

# When Santa Claus Came and Took Possession of His Ice Palace—BY J. HADDON TAYLOR

The most wonderful, the most delightful, the happiest and the best Christmas we ever had was when Santa Claus really came in person and stayed with us the whole of Christmas Day.

"The good old tutelary saint who presides over the festive season had come to us before, as he has come since, but he stayed in the big stores all day and when he brought his nice gifts it was in the night while we were asleep, and he was always gone before it was time to get up. His visits invariably made us glad; but we felt we should like to see him and tell him how we liked him.

"The year he came was long, long ago, when we were all very young. I was ten, George was seven, and Bessie was five. Bessie was the dearest little thing then you ever saw, with long curls and chubby face and cheeks like pink blossoms. We were not at all surprised that Santa Claus should have lifted her up in his arms and carried her, nor did it seem astonishing that he should have said as mother was when she was a little girl, for it was quite natural he would know what mother was like then, because he used to come just the same when she was little, although mother had told us she had never seen him.

"The year he came, when we called Santa's year, we were still living on the farm at St. Constant, but father's business in Montreal was growing bigger and bigger, and he said he would like to come into the city to live, except in the summer time. We might not be on the farm another winter, and so we would have an ice palace—a real palace with towers and battlements and gardens and terraces.

"Uncle Tom had then been gone ten years and we had ceased to grieve about him, for mother said he must have been dead long ago or we should have heard from him or from the ship. We children had not known Uncle Tom personally, for he left on the whaler the year I was born, but we knew of him just as if we had grown up with him by hearing father and mother talk about him, and his wonderful exploits and hairbreadth escapes on the water. Ever since I remember father and mother used to talk about Uncle Tom, and they would grieve very sad as the years passed over and he never came back. Once mother said, "Surely he must be drowned in the ice on the Greenland or perhaps the Norwegian coast." And so we gradually came to the conclusion that poor Uncle Tom must have perished that he and all the others went down the St. Lawrence one fair summer day on a whaling expedition to the Greenland sea in the good ship *Bonhomme* must be lost.

"Well, so many years had gone by without tidings or message from Uncle Tom that we had ceased to mourn for him, and had accepted his loss as part of the appointed order of things, but being the eldest, I knew that there was an aching void in mother's heart which could never be filled, for she had said to me that until she married father her brother Tom had been all the world to her. There was nothing to damp the joy or cheer of us younger folks at all, except as we saw our ice palace grow up under our hands all ready for Christmas day. And such a gorgeous palace it was! White walls and pillars like pure marble. We could never have done it all ourselves—we'll not like that anyway—but it happened that Louis Perrault, who had become an architect, was on the farm that winter—the Perrault farm was next to ours—and he designed it for us, and told us how to build it.

Louis was just recovering from typhoid fever, and in those days there were so convalescent homes, so he came to pick up strength on the farm, and as he had nothing else to do he took a great interest and delight in helping us. So it came that we had a palace of rare beauty, with arches and domes and decorative features, with rooms and everything as real as a palace could be. There was just one thing wanting to fill our cup of joy to the brim as we realized more and more the splendor of our palace. It was far too good, we considered for anybody but Santa Claus, and oh how ardently we wished we had a real Santa Claus to take possession of it! If he would only come himself this year, bringing his gifts, of course, wouldn't we feel that we had done something for Santa as we forced him into the palace, and told him that it was his?

"We told Louis Perrault just what we wanted to make the realization of our happiness complete; but he shook his head sadly and regretted he could not help us in that.

"Within a day or two of Christmas though, he went to the city, and when he returned there was brightness in his eye as he informed us with what seemed to be suppressed excitement, that he thought Santa Claus would really come this Christmas and take possession of the palace. As he said this he looked at mother with his eyes sparkling, but she became grave and serious, for she did not like us children to have our expectations raised to a high pitch only to meet with disappointment afterwards, and she did not see how it was possible Santa Claus would really come in the daylight bringing his parcels. We believed, however, that what Louis said would come true.

