

# How Christmas Came To Millicent Ann

By Fullerton L. Waldó

Millicent Ann had an old doll, a very old doll, for it had belonged to her mother before her. The doll's name was Dora, and Dora was as ragged and as dirty as Millicent Ann herself. But as you have seen a dog that faithfully stuck by a poor family that maltreated and underfed him, so Dora the doll went on living hopefully and pluckily with people who never touched a sponge to her smudged and sooty face or thought of giving her a new dress or a new wig that did not show the cheesecloth here and there where the hairs had come away.

For the fact is, in Millicent Ann's family there was no money to be frittered away on a body that had been fed once and for all with sawdust, and never cried for cold or for lack of a baked potato. There were too many little living bodies in that house that were always wanting something—too many small hands to be mitted and feet to be shod. Worse than that, there were voices that were lifted as quickly as the flame of kerosene leaps from a soaked stick when anything went wrong—and something was always going wrong.

Millicent Ann was eight, and Sarah Jane was four, and Baby Jim was two—so Millicent Ann had to do all the giving in and the giving up, and about all she had left in the world was the turkey-red dress she wore, and Dora the doll, and a strong faith that every dog she met was her friend, and a smile that wouldn't come off and found an answering smile even in the set and frozen, expressionless features of Dora.

Millicent Ann believed in Santa Claus, as she believed in fairies. She had never met a fairy, but she had seen and spoken with Santa Claus. He stood on a cold, windy corner, dressed in turkey-red like the stuff of which her dress was made, and he had a long white beard, and he rang a bell to call attention to a kettle by his side, and every now and then Millicent Ann saw somebody pause and drop something into the kettle instead of taking something out. Millicent Ann wished that she dared to peep over the edge and find out what it held.

"Where's the sleigh 'n' the reindeer?" she asked, not doubtfully, but hopefully, as though he had them hitched somewhere just out of sight and might ask her to take a ride.

"Had to leave 'em behind," said Santa, in a thin and quavery but good-natured voice.

"Ain't you got any presents for people in there?" asked Millicent Ann, pointing to the kettle.

Santa Claus shook his head. "That's to buy things with," he said. "That's to put things into, not to take 'em out. It's the Salvation Army," he explained.

Millicent Ann had no idea what the Salvation Army meant. She did not see any sign of a soldier or a gun. She would not have been afraid anyway, for the eyes of the saint were mild and blue as the sky, and it was plain that he was fond of little girls, and would protect her against an army, if one came.

"If somebody goes 'n' puts somep'm in that kettle, does anybody get it?"

"Yes," said Santa. "We give people bread and meat and chickens and potatoes and shirts and stockings and shoes and things."

"Can anybody put somep'm in?"

"Yes," said Santa.

Millicent Ann was lost in thought. "Don't you ever get cold 'n' hungry sometimes yourself waitin' for people to put things in?"

"Oh, yes," said Santa cheerfully. "I don't mind."

"Why not?" persisted the little girl.

"Cause it's for the Lord."

Millicent Ann lifted her eyebrows in surprise. "I didn't know you worked for anybody."

Santa stopped ringing his bell long enough to laugh heartily. Then he grew solemn again.

"It's the best job there is," he said. "I'll tell my father about it," said the child. "Do you think the Lord could find somep'm for him to do, too?"

"Ain't got no doubt about it," Santa said, positively.

Millicent Ann went home and wrote a letter on a piece of brown paper, with the family pencil:

"dear lord:  
i am sorry I aint got nothing to put in only my doll dora please be good to her lord becauz she aint nefer bin away from me befor and pleazent my papa and us sumthing to eat anythin nobody elts wants will do yours truly  
Millicent Ann Dobson.  
eight years old 4013 Pearl Street

P s if there is anybody Poorer than us give it to them"

Then she took Dora in her arms and went back to the corner. The letter was stuck in the front of Dora's dress, but Dora was innocent of her fate.

Santa Claus stood with his back to the curb, and Millicent Ann was ashamed to let him see that she was crying, so she went all the way around the block and tiptoed up behind him while he ceaselessly tinkled the bell and lifted the loose grating on the kettle and plopped the dolly in. Then she ran away with her fingers in her ears, for a mother can hear her child calling when nobody else can.

"Why, what is this?" said a soft and sympathetic voice to Santa Claus a few minutes later.

It was the voice of a very beautiful and richly clad young woman, daintily stepping across the sidewalk to her limousine and pausing to drop a coin into Santa's kettle.

With the hand that was not hidden by the enormous white muff she pointed at the limp, dilapidated form of Dora, sprawling among pennies and nickels at the bottom of the kettle.

Dora must have been very much ashamed of the contrast between her bedraggled estate and the Beautiful Lady when Santa Claus, with an exclamation, dragged her forth by her shoeless left foot and held her up to the un pitying daylight.

