# Santa Claus and Little Billee

*By John Kendrick Bangs*

Author of "A House-Boat on the Styx," "The Idiot," etc.

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HE was only a little bit of of a chap, and so, when for the first time in his life he came into close contact with the endless current of human things, it was as hard for him to "stay put" as for some wayward little atom of flotsam and jetsam to keep from tossing about in the surging tides of the sea.

His mother had left him there in the big toy shop, with instructions not to move until she came back, while she went off to do some mysterious errand. She thought, no doubt, that with so many beautiful things on every side to delight his eye and hold his attention, strict obedience to her commands would not be hard. But, alas, the good lady reckoned not upon the magnetic power of attraction of all those lovely objects in detail.

When a phonograph at the other end of the shop began to rattle off melodious tunes and funny jokes, in spite of the instruction Little Billee had received, off he pattered as fast as his little legs would carry him to investigate. After that, forgetful of everything else, finding himself caught in the constantly moving stream of Christmas shoppers, he was borne along in the resistless current until he found himself at last out upon the street—alone, free, and independent.

It was great fun, at first. By and by, however, the afternoon waned, and little Billee began to grow tired. He thought of his mamma, and tried to find the shop where he had promised to remain quiet until her return. Up and down the street he wandered until his little legs grew weary; but there was no sign of the shop, nor of the beloved face he was seeking.

Once again, and yet once again after that, did the little fellow traverse that crowded highway, his [illegible] getting harder and harder to keep back, and then—joy of joys—whom should he see walking slowly along the sidewalk but Santa Claus himself! The saint was strangely decorated with two queer-looking boards, with big red letters on them, hung over his back and chest.

With a glad cry of happiness, Little Billie ran to meet the old fellow, and put his hand gently into that of the saint. He thought it very strange that Santa Claus's hand should be so cold and cold and rough, and so chapped; but he was not in any mood to be critical.

Santa Claus, of course, would recognize him at once, and would know just how to take him back to his

His Mother Had Left Him There in the Toy-Shop.

mamma at home—wherever that might be. Little Billee had never thought to inquire just where home was. All he knew was that it was a big gray stone house on a long street somewhere, with a tall iron railing in front of it, not far from the park.

"Howdidoo, Mr. Santa Claus?" said Little Billee, as the other's hand unconsciously tightened over his own.

"Why, howdidoo, kiddie?" replied the old fellow, glancing down at his new-found friend, with surprise gleaming from his deep-set eyes. "Where did you drop from?"

"Oh, I'm out," said Little Billee bravely. "My mama left me a little while ago while she went off about something, and I guess I got losted. But it's all right now, I'm found again, ain't I?"

"Oh, yes, indeedy, you're found all right, kiddie," Santa Claus agreed.

"And pretty soon you'll take me home again, won't you?" said the child.

"Surest thing you know!" answered Santa Claus, looking down upon the bright but tired little face with a comforting smile. "Where do you live?"

"As if you didn't know that!" cried Little Billee, giggling.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Santa Claus. "Can't fool you, can I? It would be funny if, after keeping an eye on you all these years since you was a baby, I didn't know where you lived, eh?"

"Awful funny," agreed Little Billee.

Just then Little Billee noticed for the first time the square boards that Santa Claus was wearing.

"What are you wearing those boards for, Mr. Santa Claus?" he asked.

If the lad had looked closely enough, he would have seen a very unhappy look come into the old man's face; but there was nothing of it in his answer.

"Oh, those are my new-fangled back and chest protectors, my lad," he replied. "Sometimes we have bitter winds blowing at Christmas, and I have to be ready for them. It wouldn't do for Santa Claus to come down with the sneezes at Christmas time, you know—no, siree! This board in front keeps the wind off my chest, and the one behind keeps me from getting rheumatism in my back. They are a great protection against the weather."

"You've got letters printed there," said the boy, peering around in front of his companion. "What do they spell? You know I haven't learned to read yet."

"'Merry Christmas to Everybody!'" said Santa Claus. "I have the words printed there so that everybody can see them; and if I miss wishing anybody a merry Christmas, he'll know I meant it just the same."

They walked on now in silence, for Little Billee was beginning to feel almost too tired to talk, and Santa Claus seemed to be thinking of something else. Finally, however, the little fellow spoke.

