



"Hello, Little One!"

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## THE ASSOCIATED SANTA CLAUS

By CHARLES FREDERIC GILLIAM

"Hello, George, what's the matter with you?" asked Will James, as George Johnson stepped into his office in one of the sky-scrapers, and sank wearily into a chair. "I'm clear fagged out," was the reply. "Do you know, this Christmas business is something awful?" "James laughed. "Are you finding that out for the first time?" "No, but it seems worse than usual this time. It appears that my folks have nearly every little thing they need, and when I find some particular thing that strikes my fancy, it costs so much, by the time I even up all around, I can't afford it."



Joy Over a Cherished Toy.

so that it takes all the pleasure away from the giving, because the expense is really greater than I can afford. "That's it exactly. It wouldn't be so bad if the gifts were restricted to one's own family, but some relative or friend makes some of the family a present and it has to be met in kind, or with something a little better, in order to relieve one's self of the sense of obligation. If these presents were all dictated by affection, a fellow wouldn't object to making considerable sacrifices, but when a large proportion are merely for the

purpose of keeping even, it's a horse of another color."

"Yes, and our most expensive presents go to those who are better fixed financially than ourselves, and who have the least need for them. Why, just last week one of my nieces, who is in very moderate circumstances, and of whom I think a good deal, was married, and we sent her a piece of plated silverware that cost four dollars. At the same time we sent Miss DeForest for her wedding present a cut glass dish that cost \$15, and she'd hardly recognize us if we met her on the street."

"I'm glad you told me that, Will. I had a sort of a sneaking idea that I was about the biggest fool in town in that direction, but I guess you and your family and I and my family are all in the same boat. But what's to be done? Can't we make a declaration of independence? My wife and I make resolves every year, but we keep stretching the limit a little, until by the time we get through the list we find we have sent more than the preceding year."

"I'm with you on two things, George; that is, that we economize some on our expenditures, and that what we do spend shall be in a way to bring most enjoyment to ourselves, by giving the most enjoyment to others. Let's give what we give outside our own families, to those who need it."

"I don't think I follow you exactly."

"Well, take myself, for instance. I am very fortunate if I get off with a hundred dollars. How much does it cost you?"

"I can't say definitely, but fully that much, I should judge."

"Suppose, then, we take our families into the scheme with us and agree to spend only \$50 for ourselves. Then we can spend \$25 each for a number of worthy poor families who are unable to provide for themselves, out of the ordinary, yet too proud or have too much self-respect to avail themselves of the public charities on that day. In that way we would be \$25 ahead, and at the same time be able to furnish 10 or 15 families with a turkey and the other necessities for a good Christmas dinner, and some candies and toys for the children."

"Good for you, Will, that suits me down to the ground, and I know my wife will be right in for it."

"I'm glad it strikes you so favorably, George. But if it's a good

thing for us two, why not push it along a little? What's the matter with getting four or five or a half dozen of the other boys interested?"

"Nothing at all. There's Scott and Corwin and Wilson and Thompson and Smith, all of 'em good, wholesome fellows, and all here in the building. Suppose I 'phoned 'em to come up, and we'll talk the matter over. They're all pretty well fixed, too, and I believe will be glad to take a hand."

"Just the thing, George. The sooner we take hold and get it under way, the better."

Accordingly an urgent message was telephoned in a half jovial, half mysterious way, to each one mentioned, to come to James' office at once on important business. All responded promptly, undecided as to whether it meant a practical joke or business of pressing importance.

Will called the meeting to order in a very formal manner and requested George to state its purpose.

Every one seemed to enter into the spirit of the object of the meeting, as well as into the half jovial, half

formal, parliamentary manner in which it was conducted, and they were soon discussing the various suggestions offered with the enthusiasm and abandon of a lot of school boys.

While there was no posing as philanthropists, there was a whole-souled spirit of consideration shown for the worthy unfortunate, that gave them a much deeper insight into each other's characters and drew them into closer bonds of sympathy than would a year of ordinary intercourse.

It was found that after they had all pledged themselves to the fund in accordance with the rule laid down, as to ability and percentage of ordinary expenditure, there would be something over a hundred and fifty dollars available.

It being essential to the carrying out of their plan that their families should be interested, a meeting was called for a subsequent evening at the residence of Mr. Corwin, at which all were represented.

The ladies and other members of the families entered into the movement with even more enthusiasm than the organizers. Before the labor was completed of making out the list of those to be aided and the various things to be contributed to each one, several meetings were required. More enjoyment came from these meetings, twice over, than if the money expended had been for gifts for themselves.

The organization was kept secret from the public, but at the laughing suggestion of Mr. Scott, adopted the name: "The Associated Santa Claus." With each basket, delivered late on Christmas eve, at the door of various homes, was an envelope addressed to the recipient, containing a postal directed to "The Associated Santa Claus," Box 619, City; requesting that the receipt of the basket be acknowledged, so that it might be known that it had not gone astray.

It is not the province of this story to tell of the joy of the little children in these 30 or 40 homes, over the receipt of some cherished toy and the ever welcome candy and nuts, or of the heart-felt gratitude of the parents, that, for that one day of all others, their families had been permitted to partake of the comfort and luxury of a well-filled table.

