

## The Littlest Boy and Santa Claus

By Edwin L. Sabin

(Copyright)

THE GREAT hall clock, stationed opposite the foot of the stairs, struck two. From his bed the Littlest Boy listened with a sense of awe. Never before had he heard it strike so late an hour. Once, indeed, he had heard it strike ten, but usually it had struck eight—and when next he was awake it was striking six and morning had come.

The Littlest Boy lay and listened. The house was impressively still. The only sounds audible were the stately ticking of the monitor clock below, and the regular breathing of the Biggest Boy and the Biggest Girl in the room adjoining.

The Littlest Boy's eyes were wide open and gazing into the velvet blackness close above his face. When he had gone to bed it had been Christmas eve. He was not fully certain as to the line of demarcation, but it occurred to him that now it was Christmas day! Then he began to blink and think.

He wondered if Santa Claus had come yet. Before the grate-fire, down in the library, were ranged three chairs; a rocking-chair for the Biggest Girl, a straight-backed, ordinary chair for the Biggest Boy, and a huge, roomy arm-chair for himself. In addition, he had hung up his stockings to the mantel.

He tried to picture to himself how, if Santa Claus had been and gone, that chair and those stockings must



"Hello!" said Santa Claus.

look. At intervals, as some particularly alluring fancy stood out before him, he gave an ecstatic wriggle and a few blinks extra.

Oh, the red wagon! And the silver napkin-ring! Supposing he got them both! It did not seem to him possible that he could exist without either, and yet—and yet—he mustn't exact too much.

If he might take one peep into the library—just one tiny peep—to find out whether or not Santa Claus had been.

He felt that he ought not to yield to this temptation; and he sighed hard and twisted. But even in the midst of his struggle he did yield, for first his disobedient right foot stole from beneath the blue coverlet, and next his disobedient left foot; and in a moment all of him, enveloped in his long, pink-flannel night-gown, was moving resolutely towards the doorway.

At the landing the stairs turned sharply. The Littlest Boy also turned with them to continue his journey. Now there ahead of him was the monitor clock, staring him in the face, and ticking loud reproval. From the library, off the hall, came the reminiscent glow of the grate-fire with which the Christmas eve had been celebrated.

Down sped the Littlest Boy, boldly ignoring the astonished clock, down the remaining flight, and across the square hall, whose rugs were soft and comforting. On the threshold of the library he stopped short, frightened at what he had done.

He had caught Santa Claus! Aye, there was Santa Claus, bending over the big chair, which, the Littlest Boy glimpsed, was overflowing with packages and things.

I do not know but that the Littlest Boy would have beat courteous retreat (although, of course, his farther curiosity was simply tremendous) had not Santa Claus suddenly glanced up and descried him—a small, pink figure, made still pinker by the glowing coals, framed, wide-eyed, in the library door-case.

"Hello!" said Santa Claus, not moving.

"Hello!" responded the Littlest Boy. "I didn't know you were here."

"Didn't you?" remarked Santa Claus, straightening up and slowly stepping backward.

"No," assured the Littlest Boy. "Did you get in through the chimney?"

During his whole life—that is, ever since he could talk—the Littlest Boy

had been trying to say "chimney;" but, somehow, that "l," being so slim and hatchet-faced, always nimbly slipped in and elbowed out the "n."

"Did I get in through the chimney!" repeated Santa Claus; and then he opened his mouth in a silent laugh. "Yes, I clumb down the chimney," he said.

"You say 'chimbley' and I say 'chimley'; but my father says—says chimney—chimney is right," informed the Littlest Boy.

"You don't mean it!" returned Santa Claus, who, having backed to the window looking upon the side porch, now, with his hand behind him, was deftly sliding it up.

"Please don't go, Santa Claus," besought the Littlest Boy. "We'll talk real low, so nobody'll hear. That is, if you're not in too big a hurry to stay," he added, politely.

"Sure," responded Santa Claus. "It's almost empty, isn't it!" asserted the Littlest Boy. "But I s'pose you've lots more up in the balloon. Had you got all through with me? My chair is the middle one there, and these are my stockings in front of it."

"Well, I was kinder foolin' around when you come in," confessed Santa Claus; "but I reckon I'm through. Them other chairs are your ma's an' pa's, I take it?"

"Yes; mamma's is the rocker and papa's is the other," informed the Littlest Boy, hurriedly. "Did you bring me a red wagon and a silver napkin-ring?"

"Aren't they there?" queried Santa Claus.

"May I look?" asked the Littlest Boy, eagerly.

"Sure," granted Santa Claus, with his favorite word.

The Littlest Boy was not slow in taking advantage of that permission. In a twinkling he was at the chair, and, oblivious to the rustling that he was producing, was burrowing amidst its contents.

He did not have to burrow to find the red wagon. Its two front wheels were sticking straight up against the chair's back!