"I guess I'd like to go home now, Mr. Santa Claus," he said. "I'm tired, and I'm afraid my mamma will be wondering where I've gone to."

"That's so, my little man," said Santa Claus, stopping short in his walk up and down the block. "Your mother will be worried, for a fact; and your father, too—I know how I'd feel if my little boy got losted and hadn't come home at dinner time. I don't believe you know where you live, though—now, honest! Come! 'Fess up, Billee, you don't know where you live, do you?"

"Why, yes, I do," said Little Billee. "It's in the big gray stone house with the iron fence in front of it, near the park."

"Oh, that's easy enough!" laughed Santa Claus nervously. "Anybody could say he lived in a gray stone house with a fence around it, near the park; but you don't know what street it's on, nor the number, either I'll bet fourteen wooden giraffes against a monkey on a stick!"

"No, I don't," said Little Billee frankly; "but I know the number of our ortymobile. It's—'N. Y.'"

"Fine!" laughed Santa Claus. Then he reflected for a moment, eyeing the child anxiously.

"I don't believe you even know your papa's name," he said.

"Yes, I do," said Little Billee indignantly. "His name is Mr. Harrison, and he owns a bank."

"Splendid! Made of tin, I suppose, with a nice little hole at the top to drop pennies into?" said Santa Claus.

"No, it ain't, either!" retorted Little Billee. "It's made of stone, and has more than a million windows in it. I went down there with my mamma to papa's office the other day, so I guess I ought to know."

"Well, I should say so," said Santa Claus. "Nobody better. By the way, Billee, what does your mamma call your papa? 'Billee,' like you?" he added.

"Oh, no, indeed," returned Little Billee. "She calls him papa, except once in a while when he's going away, and then she says, 'Good-by, Tom.'"

"Fine again!" said Santa Claus, blowing upon his fingers, for, now that the sun had completely disappeared over in the west, it was getting very cold. "Thomas Harrison, banker," he muttered to himself. "What, with the telephone book and the city directory, I guess we can find our way home with Little Billee."

He led the little fellow into a public telephone station, where he eagerly scanned the names in the book. At last last it was found—"Thomas Harrison, seven-six-five-four Plaza." And then, in the seclusion of the telephone booth, Santa Claus sent the gladdest of all Christmas messages over the wire to two distracted parents:

"I have found your boy wandering in the street. He is safe, and I will bring him home right away."

Fifteen minutes later, there might have been seen the strange spectacle of a footsore Santa Claus leading a sleepy little boy up Fifth avenue to a cross street, which shall be nameless. The boy vainly endeavored to persuade his companion to "come in and meet mamma."

"No, Billee," the old man replied sadly, "I must hurry back. You see, kiddie, this is my busy day."

But it was not to be as Santa Claus willed, for Little Billee's papa, and his mamma, and his brothers and sisters, and the butler and the housemaids were waiting at the front door when they arrived.

Led by Little Billee's persistent father, Santa Claus went into the house. Now that the boy could see him in the full glare of many electric lights, his furs did not seem the most gorgeous things in the world. When the flapping front of his red jacket flew open, the child was surprised to see how ragged was the thin gray coat it covered; and as for the good old saint's comfortable stomach—strange to say, it was not!

"I—I wish you all a merry Christmas," faltered Santa Claus; "but I really must be going, sir—"

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Harrison. "Not until you have got rid of this chill, and—"

"I can't stay, sir," said Santa. "I'll lose my job if I do."

"Well, what if you do? I'll give you a better one," said the banker.

"I can't—I can't!" faltered the man. "I—I—I've got a Little Billee of my own at home waitin' for me, sir. If I hadn't," he added fiercely, "do you suppose I'd be doin' this?" He pointed at the painted boards, and shuddered.

"I guess Santa Claus is tired, papa," said Little Billee, snuggling up closely to the old fellow and taking hold of his hand sympathetically. "He's been walkin' a lot today."

"Yes, my son," said Mr. Harrison gravely. "These are very busy times for Santa Claus, and I guess that, as he still has a hard night ahead of him, James had better ring up Henry and tell him to bring the car around right away, so that we may take him back—to his little boy. We'll have to lend him a fur coat, to keep the wind off, too, for it is a bitter night."