"Christmas morning dawned, and as usual we were early astir, and very anxious to get peered through the frosty glass, looking for the good saint struggling under the weight of his load, but he was nowhere in sight. All around were scattered precious things that are dear to the eyes of childhood. They were just as nice as we could have wished, but with it all we could have wished, but with it all we felt that the good saint who brought them might have stopped so soon he could have learned that the things which he must have seen were his very own, even if he did think it too early to live in.

"Louis came over after breakfast, and we told him that Santa Claus had been here, but was in such a hurry he couldn't stop. But Louis would not believe that it was really him. He had only sent his message boy in the night and would come himself later.

"Look there," said Louis, and he pointed down the road; and, sure enough, there met our eyes the strangest sight we had ever seen. Dashing along in full career was a thing like a boat drawn by four reindeer, with an old man with a long white beard wearing robes of scarlet lined with ermine seated in the centre. He stopped right in front of the palace and jumped out of the boat—for it was a real boat, broad in the middle and pointed at the ends, just like the boats they go whole-fishing in when they leave the ship in the cold seas, only smaller, and it was fixed on a sled. When he got out of the extraordinary vehicle we saw that he had a wooden leg. But such a kind, jolly old man, and how he laughed, and how Bessie up in his arms and kissed her, and then opened the box that was in the stern of the boat and handed out the finest lot of furs that was ever seen.

The daintiest of them all was the set he gave to Bessie. He took out of a basket a pair of lovely white rabbit-skins, which he gave to me, and there was something good for George, too, who was the shyest of the three. While Santa was handing out the other nice treasures father and mother came rushing down, wondering what all the commotion meant. Then came the most touching part of the scene. Mother, when she heard his voice, looked at him hard, and then she gave a scream of joy and threw herself in his arms. Father, too, soon became greatly affected. We wondered rather why all this should be, but when they became more composed they looked at us and said they would talk together later. We took the old man to his palace, which he somehow seemed to know all about, and we began to ask him to tell us if in the country he came from were there such nice things. "Bessie didn't seem to quite understand, so she inquired if everybody there had wooden legs.

He seemed amused at the question, and after thinking a minute, replied: "Not everybody—only those who break the King's laws."

"Oh," she replied, "but I am sure you would not break the laws—and you have a wooden leg."

"Well, you see, I did not break them intentionally, but that did not make any difference," he added, with a sigh.

"Then he must be a cruel King," said Bessie, "or he would not punish people like that when they do not mean to do wrong."

"Well, he is rather a hard King, but people should be careful not to break his laws."

"Santa Claus remained with us all the day, and such a day it was. Nobody could imagine the time we had, and it would be impossible to describe our happiness. Still we wondered why mother seemed so singularly joyous and happy.

In the evening it was all explained. Santa Claus was Uncle Tom, who had come home. He had been saved in a most miraculous way when the ship was lost, and had been living for years with the people on the Arctic coast. The terrible sufferings he had undergone had turned his hair and beard white. At last a vessel came, and he was able to get away. He went a long voyage with that ship, visiting strange ports in the Far East, and had just reached Montreal a few days before when he met Louis Perrault, who had told him about the palace. He had brought the reindeer and the boat with him, so he planned the surprise just as described, but bound Louis over to secrecy.

"Just before bedtime on that Christmas night Bessie asked him the name of the King of the country in which he had lived.

"His name in our language is King Frost, my dear," was the reply, "and he went with an air of sadness, 'I don't think I will return to my country any more, now that you have got a palace for me here.'"