The Beautiful Lady read the letter that was imprisoned in Dora's dress.

"Here," she said to Santa Claus, handing him a dollar bill, "you take this and let me have the doll."

Santa Claus hardly knew what to make of a gift of such magnitude.

"God bless you, lady," he said fervently, "you can have the doll and welcome. I didn't know it was there. I bet maybe a little girl I was talkin' with just now stuck her in an' then run away."

The Beautiful Lady put Dora inside her muff. No doubt the quarters seemed dark and cramped, and Dora wondered where she was going—but what a warm and violet-scented luxury for one accustomed to hard boards and neglect from every one but Millicent Ann!

So Dora journeyed in darkness, and did not see where the Beautiful Lady went and what was purchased, for she was hidden behind a cushion in the limousine for about twenty-four hours. She did not know till afterward.

For the next day, which was Christmas, found Millicent Ann at home, not daring to expect anything would really come from Santa Claus, or any of the friends of Santa Claus in return for the sacrifice of Dora. Her mother and father and Sarah Jane and Baby Jim were making a brave show of Christmas, and Millicent Ann was helping with all her might, but the best that all combined could do was pitiful, though they all laughed a great deal, and the three children danced together while their father whistled a tune that he remembered from the time that he had work and was paid for it.

Millicent Ann gave her father a picture from a life-insurance calendar that she had found in an ash barrel. Sarah Jane and Baby Jim each got a pair of stockings that their mother had made, and a stick of lemon candy and a green apple. Millicent Ann got a pair of red flannel mittens made from the edge of an undershirt, the rest of which her father continued to wear. Mother and father had nothing to give each other except a kiss. They had canned corned beef instead of Christmas turkey. For dessert there was cold oatmeal without milk from the morning's breakfast.

"My!" said Millicent Ann, plashing with her spoon, "Ain't this ice cream good? Choelut, too. My fav'rite kind!"

The babies giggled. They both clutched their lemon candy while they made way with the oatmeal, as though the candy might take wings like Dora if they let go of it for a moment.

For the disappearance of Dora had made a sensation. Millicent Ann kept a stiff upper lip and told nothing. She was, if anything, more diligent than the others in searching the nooks and corners of a house so barren that the hunt was easy.

The spoons were rattling in empty saucers when there came a knock at the door.

A caller—except the landlord, to whom they owed \$17—was a highly unusual event.

"Milly, you run and see!" said her mother, nervously. "Tell him—well, I guess it don't make much difference what you tell him. We can't say any more'n what we've said already—only it does seem too bad he should come



Yours truly, Santa Claus

in when we're makin' believe we're havin' our Christmas dinner."

When the door opened it was a beautiful young lady.

"Does this dolly live here?" asked the beautiful one, holding out Dora, not by one leg, but just as carefully as though she were handling a baby.

With a cry of joy and thanksgiving at once, Millicent Ann reached for the doll, and clasped her to her faded dress. Then she remembered that she ought to be disappointed because Dora had come home empty-handed.

"I thought—maybe—Santa Claus would—"

"I know," said the beautiful lady gently. "I read your letter. See what I've brought."

It was unbelievable. Father, mother, the babies and Millicent Ann had to keep pinching themselves to make sure they were not dreaming. The beautiful lady must have imagined, or found out, about the whole family. There were warm things to wear for everybody—soft, furry things like this Christmas angel's own—things that Mrs. Dobson had told the children that princesses wore in the fairy tales. Mrs. Dobson had to remember the stories, for they had no books in the house except a Bible and a few old almanacs. Then there was a most wonderful dinner, part of it all ready to eat—a roast turkey with potatoes, other vegetables and oranges.

What a feast it was! The beautiful lady would not stay to share it with them. But before she went she took Mr. Dobson aside.

"My father will give you a position on the railroad," she said, "if you will come to his office at 9 o'clock tomorrow and bring this card."

At that remarkable Christmas feast Dora sat at the head of the table in an old abandoned high chair. Her waxen features actually seemed to have relaxed into something like a smile—there was color in her cheeks, it seemed to Millicent Ann—perhaps from the outdoors and the exercise.

Millicent Ann rose with her cheeks full of turkey and cranberry sauce, and went to where Dora sat and

threw her arms around the doll and hugged and kissed her.

"You did it, Dora; you were the one that brought us Christmas. Wasn't she, mother? Isn't she the most beautifullest, loveliest doll there ever was in all the world?"

## The Pleasant Way.

A pleasant way is the Christmas way,  
With youngsters dancing upon it,  
And the lit and lift of a music gay,  
And the joy of the world to sun it;  
A pleasant way, as it keeps its faith  
In the old dreams and the fine,  
With childhood brimmed and the rosy wraith  
Of the love that grows divine.