"Oh," said Little Billee. "I haven't told you about these boards he wears. He has 'em to keep the wind off, and they're fine, papa!" Little Billee pointed to the two sign-boards which Santa Claus had leaned against the wall. "He says he uses 'em on cold nights," the lad went on. "They have writing on 'em, too. Do you know what it says?"

"Yes," said Mr. Harrison, glancing at the boards. "It says 'If You Want a Good Christmas Dinner for a Quarter, Go to Smithson's Cafe.'"

Little Billee roared with laughter.

"Papa's trying to fool me, just as you did when you pretended not to know where I lived, Santa Claus," he said, looking up into the old fellow's face, his own countenance brimming over with mirth. "You mustn't think he can't read, though," the lad added hastily. "He's only joking."

"Oh, no, indeed, I shouldn't have thought that," replied Santa Claus, smiling through his tears.

"I've been joking, have I?" said Little Billee's papa. "Well, then, Mr. Billiam, suppose you inform me what it says."

"'Merry Christmas to Everybody,'" said Little Billee proudly. "I couldn't read it myself, but he told me what it said. He has it printed there so that

"What Are You Wearing Those Boards for, Mr. Santa Claus?"

if he misses saying it to anybody, they'll know he means it just the same."

"By Jove, Mr. Santa Claus," cried Little Billee's papa, grasping the old man warmly by the hand. "I owe you ten million apologies! I haven't believed in you for many a long year; but now, sir, I take it all back. You do exist, and, by the great horn spoon, you are the real thing!"

Little Billee had the satisfaction of acting as host to Santa Claus at a good, luscious dinner, which Santa Claus must have enjoyed very much. After dinner Henry came with the automobile, and, bidding everybody good night, Santa Claus and Little Billee's papa went out of the house together.

Christmas morning dawned, and Little Billee awoke from wonderful dreams of rich gifts, and of extraordinary adventures with his new-found friend, to find the reality quite as splendid as the dream things.

As for Santa Claus, Little Billee has not seen him again; but down at his father's bank there is a new messenger, named John, who has a voice so like Santa Claus' voice that whenever Little Billee goes down there in the motor to ride home at night with his papa, he runs into the bank and has a long talk with him, just for the pleasure of pretending that it is Santa Claus he is talking to.

### How She Counted Success.

After Jenny Lind had left the stage for no apparent reason, a friend who went to see her found her sitting by the sea, with an open Bible upon her knee, looking out on the sunset glory. During the conversation the friend said: "Madame Goldschmidt, how is it that you ever came to abandon the stage at the very height of your success, when money and affluence were pouring in upon you?" Laying one hand upon the Bible, and pointing with the other to the sunset, she quietly said: "When my success was making me every day think less of this dear book, and nothing at all of the sunset's glories, what else could I do?" "The Swedish Nightingale" counted her success by losses instead of gains. This difference is always seen between the wordling and the Christian.—Record of Christian Work.

### Philosophy of Amusement.

Amusement! What form of amusement must you give up if you become a Christian? No amusement that is a recreation. That must be your philosophy of amusement—Recreation. Anything that destroys you, spirit, mind and body, of course, you must give up, because Jesus is set upon making you perfect and beautiful, and he will not tolerate a retention of anything that stultifies you physically, or dulls you mentally, or blights you spiritually.—Dr. Campbell Morgan.

### True Meaning of Salvation.

Salvation is not the petty conception of personal safety from some far-off doom. It is the saving of the whole man; it is the domination of the higher nature over the lower; it is the education of the spiritual, the development, the evolution of the God in us, that divine spark in all humanity that can never be wholly extinguished.—William D. Little.

# Hangin' the Mistletoe

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## The Right Christmas Attitude

BEWARE of uttering pessimistic and cynical remarks about Christmas and Christmas joys. If only from motives of vanity, abstain from grumbling during the festive season, for nothing so surely fixes a person's age as disagreeable remarks about the utter futility and absurdity of keeping Christmas. However well preserved, however free from gray hair, wrinkles and other distressing marks of devouring Time, be quite sure that your Christmas attitude will not give you away. "Heigho for the holly! This life is most jolly!" is the correct attitude. It is the attitude of the child, and at Christmas time the immortal child which lurks in every human being wakes to life if we do not frighten it and allow it to creep back to its hiding place for want of encouragement. Grumpy, disagreeable people naturally do not like Christmas, because it shows them up.

### KINDHEARTED.

"Are you going to hang up your stocking on Christmas eve?" asked the boy's uncle, patronizingly.