**Xmas Party Conundrums.**

**Why are crockeryware dealers different from other merchants?** Because it won't do for them to crack up their goods.

**Why is a baby like wheat?** Because it is first cradled, then thrashed and finally becomes the flower of the family.

**On what does a corn never come?** The mistletoe.

**What is the difference between a hungry man and a glutton?** One longs to eat and the other eats too long.

**Where lies the path of duty?** Through the Custom House.

**Why should turtles be pitied?** Because theirs is a hard case.

**Why should young ladies set good examples?** Because young men are so apt to follow them.

**Why should the male sex avoid the letter 'A'?** Because it makes men mean.

**Why must chimney-sweeping be a very agreeable business?** Because it suits (suits) every one who tries it.

**Why is a joke less desirable than a church bell?** Because after it has been told (told) a few times it is worn out.

**What would you call a boy who eats all the green melons he can eat?** He is what we call a pain-taking youngster.

**What is an eaves-dropper?** An icicle.

**Why is a neglected damsel like a fire that has gone out?** Because she has no spark left.

**Why are bells used to call people to church?** Because they have an inspiring influence.

**What is that which goes up the hill and down the hill and yet stands still?** The wheel.

**What because of the chocolate cake when your only one cuts it?** It vanishes into the empty air.

"Louis came over after breakfast, and we told him that Santa Claus had been here, but was in such a hurry he couldn't stop. But Louis would not believe that it was really him. He had only sent his message boy in the night and would come himself later.

# Children at Christmas

(By Arthur Stringer.)

We watched the trooping children play  
About the old house, once so gay  
And still, then darkness fell,  
And one by one they said farewell.  
The music and the laughter stopped,  
The play was done, the curtain dropped.  
The waning lamp of mirth burned low  
With each last cry across the snow.  
And we, Old Friend, were left alone!  
What was it lost, that we had known?

Old Friend and True, must even we  
Find nevertheless what used to be?  
Man lives by change; through ebb and flow  
The new lives come, the old lives go;  
We lose and gain, yet year by year  
The aging heart grows more austere.  
It may be that the strain and stress  
Of our mad times tempt joylessness;  
'T may be that our feverish days  
Forget the old more genial ways;  
It may be, too, the ashes of  
Dead hopes and dreams have smothered love!  
But plain it stands, no more we hold  
Earth's fount of good-fellowship of old!

Yet thanks to one small spark, Old Friend,  
As down the Dust of Things we tread,  
Age shall not strip our very heart  
Of all its old congenial art!  
Aye, thanks to each small voice and light  
That lent its youth to us to-night,  
And thanks to that strange fugitive  
Enduring Love by which we live,  
Thro' childlike eyes and childlike art  
We yet shall hold our youth intact!  
And thanks to one still jovial day  
We still, Old Friend, shall make our way  
By thought and Memory through the snow  
To Youth, and that lost Long Ago,  
Where Laughter holding both his side  
Made all our days seem Christmas tides!



## A DOG SANTA CLAUS.

A Pretty Story of New Hampshire Life Many Years Ago.

Many years ago, in the State of New Hampshire, there lived two young girls named Dolly and Prue. They were great friends. They went to the same school, attended the same church and Sunday school, and during the summer were almost constantly together.

But in the winter a whole week would sometimes go by without their seeing each other. They lived on the banks of the same river, but on opposite sides of it. And during that season of the year the river was at times swollen very high at places where in summer the little girls could often cross barefoot by jumping from one stone to another.

Dolly and Prue used to think it great sport to cross it in that way; in fact, they did not mind it there was considerable water in the river, for that only made it more exciting. In winter when the river was frozen solid they would walk across it on the ice, and those were happy times for these two little friends. But the current at that point was very strong, and it was usually after Christmas before the children were allowed to venture on it.

Now, on this Christmas that I am going to tell you about, Prue had made Dolly a pretty white apron for a Christmas present. Her mother had cut it out, but Prue had done every stitch of the sewing herself, and her mother assured her that she had done it very neatly. There had been a great deal of rain all through the fall, and Roaring River was swollen very high, so that there seemed no way of getting the gift to her friend except by the road, a distance of more than three miles.

"Why don't you let Duke take it across?" suggested Prue's brother, Ralph. "He enjoys nothing better than a swim in the river, and he likes to carry things, you know."

At first Ralph's proposition was laughed at by both Prue and her mother. The idea of letting a dog swim across that leaping dancing water with an apron in his mouth!—for usually that was Duke's way of carrying packages.

"I don't believe I want to send Dolly such a wet Christmas present as that would be," Prue rejoined, with a toss of her head.