"Ooooo-ee!" jubilated the Littlest Boy, turning with sparkling eyes. "Will its sides fold over?"

"You bet!" assured Santa Claus. "Just bushels and bushels of thanks, Santa Claus," purled the Littlest Boy, rapturously. "I hope it's bigger than my Cousin James' is! Is it?"

"Sure!" said Santa Claus. "Now, about the ring? Ain't it there?"

"I don't see it?" replied the Littlest Boy, rummaging.

"Mebbe it's in the stockin's," suggested Santa Claus.

And it was!—a beautiful, shiny, silver napkin ring, all done up in tissue-paper!

"Ooooo-eee!" gurgled the Littlest Boy, unwrapped it. "I bet it's the very solides' kind!"

"Lemme see," demanded Santa Claus. "That's what I intended it to be, anyhow, an' I hope I ain't made no mistake."

"Yes, it's solid, all right enough," he said, weighing it in his hand, while the Littlest Boy watched him, anxiously. "But don't you think that that there wagon an' this here ring, both together, are too much for a kid like you?"

"I don't know," responded the Littlest Boy, abashed. "I've tried to be awful good. I've picked up kindlin' and went on errands and brushed my teeth—and—and gone down cellar after dark, and—and—and I've hardly ever cried when I got hurt!"

"Still, seems to me," persisted Santa Claus, gazing at the shiny ring in his fingers, "that a wagon alone is good enough for one kid, besides all them other things you've got in yon chair and socks. I dunno but what I'll take this an' give it somers'else."

"Well," agreed the Littlest Boy, gravely, "if—if you can find some little boy who ought to have it more'n me, then you can—can take it; and I'raps next Christmas—"

"God!" roared the Biggest Boy, like an angry lion, leaping through the library doorway.

With a slam up sped the window; with an oath, out whirled Santa Claus. "You've scared Santa Claus! You've scared Santa Claus!" wailed the Littlest Boy, in despair.

"I have, have I!" exclaimed the Biggest Boy, gathering the wailer into his arms.

"And he took my ring," farther lamented the Littlest Boy.

"He did, did he!" repeated the lion—that is, the Biggest Boy—in a commiserating growl. "Never mind; we'll get another."

"But I told him he might, if there's some other little boy who'd ought to have it more," explained the Littlest Boy, truthfully. "Maybe he'll bring me one next Christmas."

Here the Biggest Boy shut the treacherous window; and with the Biggest Girl, who by this time had arrived and was hugging and kissing the Littlest Boy's two rosy feet, as they hung down inside the Biggest Boy's arms, close accompanying, carried him upstairs to bed.

What do you think! Evidently Santa Claus repented, or else he had only been joking, or else he could find no other little boy who was more worthy; for, after all, at daylight there was discovered, lying on the mat before the side-door, that very same ring—wrapped, it is true, not in fine tissue paper, but in coarse brown paper.

However, upon the paper was scrawled, in ragged but unmistakable lines:

"For the kid  
"SANTY CLAUS."

Happiness is increased not by the enlargement of the possessions, but of the heart.—John Ruskin.

## The Church's Christmas Present

By BYRON WILLIAMS

(Copyright)

Harrison Honeywell Hickson, devotee of Michigan avenue, worshiper at the throne of



Sardanapolis and favorite at Fashion's shrine, awoke one morning in the bustle and the whirl of Chicago with a headache through the aerial window of his club the clash and clamor of city din smote his throbbing temples. Smoke and soot drifted familiarly in, and upon the indolent draughts a faint, fetid smell rode truculently.

"Bah, those stockyards!" sniffed Harrison Honeywell Hickson, gripping his temples and striving to reach oblivion by burying his nose and ears in the downy pillow.

"Always the smell and the noise and the clatter. Day and night it is the same noises, the same smells, the same wines, almost the same women—and no song at all worth hearing. I have a mind to chuck it all and go out into God's country, out into the suburbs."

With Hickson to think was to act—and this is how it happened that the good people of Horton Hollow were curious almost to a crucial point of the antecedents and personality of the dapper young society man who came among them so reservedly to superintend the construction of a pretty Queen Anne cottage on Lake Shadows. That he was a veritable catch was soon agreed upon by the spinsters, but how to break his reserve and teach him to worship at the feet of Aphrodite was a difficult problem. For, besides admitting to Amos Squires, the busman, that he was not married, Hickson had met the persevering advances of the natives with a stern frigidity.

"There ain't a blessed woman that kin git within gun shot o' him," complained Mirandy Hodges, "exceptin' Marty Brown—an' she ain't interested in nothin' but raisin' money for a new parsonage for that new preacher an' his stuck-up wife."

At last the cottage was finished and Hickson selected his furniture and fittings. On the 20th of December it was ready. With a glad heart he rode gayly homeward from the city, and slipping the key into the lock, stepped into the nest that was to be the heart of his simple life. The evening was spent in gloating over his new toy and even though it did seem strangely quiet and lonely, Hickson's spirits were so light the joy bulb stood high in the glass tube of pleasure.

