

CHRISTMAS.

Why does the earth no tribute flower, No incense-bearing blossom, bring To celebrate the thine-blessed hour Which brought to her heaven's earth-born King?

HELLO, SANTA!

What Came of a Boy's Message By Telephone.



VERY little boy stood on a chair and tiptoed to reach the telephone. His yellow curls hung over his broad collar.

His father, as usual, lay on the lounge. He was getting stronger, but could barely crawl down stairs. Mamma was beside him showing him one of those pretty cards that she used to paint to sell at the shops.

"Hello, Santa Claus!" called the little boy on the chair.

"Hello!" called Santa Claus. Now Bertie had often telephoned Santa Claus before, but never had Santa Claus said anything back.

"Santa Claus," he cried very fast, for fear Santa Claus might go away before he had finished, "will you please give me a big paint box, Christmas, 'cause my paint box, Officer, our dog, swallowed some of the paints and the rest of the box got lost—I didn't lose it, it lost itself."

"Of course," said Santa Claus. "Yes, sir. And please won't you bring Byron a sled and some candy and a red wagon like my best one, and a drum? He's been a very good boy. He hung up his stocking last Christmas, but he didn't get nothing but a tin trumpet and some candy and an apple."

"What's Byron's name?" said Santa Claus.

"His name is Byron McIntosh Cameron," the eager little voice answered, "and he lives over on the alley on Van Buren street where the red street cars are. And say, Santa Claus, I guess if you ain't got enough for both of us, you can give Byron his things and not give me my paint box, 'cause maybe I can tease my mamma to."

Mamma, who sat in the other room-exchanged smiles with auntie who was visiting her that afternoon.

"Who are you?" said Santa Claus. "Why, don't you know me?" said the little boy. "I'm Bertie Hardin and my papa is Mr. Egbert Hardin and—"

"I know him," said Santa Claus. "He is a nice fellow. So are you."

"Sometimes I'm bad," put in Bertie, out of his sturdy little conscience. "Say, Santa Claus, you won't forget. Course I'd like the paint box, if you've got enough presents to go round. You know you needn't give our baby any. He can't talk at all and he don't know about you, either, and he threw his rattle into the fire; so I guess he'd throw his Christmas presents away, too. That's all. Good bye."

Santa Claus hung up the telephone tube and began to walk up and down the floor, his brows knitted and his hands in his pockets like a man perplexed.

The floor was marble, because he was in a hotel office, and his footsteps made a ringing sound. He was not an old man, neither would anyone have suspected that he was Santa Claus; in fact, he looked a good deal like little Byron Cameron.

Presently a man passing said, "Going to night, Mr. Cameron?" "There was a slight pause before Santa Claus answered "No I shall stay over Christmas."

"Not much like Australian Christmas weather, I take it," said the man, and laughed at Santa Claus' shiver.

Santa Claus himself smiled a queer smile after the man. "He has decided for me," he was thinking. "Why not stay? It must be Ned. And he has named his boy after me! He can't feel very bitter to have done that!"

He gave a harsh sigh. Years ago the brothers had quarreled—it is no matter why now—and so bitterly that the younger went away and never more had any dealings with his brother for ten years.

They were alone in the world, these two brothers, therefore the more shame that they should quarrel. Nevertheless, so angry was Santa Claus that even in far away Australia, whither he had drifted, he could not forgive his brother. It was business that had brought him to this Western city. He never guessed that it was here his brother lived; he did not even

know that his brother had a little boy as old as his own little son. The fact is, he had stepped to the telephone to make some arrangements about going to another city. But Bertie's innocent boyish call came to him, and what Bertie said touched a heart soft with aching for the sight of his wife and his little girls and his own Byron, this Christmas eve.

He was become a very rich man; he felt a little lump in his throat, contrasting the presents over which his own boy would rejoice with that poor little tin trumpet and apple in Byron's stocking.

"If he should look like a boy!" thought he; well, what harm to play Santa Claus? They needn't see me.

The air was dark and cold through which little Byron ran home, and he had no winter coat, because his mother was piecing down the arms of the old one. Boys must grow; no matter how little money their parents may have.

Poor little Byron! I fancy he often was cold. He never was hungry; but then his mamma never wanted to eat much. His father was always sick too, now, and sometimes he would give Byron some of his grapes or a piece of an orange.

When Byron got into the room he thought it pretty to see. The coal in the stove made the mica windows glow so red, and the lamp was lighted, and the shabby furniture, you may be sure, never bothered Byron.

His father, as usual, lay on the lounge. He was getting stronger, but could barely crawl down stairs. Mamma was beside him showing him one of those pretty cards that she used to paint to sell at the shops. She had a wooden shoe besides, all gilded, with mistletoe and holly painted on it and words. Byron heard her say:

"The Hardins' man is waiting for them. That's the last, dear, then I'm going to be lazy."

Indeed, she did nothing all that evening. She took Byron on her knee and told him about Santa Claus.

"Will he come here, to-night?" said Byron, patting his mother's pretty cheek and her silky brown hair, "will he bring me lots and lots of things—did I hit you with my foot, papa?" For papa made a queer little sound like a groan.

"No, dear," said mamma, "not lots but something. You know Santa Claus has so many little boys and he doesn't know always what they want."

