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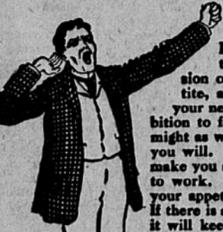
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## AN UP TO DATE SANTA CLAUS

By SUSAN BROWN ROBBINS.

PAUL FLETCHER was in the drawing room waiting for Lida to come. Lida lived with her brother, and every time Fletcher called to see her either the brother's wife or his children were in the room, so there was never a chance to say anything to her alone.

At last, however, his opportunity had come. It was the day before Christmas, and Mrs. Safford and the children had gone to her mother's for several days.

Now, with Lida left at home with the two servants and her brother not coming till evening, Fletcher could say to her those things he had been longing to say, but which he could not bring himself to write in a letter nor to declare before the assembled family.

At length, after what seemed a very long waiting, some one was coming. He stood up and looked eagerly toward the doorway. The portiere was thrust aside, and in walked Teddy—Teddy, who, in Fletcher's opinion, was the worst pill in the whole box as far as staying power and keen observation were concerned.

"Hello, Teddy," he said, not very cordially. "I thought you had gone to spend Christmas with your grandma."

"I didn't go," said Teddy.

"Do you expect a visit from Santa Claus tonight?"

"Oh, I s'pose so," wearily. "I'd just like to see him, though!" His manner grew more animated.

"Why, what would you do?"

"I'd tell him what I think of him."

"And what is that?"

"Oh, that I think he's a fraud! Pretending he comes in a sleigh when the ground has been bare for a month! And, reindeers' too! Who does he think is going to believe that? Why doesn't he come on a bicycle?"

"His fur overcoat would be rather in the way," said Fletcher gravely. "And



SANTA CLAUS STOOD BEFORE HIM.

he's pretty old, too, and maybe doesn't know how to ride, and, besides, how would he bring the presents?"

"What's the use of presents, anyway? I never have anything that's any good."

"I think you have the blues today," said Fletcher, and then he did not speak again, though Teddy tried to draw him out.

He seemed to be in a brown study, and nothing roused him till Lida came in, and even then he did not say much and stayed only a short time.

It was in the evening that a card was brought to Teddy. On it was written "Santa Claus." Teddy's eyes sparkled. "Tell him to come in," he said grandly.

A moment later Santa Claus stood before him, a tall, fur clad figure with flowing hair and beard. Teddy shook hands and introduced the guest to his aunt.

"Did you find it good sleighing?" Teddy asked. "And how are the reindeers?"

"I did not come on runners, young man," said Santa Claus. "Perhaps you did not know that there is no snow on the ground."

"Bicycle?" asked Teddy.

"No; I came in a motor carriage."

"A motor carriage!" cried Teddy incredulously. Then he ran to the window and looked out. "It is, Aunt Lida," he said excitedly, coming back. "You can see it just as plain out under the electric light."

"I did not bring you any presents," said Santa Claus, "as I heard you did not care for them, but I would like to take you for a little ride, if your aunt will go too. I came early, glancing at the clock, so that I can get back and attend to the boys and girls who like to have presents."

"Of course we will go," said Teddy promptly. "I have never been in a motor carriage."

In a few moments the three were on their way, well protected from the cold, bracing air by an abundance of furs and wraps. There was no moon, but after the lighted streets of the town were past the stars shone down on them brightly.

Teddy was wild with delight, and his tongue ran on rapidly. At length there were occasional pauses, then longer ones interrupted by disjointed remarks. Finally there was total silence. Fletcher bent over so that he could see the child's face; then he looked at Lida and smiled.

They went on for a little in silence. Fletcher was trying to compose his speech.

"I don't know how to say it," he burst out desperately at length. "I keep forgetting how I look, and if I say it the way I want to it will be perfectly ridiculous. And yet I must say it, for I may never have another chance."

She was looking at him, her startled eyes dark and luminous in the starlight.

"Perhaps you do not need to say it," she said gently.

"Do you mean that you understand without my telling you?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," she answered very low.

When they reached the house Fletcher took Teddy in his arms and carried him in. He laid him gently on the couch in the hall and turned away, thinking the child still slept.

"I can stop only a moment," Fletcher said. "Is it late?"

At that instant Teddy sat bolt upright, staring about him wildly. He caught sight of his father in an adjoining room.

"Oh, papa!" he cried, his voice ringing out clear and shrill. "Oh, papa, Santa Claus is kissing Aunt Lida!"—Boston Herald.

## THAT CHRISTMAS PIE.

Confession of the Sinner Who Doctored the Mince-meat.

It had been our family custom to put brandy in all the mince pies and to put in at Christmas time a sufficient amount to enable the partakers thereof to detect that there was really something in it. It often went so far as to deserve the remark of my grandfather that we put mince pie in our brandy. With this as the family precedent, imagine the consternation when it was learned that Rev. Jeremiah Scroggins, our new minister and an avowed teetotaler, had accepted mother's invitation to Christmas dinner. A vote was taken at the family table (we were a democratic household), and it was decided that out of respect to our guest the brandy would be omitted from the big mince pie.

Now, each of us in his heart of hearts felt that the pie would be improved if just a wee bit of brandy were added. So I, for one, resolved to do the deed. Accordingly I sought out the big stone crock in which reposed the mince-meat and poured in what I thought was a moderate quantity of brandy.

It's wonderful how true is the adage about great minds running in similar channels, for every other member of the family, including my father, surreptitiously did the same thing. Later we figured that the mince-meat must have been treated to nigh unto a quart. Mother reserved her brandy until Christmas day, when, before the pie was baked, she added a generous amount.

