

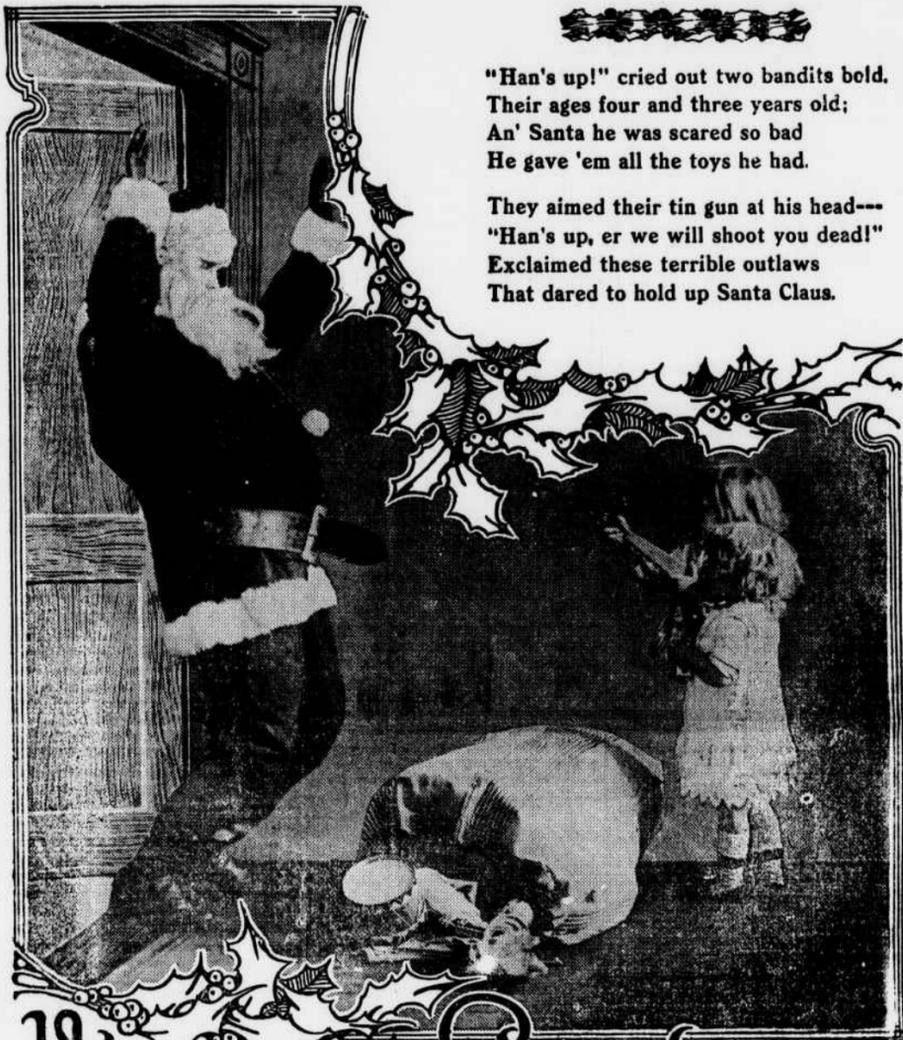
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## MERRY XMAS



"Han's up!" cried out two bandits bold.  
Their ages four and three years old;  
An' Santa he was scared so bad  
He gave 'em all the toys he had.

They aimed their tin gun at his head---  
"Han's up, er we will shoot you dead!"  
Exclaimed these terrible outlaws  
That dared to hold up Santa Claus.

### HOLDING UP SANTA CLAUS

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**M**OTHER, I've never had a Christmas tree," grieved little Bobbinel Loring one December day.

Mrs. Loring looked down at the sweet little face, and her own, so like it, grew more sad than its own.

"I know it, dearie," she said. "When your dear father was alive you were too little to have one, and since he has been gone we have been so poor the Santa Claus feels that he did very well to fill our stockings. Don't you remember the lovely stocking full of presents you received last year?"

Bobbinel shook her sunny head disconsolately. "I sure 'member it, but it wasn't a tree, mother; and I would so much love to have a tree just like the ones I've read about in my books."

Mrs. Loring smiled sadly at her small daughter's pretty conceit. Bobbinel's "reading" consisted of gazing at the pictures in her little books and glibly reciting from memory the stories her mother had so often read to her.

"A Christmas tree would be perfectly lovely," murmured Bobbinel as she went back to her picture books.

"I'll try and see if I cannot get one this year," mused Mrs. Loring, "but they do charge so fearfully for everything here in Highhill. That's the worst of living in an expensive suburb, but I did it for the best. I was sure that I could obtain more music pupils here than in the city where there is so much competition."

Edith Loring had done very well since the death of her husband three years before. Frank's illness had been a long one, and when at last he was laid to rest beside the tiny grave where Bobbinel's twin brother rested there was little money left for the young widow and her child to start life anew.