But when her brother produced some rubber cloth that had been used on a camping expedition and offered to send off a small piece for Prue's benefit, she decided that boys were sometimes wiser than girls, and joyfully accepted his aid.

On Christmas morning the apron was carefully wrapped in the milbooth, with a string tied tightly around it, and this was fastened to Duke's collar and the dog led to the bank of the river, which was leaping in little waves, instead of lying placid and serene as on summer days. He enjoyed a swim, however, even if he did have to struggle against odds for it. So when Prue led him by his collar with the words "In, old boy! Carry my Christmas present to Dolly!" with one straining wrench he freed himself and leaped bravely into the turbulent water.

Prue watched him until he reached the other shore; saw him shake the water from his tawny sides; and then dash up the bank. Then she wandered slowly along the shore, waiting to see how long it would take him to return to her.

Half an hour passed before a sharp bark from across the river announced that Duke was on his homeward way. Dolly was with him and water her handkerchief at her little friend, and Prue waved hers back, while Duke plunged into the water again and was soon dancing around his little friend, shaking the water from his hair until Prue indignantly declared that it might about as well have swum across herself, she was so wet.

But Duke was uneasy, and fawned persistently around Prue until she discovered that he still had, God to his collar, the bundle with which he had started.

"Why, Duke! what made you bring it back again?" she cried in a tone of vexation.

"Open it, open it!" the dog's impatient tail seemed to be insisting as it wildly lashed the air.

Eager-eyed, he watched his little mistress as she untied the string. And when out from the protecting folds of the olefin's covering there fell a pretty neck chain made of beads and a pair of warm mittens, gifts from Dolly and her mother for Prue herself, Duke barked joyously, which was the dog way of saying:

"I hope you see now that I am a dog that can be trusted."

Prue, fair, but no longer young, still fondly cherishes the necklace that Duke brought to her on that Christmas morning so long ago.

But there is another little Prue that once in a while is allowed to wear the precious chain around her own neck, and who often wishes that she had a dog as brave and faithful as her grandfather's dog Duke.

# The Legend of the Mistletoe..

By Virginia Belmont

Balder the beautiful,  
God of the summer sun,  
Fairest of all the Gods!  
Light from his forehead beamed,  
Runes were upon his tongue,  
As on the warrior's sword.  
All things in earth and air  
Bound were by magic spell  
Never to do him harm.  
Even the planets and stones  
All save the Mistletoe,  
The sacred Mistletoe.

There are some customs which seem to survive almost indefinitely the lapse of centuries. The Mistletoe, which reappears every Christmas, was a sacred plant as far back as the days of the Persians, an object of worship in Persia and India. It evokes memories of the ancient Gauls, of the sacred groves, and the Druids, whose priests were said to have sprung from the Magi, and all that belongs to a vanished religion. In the days of the Druids, the festival of the cutting of the Mistletoe took place in the month of March, on the sixth day of the moon. The tenth of March at that period was New Year's Day, and as the festival required the full light of the moon, it was held as near New Year's Day as the moon would allow. The Druids claimed that the Gods loved the oak above all other trees. It was the tree of Thor, the Thunderer in Scandinavian mythology, of Jupiter among the Greeks, of Perun, who is the Jove of the Slavonic nations. On the day appointed for the festival of cutting the sacred plant, a procession was formed. Two white bulls being led, were listened by their horns to the oak. A white robed Druid climbed the leafless branches of the tree, and with a golden sickle cut the sprays of Mistletoe. Beneath the stately oak was a circle of Druid priestesses in white robes, their hair confined by golden crescents; they held their snowy veils outspread to receive the sacred sprays as they fell from the oak, for they were never permitted to touch the ground. Religious rites were then performed and the two white bulls were sacrificed. The sprays of Mistletoe were carefully preserved and used in many ways. They were placed over doors to bring good fortune, to keep off evil spirits. They were also used in various decoctions to cure many maladies, for great healing power was ascribed to the plant.