"But he does this time 'cause Bertie telephoned," said Byron with triumph, "and Santa Claus said yes. And understand. Afterwards Bertie and me both telephoned him for our mamma, but he didn't say nothing but whirr—whirr—like that; so, maybe he didn't hear 'bout you; but I know he did 'bout me and you can have some of my candy. Don't you love candy, mamma? You never eat a single bite! Nor pie, nor apples. Say, mamma, Bertie's folks are going to have the biggest turkey—did I ever taste turkey?"

There is a superstition connected with the mistletoe that it is unlucky to fall on oak on which it grows, and the author of "Magna Britannia" describes a great wood belonging to the archbishops of the Hundred of Croylund, said to have consisted wholly of oaks, and among them was one that bore mistletoe, which some persons were so hardy as to cut down for the gain of selling it to the apothecaries of London leaving a branch of it to sprout out, but they proved unfortunate after it, for one of them fell lame and others lost an eye. At length, in the year 1078, a certain

ing the subject abruptly. "What you think, Bertie? Santa Claus came back?"

"What? Did you see him?" "No," humbly, "but I know he did, 'cause I found another shoe and another red wagon and a drum and candy on the porch; I guess he forgot he left the others."

"Guess he forgot and came twice to me, too," exclaimed Bertie, deeply excited, "for I got two paint boxes and one was on the piazza with a whole box of oranges and marked 'From Santa Claus.'"

But maybe mamma and auntie, who were smiling very much in the other room, could have explained. That is what it is to tamper with Santa Claus.

CONCERNING THE MISTLETOE

An Exotic Shrub Which Has But Recently Been Introduced in America.

The mistletoe hung on the castle wall, And the holly branch shone in the old oak hall, And the baron's retainers were blithe and gay, Keeping their Christmas holiday.

At this season of the year the mistletoe is a welcome addition to the stock of our florists, being intimately associated, as it is, with Christmas sports. It is now, however, to this country, and it is not much more than a decade since the first venture was ever brought here.

It is popularly supposed that the mistletoe grows exclusively on the oak tree, but that is a mistake, as it is found on the oak in very rare instances, while it grows with great profusion on the apple, the pear, the Hawthorn, and also on sycamores, limes, poplars, locust trees and firs. In some portions of the south of England it is very abundant and its evergreen leaves give a peculiar appearance to the orchard in winter, when the bushes of mistletoe are very conspicuous among the naked branches of the trees.

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man, notwithstanding he was warned against it, upon account of what the others had suffered, adventured to cut the tree down, and he soon after broke his leg. To fell oaks had long been considered fatal, and such as believe it produce the instance of the Earl of Winchelsea, who, having felled a curious grove of oaks, soon after found his countess dead in her bed suddenly, and his eldest son, Lord Maidstone, was presently killed by a cannon ball.—New York Press.

What They All Received.

Mr. Jeremiah Carraway wanted a rest; but it was twins. David Bunker Hill prayed for an acre—and he got it, but the other man held a royal.

The little king of Spain expected an ark on the tree and received a box on the ear. Susan B. Anthony was dead sure she was to get a nomination and she got—left.

Lord Tennyson expected a check from the princess; but it was only an order for another birthday-ode. Henry Irving wanted some beef for his shanks and got one little calf.

Young Hobson Bobson was hoping for side whiskers and he caught the mumps. Gentle Annie, the beggar's daughter, wanted a collar; but she got a cuff.

The postman on our block dreamed of a remembrance and was given the letter which never came. The czar of all the Russias expected a bomb and, sure enough, his wife made him a custard pudding. Sarah Bernhardt wanted a new bedstead and received twelve yards of lead pipe.

Queen Victoria hung up her stocking with a longing for more jubilee purses and got a new stocking. What we all expected: the earth with a wire fence around it. What we all got: a piece of the wire.—De Witt Sterry.



WATCHING FOR SANTA CLAUS.

"It's very like chicken, dear; you used to taste it often. When papa gets well you shall again. Won't a great big chicken do as well to-morrow?"

"Ye-es, ma'am," said Byron, doubtfully. Then he whispered, "Mamma, look at papa, he's crying 'cause he ain't got a turkey? He's put his hands all over his eyes. I don't mind a bit!"

"A big chicken is much nicer for three people," said mamma. "Papa is only tired; he—"

But nobody will ever know what mamma would have said, for Byron caught her tightly around the neck.

"Listen! Listen!" I hear a trompin' outside. It's Santa Claus! I'll catch him!" he cried.

Then mamma and he ran out of doors together. There on the little piazza was an amazing sight. You would suppose that a toy shop and grocer's had been unloaded together.

"Oh, mamma! Oh, mamma!" shrieked Byron, "Santa Claus heard! There's everything Bertie telephoned for—my sled, my wagon, a red wagon, and—Oh! lo! at the oranges and the candy! And a turkey! Look at 'em! Look at 'em! Thank you, Santa Claus! Why, mamma!"

"Byron! Byron!" cried mamma—but she wasn't looking at Byron at all, staring down the street at a man who had turned round under the street lamp. "Byron!" she sobbed, after all these years! We know we wronged you now; come back!"

And what was stranger the man did come back and hugged and kissed mamma.

Next day Byron was trying to describe the glories of the evening to Bertie.

"Shaw!" said Bertie, "why didn't you catch Santa Claus? You ought to have runned out quick's lightning and seen the sleigh!"

"I did see the back of a sleigh," apologized Byron, "but my uncle, you see he came 'long just then—"

"Oh, unless!" said Bertie, with high scorn. "Catch me talking to uncles when I could see Santa Claus!"

"But I never saw my uncle before, neither," pleaded Byron. Then, chang-

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