She had kept her piano, and although never a brilliant musician, she was an admirable teacher and found many young pupils in the pretty suburban community where she elected to settle with her little daughter. The cottage they lived in was a tiny one on the outskirts of the town and had been a rather dilapidated affair, but Edith had spent money, time and effort to transform it into a cozy nest for them.

"It seems a pity that I cannot provide a Christmas tree for the mite," murmured Edith Loring as she bent over her sewing. "I wonder how I can economize in order to save the amount. Smith wanted \$1 apiece for every tree he had last year."

Bobbinel, still sitting on the floor in the corner, was gazing intently at the colored picture of a gayly decorated Christmas tree. Suddenly her brown eyes opened wider and a smile curved her lips. She jumped up hurriedly.

"Mother, dear, I believe I'll go out and play," she said.

"Bring your things in here, Bobbinel, and be sure and stay in the sunshine."

Presently Bobbinel skipped down the path to the gate, dragging her sled over the hard packed snow. She was a pretty sight in her red cloak and knitted cap and leggings all of the same cherry hue even to the mittens on her diminutive hands.

Next door to the Loring's cottage was the Moore place, a handsome brick structure set in the midst of a park-like expanse of undulating lawns and wooded slopes. A grove of young Norway spruces dipped down to the stone wall that divided the cottage from the great place beyond.

Bobbinel often played in front of the Moore place, for the trees overhung the high iron fence and shaded the sidewalk in summer, while in winter the sloping walk made a very safe hill on which a small girl might coast. The Moore place was closed most of the time.

On this crisp December morning, however, Bobbinel did not stop on the sidewalk. She walked boldly through

the open gate and up the driveway, where there were tracks of horse's hoofs and ruts where a sleigh had passed. By these signs Bobbinel knew that the lonely gentleman who sometimes occupied the Moore place was at home. Now she glimpsed him walking among the trees with a Gordon setter at his heels. He was a tall, straight figure of a man with prematurely gray hair and severe features. Bobbinel had heard people speak of him as "Judge Moore" and "the judge," and she knew that he was a person to be treated with great awe and respect.

But Bobbinel Loring had always found that stern faces softened at her approach and harsh voices were tempered when people spoke to her, and because of this experience and also because she was blessed with the sweet



TIED ONE OF HER HAIR RIBBONS TO THE TREE.

trustfulness of innocent childhood, she approached Judge Moore with more of hope than fear in her heart.

Judge Moore always came down to the old homestead when he had a difficult case to think over. Now he was pacing to and fro on a little beaten track his feet had made on the snow under the trees. He enjoyed the stillness of the place, the pungent odor of the evergreens and the crisp tang of the winter air. Overhead the sky was cloudless and from the high trees back of the house blue jays were scolding.

"I'm very glad to see you," piped Bobbinel with her best company manner.

Judge Moore started and looked down at the small red coated figure, beside which the setter stood wagging a friendly tail.

"Why, Red Riding Hood, I'm glad to see you too." He smiled down at her, and Bobbinel wondered why people seemed afraid of such a handsome gentleman and one who had such a deep, kind voice.

"I'm not Red Riding Hood, but I know all about her," returned Bobbinel earnestly.

Judge Moore lifted his eyebrows in mock surprise. "Not Red Riding Hood, eh? Well, you look just like her, and my dog, Prince, looks very much like the wolf."

Bobbinel's dimples showed in an appreciative smile.

"I came to talk about Christmas trees," she said without further introduction.

"Christmas trees! Bless my soul! It is almost Christmas, isn't it?"

"Yes, and I never had a Christmas tree." Bobbinel could not suppress the longing in her tones.

"Never did?" There was genuine surprise in the judge's tones now. "So you came to talk it over with me?"

"Yes, please. You have so many trees right next to my house. They are just like the trees in my picture books and like the one at Sunday school last year. Mother says I might have one, only probably Santa Claus knows we're quite poor and that he thinks he has done very well to fill my stockings. But a tree would look so lovely in our parlor!"

"And you would like to have one of my trees?" asked the judge kindly.

"Well, I thought maybe if you didn't mind perhaps I could write to Santa Claus and tell him if he didn't have a tree to spare for me you wouldn't care if he took one from all those pretty ones next door to my house."

"That's a splendid idea! Shall we go and look at them now?"

"Oh, goodly! Let's!" cried Bobbinel, thrusting a warm red mittened hand in the judge's gloved palm.

"What is your name--your real name?" asked the judge as they walked toward the spruce covered hill.

"Bobbinel Loring."

"Bobbinel! What an odd name for a little girl!"

"It is two names," sighed Bobbinel. "I had a little brother Bobby, but he died, and father said that I must be son and daughter now, so they called me Bobbinel. My own name is Nellie. Father is with Bobby now, and so there's only mother and me."

"Oh," said the judge, and his hand closed tighter on Bobbinel's. "You live in the little cottage?"

"Yes, and mother teaches music."

They had reached the spruce grove now and could look down upon the little gray cottage with a friendly wreath of smoke curling from the chimney.

"That's where I live," said Bobbinel proudly.