"I suppose so," answered the boy, still more patronizingly. "Father and mother seem to expect that sort of thing, and it would be a pity to disappoint them."

### Couldn't Have.

"Huh! I bet you didn't have a good time at your Christmas party yesterday" taunted Billy.

"I bet I did," answered little Eddie.

"Aw, go 'way. Why ain't you sick today, if you did?"

### Papa's Suggestion.

Miss Fosdick (who is self-willed)—I wish I knew what to give dear Charles for a Christmas gift.

Fosdick, pere (who hates "dear Charles")—Give him a wide berth.

## CUSTOM OF GIVING IS OLD

### Popular Practice Associated With Christmas Ancient as Rome's Seven Hills.

When Caligula, at the Roman Kalends preceding the New Year, realized that his daughter was going to be married while, to all intents and purposes, he was broke, although he was running the great Roman empire, he sent out word that, if his countrymen were going to send him gifts that year, they might as well make their gifts cash to help him provide her with a proper dowry. Next day he had to wade through hills of gold at his palace door.

Our Christmas giving, as a custom, is as old as Rome's seven hills. The old Romans used to start in with their Saturnalia, and a few days later, at January 1, they dashed jubilantly into the Kalends. It was the season for feasting and merrymaking, with profuse and universal generosity thrown in for good measure.

In the homes of the wealthy luxurious abundance prevailed; in the dwellings of the poor there was always some striving for the makings of a feast. All that was connected with toil was abandoned; even the children didn't have to go to school. The very slaves were permitted to forget their thralldom. From end to end of the vast empire people vied with one another in giving presents, and the very misers were expected then to open their coffers and remember that money was made to be spent, not hoarded.

So there, in ancient Rome, were all the popular makings of our own Christmas season, right down to the school holidays.

## FESTIVAL FOR THE YOUNG

### Opportunity of Christmas of Bringing Happiness to Children Should Not Be Passed By.

Christmas, the celebration of the birthday of the Divine Child, is peculiarly the children's festival. And while it cannot, too, but be a time of special rejoicing among grown-ups, we realize after all, that it has no other charm to compare with the pleasure we take in some kiddy's delight over the doll or drum or picture book that our special Santa Claus has brought him.

This opportunity of making some child's Christmas one of surpassing joy, of which he will carry a gracious and ennobling memory into after life, years, it may be, after our direct influence for good or evil will have ceased forever—this opportunity of giving pleasure is one of the best that life has to offer us. And perhaps the greatest opportunity is his who in place of home times, has the wide, gray world of homeless, loveless, unhappy childhood from which to choose the most needy recipient of his Christmas giving. The chances of giving happiness in this way are so many, the means so simple, and the deed itself so worthy, that no one of us should let the season pass unimproved.

### Near-Useful Xmas Gifts.

Burnt wood pipe racks.
Hand painted neckties.
Fancy pen wipers.
Silver match safes.
Ornamental collar boxes.

### Christmas Beauty.

Think lovely thoughts in keeping with the spirit of the time.

## The GIFT CIGARS by WILBUR D. NESBIT

DON'T laugh! But she gave me cigars,
Selected the things by their color—
They came out in one of those jars—
I think they were called the "Maud Muller."

I've read all these gift-cigar jokes,
I know I must read them hereafter;
Please wait for the place for the laughter.

Don't smile! But she bought them herself.
I know how she talked to the dealer—
She looked at each box on the shelf
And spoke of the wrapper as "peeler."

O, beautiful-looking were they—
I think they were called the "Maud Muller."
Of course you think now of hay
Unless, as I was, you are duller.

Don't grin! They wore gilt and red bands,
And really looked quite artistic.
She says that she now understands
Why smoking has charms that are mystic.
She says that it's cheering to see
How much as I smoke I enjoy them.
I know you are choking with glee
And think that I wished to destroy them.

Now, wait! Well, I sat down and smoked;
She placed the ash tray on the table;
I chuckled and subtly I joked—
"Maud Muller," you know, was the label.
Well, talk of your jokes on cigars!
I said you might laugh when I'd ended
These came out in one of those jars—
And, honestly, now, they were splendid!

### Satisfied.

He was a poor man but a contented one. Santa Claus came to him and said:

"What do you want, my friend?"

"Nothing," he replied, with becoming modesty, which he hoped would be rewarded.