At the final meeting of the year, held the night after Christmas, at which the acknowledgments were read to the association, more than one woman's eyes were brimming with tears, and more than one man had a lump in his throat that was difficult to swallow, as he listened to the burning words of gratitude, for the joy that had been brought to their homes. Some were expressed in un-couth, and some in the most refined language, but all bore the impress of sincerity.

There was not a dissenting voice, when Mr. Wilson presented the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Christmas just passed has been the happiest one of our lives, and that we continue, as a permanent organization, "The Associated Santa Claus."—Ohio Magazine.

### Christmas Superstitions.

There are many Christmas superstitions long held as articles of faith that are to be recalled, says Country Life. How that oxen kneel in their stalls at midnight on Christmas eve, in adoration of the Nativity, and for one hour have the power of speech—for that one hour, too, the lost spirits have rest. Judas sleeps. Herod ceases to clank his chains, the daughter of Herodias may pause in the dance, in which she is condemned to spin forever, and Pilate's ghost ceases its wanderings on Mount Pilatus. It was believed, too, that the sound of church bells could be heard wherever a church had stood, though no trace remained, and that, on that pregnant night, one sleeping in a manger would see his future in a vision.

## The Matter of Dress



Perhaps at no time in the past has there been greater diversity in styles and in materials worn at various functions. Skirts are trailing, of the short walking length, or just escape the floor; they are empire, princess, glove or loosely fitting princess, with no suggestion of the empire, or they show the Louis coats with trailing skirts, or elaborate coats and skirts, or the severest of the tailored variety of the latter combination.

Velvet is especially smart in gowns and in coats, whether tight or loose. Hats as a rule are prettier than ever, but some extraordinary effects are seen.

Although fur is now so much used as a trimming for evening gowns and evening mantles, I am of the opinion that the latter garments are most effective and distinguished when made on very simple lines and left practically untrimmed. Of course, everything depends on the dress with which the mantle is to be worn; if that be exceedingly elaborate the mantle or wrap can afford to be simple, and vice versa. Now that our evening cloaks are always made to accompany some special gown we find them in many different materials and styles. Perhaps the graceful burnous is about the most satisfactory and becoming shape. The burnous wrap looks best when made of soft cashmere and lined with liberty satin or of supple satin, and lined with a heavy make of crepe de chine. Beautiful embroideries are arranged on the fronts and hoods of the cloaks of this genre.

The reign of the three-quarter length tailor-made coat has commenced brilliantly, and now this delightful garment is almost ubiquitous. And all the best of the new tailor-made coats show rounded fronts. In many cases the back is longer than the front; the sleeves reach almost to the elbow and are semi-Japanese in outline.

The white shirt waist can well be eschewed for the time being and a shirt of crepe de chine to match the cloth coat and skirt costume substituted instead. A dark blue serge skirt and coat would be most effectively completed with a dark blue crepe de chine shirt, made with broad tucks and spotted with white cotton. White frills at the wrists and down the center of the front, and outlining the collar-band, will, if made of very narrow and finely hemstitched lawn, give the finishing touch justly recognized as distinguishing between the blouse of yesterday and that of to-day.

Perhaps the height of magnificence in dress is reached in the evening gowns. Embroidery appears on every gown, be it Greek or Louis XVI. There is a great craze for what is known as Egyptian embroidery—copies of old Egyptian conventional designs. The Greek keynote pattern is always effective in rich fabrics.

I should say most of the evening dresses have sleeves, and although it has been observed that there is very little bodice worn in Paris just now, there is a good bit of drapery in the sleeve. The bodice is cut very low back and front, for the most part square, and filled in with pieces of heavy embroidery, lace and tulle, and the sleeve, as I have said, is a mass of drapery, often covering the elbow but leaving the arm bare at the top or veiled with a transparency. This draped sleeve is a pretty fashion, though perhaps not strictly classical. The two frocks illustrated in our large picture are simple but elegant in design. The first has a distinct Louis

XV. flavor. It is made in apricot yellow satin shot with pink, while the draped fichu and center panel beneath are of gold fillet lace, embroidered in raised chenille with groups of autumn-tinted leaves.

The bodice points down the center in the front, and is cut short on the hips, and the little under-sleeves, which the drawing scarcely shows, are of very fine net.

Dedicated to the use of the young girl is figure No. 2, and it is made of white satin with little pleatings of tulle peeping beneath broad bands of



Charming Afternoon Frock.

satin, which are held together by strings of pearls, the skirt trimmed with the same decoration. The whole idea is expressive of youth, simplicity, and perhaps just a little indicative of an expensive taste. Not that, when I come to think of it, the purchase of a satin evening dress should be termed expensive, for expenses to-day lie as much in the making as in the material, and undoubtedly it may be granted that a satin dress will outlive two chiffon dresses. And chiffon nowadays insists upon embroidery as well as a lining of chiffon, while net, which is considered a privilege for the thrifty, will call aloud for a decoration of ribbons, and again demands a lining of chiffon and an underlining of soft satin, so, to be really just, the diaphanous gown, although it assumes the virtue of economy, has it not. We may, though, except from the rule the frock of chiffon, which can be made extremely attractive on a slight figure when it is trimmed with large tucks, or ribbons, and allowed to display some dainty chemisette of tulle or lace threaded with ribbons.



Little Miss Christmas