asked him to bring me something for Christmas. That isn't any harm, is it? Don't you believe he's glad to hear of little girls that want presents?"

"Yes, I know he is," replied Kitty's guest, greatly touched. "When Mary Worell returned the stranger told her quietly what his errand was, received the needed direction and departed, first putting into Kitty's thin hand a purse that Margaret had sent. She could not wait until Christmas to begin playing Santa Claus."

The benign face of a middle aged man was bending over a child who lay prostrate in a capacious room. She was looking up at him as he touched her body gently, a world of faith in her great brown eyes. It was little wonder his mild yet strong countenance inspired her confidence. The face was all she saw, but her watchful parents had begun to hope that here was a helper indeed, for they noted the scientific way in which the firm hands did their work and the keen questions which showed his complete knowledge of the disease to be treated.

And yet when Mr. Claus found him, the man had said: "I am not a physician, but only a physician's aid. I help those whose bodies are helpless merely by giving them outward support."

The group in that lovely room formed a picture, and the growing hope in the parents' faces became joy as they heard him say presently, "I believe she can be cured, but it will take a long time, and I will only see in connection with your regular physician."

The child's look was triumphant. "Didn't I tell you so, mamma? And he will cure Kitty too!"

Then she told the gentleman of Kitty, and how the poor child's illness had been the means of their meeting about him, and he agreed to go at once to Gunnison alley to examine Kitty, as Mr. Claus requested him to do.

"It is Christmas eve," cried Margaret. "Tell her you came from Santa Claus, for you really do, you know, because I am playing Santa Claus this year. But"—her voice grew very tender—"it isn't truly Santa Claus at all; it's the Christ-child, he puts it into our hearts, you see, and I want you to tell Kitty about him, will you? Because I can't go. I don't think she's so well acquainted with him as she is with Santa Claus. They have the Christ-child in Germany on Christmas, and I like it better than Santa Claus."

The spirit of Christmas was hovering in the air that night, for in the midst of joyous gift making in richer homes, the ringing of Christmas bells in towers and steeples and the remembrances for childhood throughout the world, some good angel found time to bring a dream to weary, happy Kitty. She saw—not Santa Claus—but a beautiful child, who held out hands full of overflowing with gifts and blessings, saying, "The Christ-child sends them."

A year passed. It was Christmas eve again, and there was an air of expectancy noticeable in Mary and Joe Worell as they moved about their humble home. Kitty was too engrossed in a picture book to see it. She sat in a reclining chair—Mr. Claus and his wife had spared no pains to make her comfortable—and was so interested that she never heard the rattle of wheels. Joe left the room and went down to help if needed. There was a sound of people climbing the stairs; a vision of loveliness with golden hair framed in the soft white of floating feathers and downy furs; then a rosy faced maid placed a child before the door and stepped to one side. Joe leaned from the other and gave a sounding knock. It was part of the plan that when it opened Kitty should see no one but Margaret, her friend and benefactor, who had grown able to go out and was come to see her for the first time.

Mary threw the door wide open, and, smiling, Margaret stepped forward, her hands full of packages. The figure in the chair looked up, and never noticing the slight limp and bent back, results of the disease which time would cure, gave a glad cry.

"It is my dream, my Christmas dream," she said. "It is the Christ-child."

"No, dear, it is Margaret," said Mary gently, with tears in her eyes. "I saw it just as plain," Kitty went on, "and I never forgot how it looked. Are you sure this is Margaret?"

A merry laugh from the child herself settled the question, and the two little friends went straight to work to get better acquainted over the contents of sundry Christmas packages.

"The Truth About It. When Uncle Sam was but a boy, One Christmas eve he hung His stockings by the old fireplace, And then this song he sung:

"Oh, Santa Claus! Oh, Santa Claus, Give me some potent charm, That pretty girls, when I'm a man, May grob upon my farm."

And that is why old Santa Claus Today is so admired; Because he gave our Uncle Sam The thing he most desired. TOM LANSING.

Give Him Time. Then she told the gentleman of Kitty, and how the poor child's illness had been the means of their meeting about him, and he agreed to go at once to Gunnison alley to examine Kitty, as Mr. Claus requested him to do.

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Well, "Dr. Good," as Margaret chose to call him, though he wasn't a doctor and his name was plain Mr. Goodsell, went to 9 Gunnison alley and made a favorable report of Kitty's case also. And so touched was he by Margaret's request that he did not forget to tell his new patient about her and the story of the Christ-child.

After he had gone another knock surprised the Worells. This time a colored man came "with Mr. Santa Claus" compliments, and he wasn't feelin able to get round to Gunnison alley, but would they accept these, with his best wishes and his particular love to Miss Kitty?"

"These" proved to be more things than can be described. Edibles, of course, some wonderful toys for Kitty, a soft Afghan and down pillows for her bed and another purse, not at all like that the "strange" man had given her, but quite as well filled.

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