And Santa Claus was so pleased that he gave it to him and passed on.

For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.
—Charles Dickens

## A Silver Tea Caddy

By SOPHY F. GOULD

SHE was a frail-looking little girl, who had been self-supporting for over three years, since her mother died, and was tired now, as she walked through the street crowded with shopgirls like herself.

Listlessly, in order for a minute to avoid the onrush of hurrying humans, she paused before a shop window where antiques of all kinds were grouped attractively.

There was little in the window to interest a mite of a girl earning a paltry $6 a week, yet of a sudden her eyes, a moment before so tired, lighted excitedly, and a casual observer might have noticed how exquisitely beautiful they were. The tired line of her mouth also relaxed, and hopefully she stepped closer to the plate glass and peered for a long, concentrated moment at a silver tea caddy of quaint design. After a second's hesitation she opened the door and walked bravely into the little shop.

"The tea caddy?" she asked of the woman who greeted her inquiringly. "How much is it?"

"The little silver one?" The woman looked her surprise, as she noted the shabby black coat and much-worn skirt. "You wanted to buy it?" she asked kindly, for something in the girl's eyes made her know she was in earnest. "It is $25."

"Twenty-five dollars!" the girl gasped, and as suddenly as it had come the brightness left her eyes. "Twenty-five," she repeated. "I'm afraid I could never afford that." She gripped her pay envelope firmly and, turning, walked out of the shop.

In her tiny room, as she cooked her meager dinner over the gas plate, and later, when lying wide awake in her narrow bed, she thought of the beautiful tea caddy. She thought until it became a cherished ideal, vested with wonderful scenes among the great people of the world.

The following day she neglected her lunch, and hurried to the shop to once more view the wonderful caddy.

When she entered the woman greeted her warmly, for the expression in her eyes had proved haunting to the woman all the past night.

"Did you really want to buy the caddy?" she asked, as she handed it to the girl, "for if you do—"

"I must buy it," she interrupted, as she took it reverently in her two hands, "but I can't pay the money all at once." She hesitated.

"How much could you pay?" The woman suddenly understood the girl's

need, and a great kindness came to her. "Perhaps we could come to terms."

"I have $2 that I have saved, and I think I can spare 50 cents each week. I only make $6," she added, apologetically.

"Six dollars!" the woman gasped, as the enormity of the girl's project came to her. "You may have it at your own terms," she said impulsively.

"Oh!" For a moment the girl held it to her breast, then she handed the money without regret to the woman.

In the days that followed the woman became very fond of the girl, for she came often to gaze with awe upon the silver caddy of quaint design, and in the short visits the woman learned to know what a difference an ideal can make in a life. In watching the girl's love for the thing that kept her poorer than she need have been the woman found her own life broadening.

On Christmas eve a young man persistently tried to buy the caddy, until the woman finally told him the story of its sale. He listened in wonder, and then asked for the name of the girl, who seemed so great a marvel that he wanted his mother to see and help her.

The same evening, after the young man had left, the girl made her final payment, and with a wild joy throbbing in her heart carried the tea caddy home, and with it a beautiful bunch of holly, a festive touch from the woman.

She had pinched hard to save the 50 cents each week, but her reward was great, and worth the happiness the ideal had always given her.

It was again Christmas eve, and a dainty woman, wrapped in a soft fur coat, opened the door of the little shop, and with extended hand came to the woman. "Merry Chrismas!" she exclaimed. "Don't you remember me?"

In the deep, winsome eyes there was something familiar, and suddenly the woman threw her arms about the girl, and peering over her head espied the man.

"We have just been married," he explained. "My mother found her for me, and we wanted to come to thank you for what you have done."

"I have missed your example so." The woman held her very close, laughing softly through her tears, for they were suddenly all so happy, and it was Christmas, for outside faraway bells were ringing.

### Eggless Beef Loaf.

Blend together two pounds of minced raw beef, one large handful of moistened bread crumbs, one small grated onion, one teaspoonful of pepper, one scant tablespoonful of salt and from one-half to three-quarters of a glassful of cold water; mix well, form into a loaf and cook for 1½ hours in a moderate oven, pouring a small cupful of water into the baking pan. It has been noticed that when beef loaf is made with eggs it does not cut well when hot, but this recipe gives nice, smooth slices either hot or cold.