A pleasant way, where the plodding throngs  
Go by with hop and skip,  
And always breathing the song of songs  
And whistling with puckered lip,  
A fairy way for the hosts of strife  
To find when the time draws near,  
So beautiful with the dreams of life  
And sweet with the Christmas cheer.

A pleasant way, where the people pass  
With light hearts and bright eyes,  
The old and the young, the lad and the lass,  
And above them the bright blue skies.

A way that is rich with the hopes of things  
And stored with the dreams of men,  
And a voice of life's beautiful love that sings  
Of a King that shall come again.

"Music boxes," so popular a generation ago, gave employment to 20,000 men in Switzerland alone when these instruments were at the height of their popularity.

## The Bedtime of the Year

The ridge road slopes off westward to the dying sun,  
Across the valley come the cattle homeward, one by one;  
The clouds, banked high against the sunset, full of snow,  
Become a vast, gray blanket as the night winds blow.

Through leafless limbs the crimson of the bittersweet  
Borders the wheel tracks of the road to where the borders meet;  
The giant beech, left naked as the winds whip by,  
Its gray arms lifts in winter prayer unto the sky.

A clot of russet oak leaves that are doomed to stay  
Upon gnarled branches watch their weaker brothers whirl away;  
The long, bare aisles of orchard on the windswept hill  
Lie waiting where the storm king's hosts shall drift and fill.

The weary world's inert and prone upon its bed—  
The long year done, and all the bedtime prayers of nature said.  
Saddened, I turn, and, lo—a wisp of hickory smoke!  
A light—and bedtime music from my little folk!

—Walter Greenough.

## Hospital for Sick Children

COLLEGE ST., TORONTO.

Dear Mr. Editor,  
Realizing that the trend of public opinion is swinging more and more towards the equalization of the burdens which each citizen of Canada must bear, that the helping of those who are unable to help themselves occupies a much larger place in our minds, may I draw your attention to the fact that this Hospital is accomplishing great things in a field that is untouched by any other organization.

Little children from all parts of the Province, irrespective of class or creed, children who are sickly and maimed, come here and are made strong and healthy. Is not this in itself a wonderful work?

The service and the duty of the Hospital is far-reaching. As well as personal attention, both surgical and medical, for all the tiny patients, doctors and nurses are also trained to extend the mission of healing to the uttermost parts of the Province.

The entire function of the Hospital must commend itself to you and your readers. It is a CHILD WELFARE work well deserving of the support of your subscribers.

Of late a new and unfortunate factor has added to the responsibilities which the Hospital must assume. You have noticed, no doubt, the alarming increase in the number of motor accidents throughout the Province in the majority of which little children are the chief sufferers. Many of them are little waifs of the poorer sections where the streets are the only playgrounds.

Here are the average day's figures for 1922 attendance:

Cot patients ..... 256  
Out-patients ..... 199

The carrying out of this great work is your responsibility as well as that of the people of all Ontario. Every contributor to the Hospital is a friend, indeed, to these little mites of humanity, and has the satisfaction of knowing that the result of his individual contribution is bringing joy into at least one home by assisting to care for somebody's child.

The service of the Hospital depends on the continued support of the public and the conversion of dollars into health and strength will, I am sure, meet with your approval. Each minute of mercy costs over fifty cents, so you will see that much money is needed to carry on this GREAT MOTHER CHARITY.

Every day sees a large number of additional patients on the Hospital's register. Owing to the advanced costs of surgical and medical appliances maintenance is mounting until now nearly twice the usual amount of money is essential for the fulfilling of our duty. With the approach of Christmas, may I place these facts before your readers in connection with the 47th Christmas appeal of the Hospital for Sick Children?

Faithfully yours,

I. E. ROBERTSON,  
Chairman of the Appeal Committee.

## Who Will Come A-Carolling?

Who will come a-carolling with me  
this Christmastide?  
Stars are gleaming,  
Lights are streaming  
O'er the countryside.  
From the windows of those homes  
where joy and love abide.

Who will come a-carolling with me  
this Christmastide?  
Good news bearing,  
Gladness sharing,  
We perchance may guide  
Hearts now filled with selfish thoughts  
to seek the Christ Child's side.

Who will come a-carolling with me  
this Christmastide?  
Bells are ringing,  
Waits are singing,  
God is glorified:  
"Peace, good-will to men on earth" is  
echoing far and wide.  
—Norah Sheppard.

## Christmas Song.

Why do bells for Christmas ring?  
Why do little children sing?  
Once a lovely, shining star,  
Seen by shepherds from afar,  
Gently moved until its light  
Made a manger-cradle bright.

There a darling baby lay  
Pillowed soft upon the hay,  
And his mother sang and smiled,  
"This is Christ, the holy child."

So the bells for Christmas ring,  
So the little children sing.  
—Lidia A. C. Ward.