But solitude wears on the best of us after a time, and to Harrison Honeywell Hickson, inured to clatter and bang and the busy whirl of society, the continued silence fell like a pall.

"Of course, I could get married," sighed Hickson, as he sat on the edge of his bed and pondered. "That would help some and—no," shaking his head determinedly, "no laces and tantrums for mine!"

Satisfied in his decision, he lay down to sleep.

Then, all at once there entered that vacuum of stillness, strange and sinister, the cracking of a veneered joint, the settling of a beam. As Hickson sat bolt upright in bed, he distinctly heard a sound as of running water. Dashing madly down the stairs he found a leaking water pipe—and what was worse, he discovered that the hot-water plant was simply boiling its head off. The servants had not yet arrived, but Hickson managed to check the furnace and turn off the water. Then he returned to bed.

Suddenly a hoot-owl set up his weird call, the sighing wind whistled with sepulchral meaning, a misguided cock mistaking the bright moonlight for morning awoke and set up an unearthly din, while a pair of stray cats meeting in sanguinary combat under the west window, added to the horrible intensity of the night.

When he bounded out of bed, Hickson was a determined man. He looked at his watch and then at his time table. Thirty minutes later a dark form scurried through the shadows of the shaded street and dashed madly up to the three o'clock train as it puffed and snorted at Horton Hollow.

The next day, Martha Brown, sweet, white-haired, motherly Martha Brown, received a letter. It said:

My dear Miss Brown: I have decided to surprise you by making your church a Christmas present of my Queen Anne cottage. My man will deliver the keys to-morrow. It is furnished complete and I hope that sweet-faced little wife of the preacher will not find an old bachelor's tastes too broad for her sanction. I have always wanted to do some good in the world—and by presenting the cottage I am merely gratifying myself. Please accept the gift without demonstration. I beg to remain humbly yours,  
HARRISON HONEYWELL HICKSON.

That night on State street Hickson, a howling swell, walked gaily in the glare of the lights, in the heart of the din, and was glad!

# Davies & Owens

Reliable Jewelers and Opticians

## We Welcome You

Whether you come as an intending purchaser or as a visitor. We welcome the stranger, as well as the regular patron, and any and every article we offer you will be just as represented. Following is a few of the many things we have to offer. They will bear the closest inspection.

## Diamonds \$5 to \$250

We have a very fine line of Diamonds in all the desirable sizes, at prices ranging from \$5.00 to \$250. Nothing is more appropriate and nothing more appreciated than a fine Diamond Ring.

## Elegant Line of Watches

All Standard Makes and Sizes

Ladies' O size, with Elgin or Waltham works; 7 jewels, in 20-year guaranteed gold-filled case... **\$10.50**

Ladies' 6 size, with Elgin or Waltham works, 7 and 15 jewels, in 20 or 25-year guaranteed case, for \$9.65 to ..... **\$16.85**

Gent's 12 size, with 7, 15 and 17 jewel works in 20 and 25-year guaranteed cases, for \$11 to ..... **\$18.50**

Gent's 16 size, with 7, 15 and 17 jewel works in 20 and 25-year guaranteed cases, for \$10 and ..... **\$25.00**

Gent's 18 size, with 7, 15 and 17 jewel works, with 20 and 25 cases, for \$8.00 to ..... **\$33.75**

Remember we carry all standard makes and sizes, and cannot fail to please the most exacting individual who desires something extra good in the watch line.

## In the Jewelry Line

Our jewelry line consists of Ladies and Gent's Charms, Fobs, Rings and Lockets, Ladies' Brooches, Neck Chains, Hat Pins, Cuff Pins, Cuff Links, Thimbles.

### For the Man

Gentlemen's Charms, Cuff Links, Scarf Pins, Tie Clasps, etc. All the new ideas at the right prices.

### For the Woman

Hatwear Novelties of the latest designs in sterling and plated.

### A Nice Present

Umbrellas make a most appropriate gift. We carry a good line in gents' and ladies' Umbrellas, mounted in sterling silver and gold filled. Here is a line of goods that ought to interest both ladies and gentlemen. Our line is extensive and there is a variety of qualities and prices to suit all purses.

## Cut Glass, China and Silverware for Christmas Buyers

Exquisite Cut Glass Pieces and Sets

Lovely Novelties in Silverware

Elaborate Toilet Sets, great variety

Military Brushes, various patterns

Cloth Brushes—always appropriate

Hat Brushes, in great variety

Handsome Manicure Sets

Embroidery Scissors

And Many Other Useful Articles in this Line

A visit to our store will convince the most critical person that we have

The Right Goods

The Right Prices

The Right Quality

# Davies & Owens

Reliable Jewelers and Opticians

1st DOOR S. RICHARDSON CO. BANK

FALLS CITY, NEB.