

# A Merry Christmas

## Mrs. Santa Claus

Last Christmas our local jewelry store added two new departments we never had carried before. One was a top counter, where a selection of movie dolls was featured. The other—an optical department—catered to the trade who could not afford glasses unless they could arrange to pay for them on credit.

Visiting the shop the night before Christmas, I watched a tiny little girl . . . I'm sure she couldn't have been more than six . . . standing before the already sadly depleted doll counter. Her eyes were big as she looked up at the one doll still unsold, and there was a child's longing in them as she tugged at the tattered overall jacket of her father, busy talking to the optometrist.

"Daddy," she called, her voice shrill with excitement, "look! Isn't it the darlinest thing? Do you think Santa will bring it to me?"

The man's tired face turned toward her, and a hurt expression flushed across it settling hopelessly in the gray eyes. "Fraid not, Mary," he answered. "I saw Santa in a store down the street a while ago, and he said that 'e'd be about out of everything by the time he reached our house. Reckon he might have some sweets, or maybe a rag doll though. And he's promised for sure to bring those glasses."

"Oh!" Tears were in her eyes, but she fought them back bravely, and her worn coat sleeve wiped the last trace of them away.

"Come on, Mary," the optometrist called, taking the little girl by the hand.

The optometrist turned to the father. "I'll make a special effort to finish them tonight," he said.

He was back soon, a slip in his hand. "I've fixed it with the management. A dollar now, and a dollar a month until the balance of five dollars is paid."

Mary had returned for a final look at the toy. "Don't you think, Daddy, that the glasses could come as a birthday present, and . . . oh, I did want a doll so badly! But . . . but I won't cry."

Her father hadn't heard. He was busy feeling in his pockets for the dollar needed for the down payment. He found a lean wallet, and from it pulled a quarter and seven dimes. He counted them over twice, a scared look on his face, then began a renewed search. Triumphant, he finally produced an eighth dime, and handed the silver to the optometrist.

As the man in overalls and his elfin daughter started toward the door, the girl behind the doll counter looked at the optometrist, then at me, a tear in her eye. Then she ran after the pair. "Wait a moment— isn't your name Mary?" she asked.

"Uh-huh?" the little girl answered, bewildered.

"Then I guess Santa meant you. He was here just a few minutes ago, and said he had a doll for a little girl named Mary, but he was afraid he wouldn't have the time to deliver it. Then he remembered that the little girl's father said he was coming here, so he asked me if I'd keep the doll and give it to you. That's it, up on the counter. Take it and run away, because I'm so busy I haven't time to talk."

Shyly, Mary reached up for the proffered treasure, and hugged it close.

Mary was speechless while her benefactor busied herself behind the counter. Suddenly the girl felt a tug at her skirt, and Mary was at her side, looking up at her. "I believe you're Mrs. Santa Claus," the child whispered, awe in her voice.

As the door closed behind the pair, the girl took her purse from her bag and looked inside.

"Mrs. Santa Claus, indeed!" I heard her mutter. "Lucky for me this is pay day, or Mrs. Santa wouldn't eat tomorrow."



## Peace on Earth Good-Will to Men

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

—Longfellow  
"Christmas Bells"

## If You Are Born On Christmas Day

There is a Scottish belief that to be born on Christmas is to have the power to see spirits and even to command them. Sir Walter Scott says that the Spaniards attributed the haggard and down-cast looks of Philip II to the terrible visions he was able to see because he was born on Christmas.

French peasants believe that



babies born on Christmas have the gift of prophecy.

In Silesia a baby born on Christmas will become either a lawyer or a thief.

In middle Europe it is said that if a baby is born at sermon time Christmas Eve, someone in the house will die within the year.

English mothers used to take sick babies to the door Christmas Eve midnight. Mary was expected to pass with the Christ Child. If the baby recovered, it was a sign that it had been touched by Christ, with healing fingers, and if it died, the Christ Child had called the baby to be His playmate in heaven.



MERRY  
CHRISTMAS



Christmas greetings—one and all—  
Young and old, big and small.

Greetings to the busy mother  
Loved by big and I'll brother.

Greetings to the Daddy who  
Finds these days so much to do.

Greetings to the teacher tired,  
And the children so inspired  
With the noise of Christmas cheer—  
Grandest sound of all the year!

Yes—greetings to you everyone—  
And lots to eat and lots of fun!  
But . . .

Where there is a saddened heart,  
Where the tears are quick to start;  
Where a mother hides her grief  
Knowing tears are scant relief.

Where an ear is tuned to hear  
Rumblings of unspoken fear;  
Where a father, proud and tense,  
Carries on, despite suspense.

Where a chair must vacant be  
Since 'Our Tom' put out to sea;  
Or else a boy in khaki clad—  
Perchance again an airforce lad—

Where such things be—oh take my hand,  
And let me say—"I understand!"

A Day will come—we know not when  
But come it must. And then—yes then—

The bells will ring with clarion call  
Good Will on Earth and Peace to all . . .

'Til that time comes our way is clear—  
At Christmas and throughout the year;

To work; to cheer; to give our aid—  
Tireless; boundless; unafraid!

Then let us celebrate this Day—  
This Christmas—in the good old way.

And at the end—O let us pray—  
"Bring Peace, dear Lord, NEXT Christmas  
Day."

## Some Traditions Of Christmas Day

The tradition of Santa Claus riding in a sleigh drawn by reindeer is said to have originated in Holland where St. Nicholas was supposed to make his rounds on Woden's (god of the elements and harvest) horse. His chimney-sliding propensities may be traced to the old English custom of cleaning the chimneys at the beginning of the year in prepara-



tion for the entry of good luck into the home.

As a receptacle for Santa Claus' gifts, the stocking with its obvious roomy advantages developed from the shoe used by the European child and placed on the hearth, signifying the owner was in bed. In Germany and Scandinavia the children usually search for their toy, which are hidden away in unexpected places, while in many districts of Spain and Italy gifts are distributed to the children at elaborate street festivals.



## Peace, Good-Will

"It isn't the giving, or getting alone  
Of gifts that has brought on  
the Christmas-time tone,  
But rather the peace that your  
heart holds—and then  
The honest good-will that you  
Show unto men."

## The Chinese Pay Bills At Christmas

Although their usually elaborate holiday feasts are somewhat simpler these days, the Chinese still exchange gifts. In fact, the soldiers thereabouts found gift-giving is a national weakness. And every Chinese tries to pay

all his bills at Christmas time, so he may begin the New Year debtless, if penniless.

Christmas celebrations are particularly widespread in Chungking, the capital, for General Chiang Kai-shek is a Methodist and a large percentage of the Chinese are Christians.

Soldiers in India will have an English Christmas in semi-trop-

ical surroundings. Most of the Christian population is English and there are Christmas trees, church services, nativity pageants and huge Christmas dinners—just like home.

December is derived from "decem," meaning ten. In the old Roman calendar the year began in March and December was the tenth month.