With hearts as high as the daisy pie crust itself we all watched mother carve that pie and serve it.

The Rev. Jeremiah Scroggins, because of an expressed fondness for pie, was given a big portion.

No sooner had we tasted of the fine dish than we discovered that that pie was nothing short of a small sized distillery. It was branded as no other pie had been since the birth of time. You can imagine the cold chills which went round the festive board as we watched the Rev. Jeremiah begin to eat. I believe I actually shivered as the first forkful went mouthward.

The first mouthful was followed by a second and the second by a third. Finally he had finished the whole portion, and he settled back in his chair. We saw he was a bit embarrassed and expected a real old fashioned temperance lecture right then and there.

The Rev. Jeremiah Scroggins cleared his throat and, turning to mother, said: "Ah—er—my good sister, permit me to compliment you upon the excellence of this pie. It has a most delicious flavor. I confess I never tasted anything like it. Would you think me overbold if I asked for another piece?"—New York Mail and Express.

**Bear Up Gracefully.**

Don't take the tone that you are "cut up" if some one for whom you have nothing gives you a present. The thing is not supposed to be a matter of bargaining. Preserve a decent semblance of a Christmas spirit and repay the obligation, not by a tardy responding gift, but in some other way at some other time, if you want to.

**This Was In Denmark.**

An Englishman having business in a certain Danish town arrived at the railway station. He inquired of a group of men standing near the way to the house he wanted, whereupon one of them offered to go with him and show him. With recollections of what such a service meant in England he said, "I don't want a guide." "But surely you asked us to show you the way," said one of them. "Yes, but I don't want a guide." "My dear sir, I am not a guide; I am the bishop."

**Romance In High Life.**

"So that helress is engaged to a nobleman?"

"Yes."

"And you say the affair was romantic?"

"Oh, very. Why, the duke was even too poor to hire a lawyer."—Kansas City Journalist.

**Afraid of Consequences.**

Dog Hater (tremulously)—S e, here, sir! Will that dog bite me? Dog Owner (scornfully)—Do you suppose he has no instinct of self preservation?—Baltimore American.

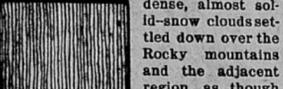
The sagacious are generally inck.—Blackwood.

## One Christmas in the Mountains

By EARL MARBLE

(Copyright.)

Two or three days before the "holy holiday," as Christmas has not inaptly been termed, the dense, almost solid-snow clouds settled down over the Rocky mountains and the adjacent region, as though burying them mountain deep with the feathery flakes that came silently and swirling down, steadily and persistently busy, as though building a new range of mountains of solid and never-ending pearl stretching away seemingly in an endless chain, and creeping up toward the zenith in a few moments of time to inundate valleys and even hills themselves; and such a display of the forces of Nature as this seemed to be a snow-spout, if such a word may be coined.



Just before entering the snowy realm on an east-bound train, Harold Lancaster had telegraphed to Holyville, a pretty little village in Illinois, that he was on his way home, and would be there in season to assist in the church festivities on Christmas, after which the train had plunged into the mountain region. He did not know that his telegram was not sent, as before it was dispatched the wires had broken under the weight of the snow, and all communication with the east was suspended. The train plunged ahead, assisted occasionally by a convenient snow-plow, and was making fair progress toward the summit, where it was expected it would meet with less obstruction than on the western slope.

Harold had gone on a trip up through the wonderful Canadian country in the fall, promising to return to assist in giving a Christmas entertainment in the church, of which Edith Lowell, his sweetheart, was the soprano, as he was the tenor. He had written a little musical skit, in which he was to essay the part of a trumpeter and messenger, to announce to the Christian world—the birth of the Saviour; and his announcement of that event was to be greeted by the beautiful soprano voice of Miss Lowell in a welcoming aria, which had been composed with particular reference to her exquisite method of bird-like trillings, which was one of the features of her voice that made her so popular with those who listened to her voice Sunday after Sunday.

As Christmas approached, and day after day passed without any word being received from young Lancaster, she seemed buried in gloom as deeply as were the foothills and even the peaks as well as the canyons of the great dividing range of the country.

All this time, out in the Rocky mountains, a train was creeping along slowly, and a muffled tenor voice was murmuring, almost muttering, in occasional voicings, "A son is born to the Highest!" and again, "Glory Hallelujah!" as though in rehearsal of the event in the little church in Holyville.

At last Christmas eve arrived, and the congregation in their seats were expectant. The choir singers seemed to take their cue from Miss Lowell, and a small modicum of success only was anticipated.

Everybody was ready for the start, and there was a pause. The blast on the trumpet sounded, which was the signal for Edith to rise and be ready to greet the tenor announcement.

"If only Harold were here!" she said sotto voice, as she arose. "It will be hard for me to sing it." She stood expectantly. "I have no inspiration without Harold."

Following the trumpet signal, a figure appeared in the distance; but Edith did not have the heart to look. There seemed to be a little commotion.

"O, dear!" she exclaimed, "I hope that end of it will not fall also, as I fear this will!"

Then a clear, ringing voice sounded forth, which acted on Edith like an electric battery:

"A son is born to the Highest!" she heard, which was followed by "Glory Hallelujah!" taken up by both choir and congregation.

Her inspiration had arrived. She knew the voice so well, and her heart leaped, as her voice rang out in the opening notes of her aria, which in turn was so inspiring that it brought the entire audience to its feet, and all remained standing, in deference to her sweet delivery of the words and notes alike.

"It was a great triumph!" said the old pastor, as he was being congratulated.

"And love was the key-note," said a knowing young deacon.

"Yes, love to God," said the pastor.

"And to man," added the deacon.

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