"Suppose we pick out a tree now, and you can tie a ribbon upon it so that Santa Claus will know what one to bring to you, eh?"

"Oh, that will be perfectly lovely!" squealed Bobbinel.

Without a qualm Judge Moore selected his finest spruce for Bobbinel's Christmas tree. Gravely he untied one of the little girl's red hair ribbons and tied it to the tree.

"Now, he won't make any mistake!" she cried as they went back.

That evening Bobbinel told her mother the story of her adventure in the Moore place and how the kind judge had marked a "beautiful" tree for Santa Claus to bring to them.

So Mrs. Loring wrote the letter to Santa Claus and the very next morning went over to the Moore place to apologize for Bobbinel's intrusion and to assure the judge that she could not permit him to sacrifice his handsome spruce for one little girl's Christmas.

But Judge Moore had a will of his own and a most winning manner, and it did not take him long to convince Mrs. Loring that the pleasure was all on his side of the stone wall.

"Perhaps you will permit me to call on Christmas morning and see the tree? That will be the greatest reward." He smiled down at her, and Edith Loring fondly herself telling him they would be very glad to see him.

The judge walked to the gate with the lovely young widow, and Bobbinel was delighted when she found that her mother would put no objection in the way of Santa Claus bringing the coveted tree.

It was a wonderful Christmas for Bobbinel Loring. When Judge Moore called on Christmas morning to see the tree he discovered several large and interesting packages behind the tree, where Bobbinel had supposed she had searched before.

Perhaps the following Christmas was the most wonderful for all three of them, for Bobbinel found herself living at the Moore house next door, with a whole grove of trees to choose from, while people called her mamma "Mrs. Moore" and called the judge "a lucky fellow."

### A Flat Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas,  
And all through the flat  
Not a creature was stirring--  
Too crowded for that.

### A Historic Christmas



**C**HRISTMAS night, 1776, General George Washington crossed the Delaware, and the next day occurred the battle of Trenton. The Hessians were naturally surprised. They took it for granted that the Revolutionary army would rest upon its arms and permit them to enjoy their Christmas in peace, but Washington concluded that the deed would be bettered by the day, and he loaded his small army into boats and crossed the icy waters of the muddy river. He reckoned correctly, and the result of his daring maneuver was that he attacked Colonel Rahl at sunrise. The commanding officer and twenty of the enemy were killed and 1,000 taken prisoners. Two Americans were killed, and two were frozen to death. Washington's valor, however, saved the American cause.

### Storing Christmas Presents

Flat dwellers in the big cities have not the same facilities for storing their Christmas packages that people enjoy who live in houses. It is very hard to conceal an intended present in a flat. For that reason drug stores, hotel check stands, saloons and other like places are used. If one does his Christmas shopping early and does not wish to appear with the gift at his home before Christmas eve he employs some of these hiding places where the prying eyes of wife or children may not discover in advance the nature of the intended surprise.

### ODD SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

There are superstitions anent Christmas in all countries, but probably the following are a few of the most extraordinary:

In north Germany a person must not spin during the twelve nights of Christmas, lest he or she should walk after death, nor after sunset on Saturday, for then mice will eat the work. If it is desired to have money and luck all the year round one must not fail to eat herrings on New Year's day, nor if you wish to be lucky must you rock an empty cradle or spill salt wantonly or cross knives or point at the stars.

If a dirty cloth is left on the table over Christmas night it will make the angels weep, if you point upward to the rainbow it will make the angels' feet bleed, and if you talk of cabbages while looking at the moon you will hurt the feelings of the man in it.

At Kilgrinol, near Blackpool, in England a very common superstition prevails that the bells of a hidden church may be heard by any one who bends his ear to the ground. In Berkshire it was at one time a popular belief that bells could be heard ringing in the ground on Christmas eve, and in some parts of England miners have been heard to say that bells could be heard merrily pealing in the most distant parts of the mine.

The most popular superstition in many parts of England is that every remnant of Christmas decoration must be removed before Candlemas day. Should a sprig of holly or other evergreen be left in any house one of its occupants will die within the year.

### America's Oldest Christmas Bells

**T**HE oldest chime of bells in this country is located in old Christ church, on Second street, Philadelphia. They have been pealing out the glad tidings of "Peace on earth, good will toward men," for considerably over a hundred years and will do so this year at Christmas time.

### Christmas Trees and Fires

So many fires have been started by candles on Christmas trees that in many states laws have been passed against this form of illumination. In those states where the practice still prevails a hose or bucket of water should be kept handy to put out any blaze that may start. A very effective substitute for the candles is furnished by a system of tiny electric bulbs connected with a few small storage batteries. As these bulbs may be used year after year the expense is not high.

### Christmas Deception

In one sense Christmas is a sort of game which the grown ups play with as much zest as the children. Santa Claus is not the only deception. Everybody pretends to enjoy buying presents and to be delighted with those received from others. Yet these little white lies are amiable and are forgiven, let us be sure, because of the spirit behind them. Besides, it is just such innocent pretending that makes social life possible and that keeps the heart young.