Bacon says that the Mistletoe which grew upon oaks was counted very medicinal, and the Druids considered it a remedy for every kind of poison. In some parts of Germany the children still run about the streets at Christmas, knocking at doors and windows with hammers, and shouting "Gut heil, Gut heil!" These words are plainly equivalent to the Druidical name of the Mistletoe, used by Pflanz when he speaks of it as "All heal." It played an important part in the life of the Gauls; a remnant of this still seems to exist in France, for the peasant boys still use the expression "A qui l'an neuf" as a New Year's greeting. The ceremony of decorating churches and houses with evergreens of great antiquity and was preserved in many countries hundreds of years ago, just as we still find a similar custom observed in the East at New Year, showing us that the origin of the observance is the same in each case. It was esteemed a sacred plant among the Normans and the Celtic bards, the harpers of Scotland and Wales held it in great reverence. Perhaps the Mistletoe was taken as a symbol of the New Year because of its clusters of green growing upon bare trees, and giving them the appearance of having renewed their foliage. In Brittany, it is called "Ferbe de la Croix" because it was believed that from its wood the cross was made; though it was degraded from a stately forest tree in consequence of this fact.

But before we hear of the Mistletoe of the Druids, we meet with the plant in the beautiful legend of the death of Balder, from the mythology which it doubtless derives its name from. The Apollo, or Day god of the Norsemen, bore the name of Balder the Good. He was beloved alike of gods and men. In him the Norsemen honored all that was beautiful, eloquent, wise and good. He was the spirit of activity, joy and light, without the brightness of his presence, Asgard, the abode of the gods, of Odin, of Thor, of Freyja, would have been dull and barren. Great trouble, therefore, fell on the gods in Valhalla, when Balder one day informed them that he had been visited by terrific dreams, threatening him with deadly peril. It seems that he did not possess the immortality which the Greeks attributed to their mythic divinities. Therefore, the gods of Valhalla determined to use all their magic arts to preserve to themselves and to men their favorite deity. The mythology of ancient Scandinavia included a principle or power of evil called Loki, whose chief aim was to do mischief and mar the happiness of the gods. Of all the deities, Loki hated most the God of Light, Balder's mother, Freyja, resolved to extort an oath from all created things that they would not hurt him. The goddess mother met with a ready response from earth, air, fire, water, stones, diseases, beasts, birds, insects and poisons, and from trees and flowers. One thing alone escaped her spells. There grew on the eastern side of the Valhalla an ancient oak, attached to which, rooted in its gnarled branches, shone a perceived a tiny plant, a soft green, insignificant thing with pearly white berries. It seemed so powerless to do harm, that she passed it by. Alas! from all ages came the warning, that nothing is insignificant. After the spell had been laid on all creation, not to hurt Balder, the gods were wont to test his immunity from harm, by getting him to stand on the plains of Asgard as a target at which they hurled darts and stones, and some struck at him with swords and battle

axes. The spell worked well; Balder was ever unharmed, and it came to be an honor to him, when his invulnerability was thus tested. One day the gods were assembled, when Loki, hovering near unseen, gazed upon the singular spectacle. He beheld the bright-haired Balder standing in a circle formed by the deities of Valhalla. Odin stood gazing at the sport, while Thor threw his mighty mallet at Balder, which rebounded without injury to the youthful god. In his turn each god hurled missiles at Balder who stood smiling at them, unconcerned and unharmed. What could it mean? Loki determined to find out, by changing his shape to that of a fair and queenly woman, he hastened to the dwelling of Freyja. The goddess received her visitor graciously and inquired whence she came. "Freyja, the plain where the gods are making a target of Balder, without hurting him," replied the false guest.

"Aye," said Freyja, "neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all things, that they will not harm him."

"What!" exclaimed the guest, "have all things sworn to spare him?"

"All things," replied Freyja, "except one little shrub that grows upon an oak on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called the Mistletoe. I thought it too young and too feeble to crave an oath from it."

A secret joy thrilled through the false maiden as she heard these words, and hastening from Freyja's dwelling as soon as she could, she flew to the spot where grew the fatal parasite. Then, resuming his proper shape, Loki cut off the Mistletoe and hastened back to the plains of Asgard. He found the gods still at their singular amusement. The blind god Mimir, the god of brute strength, was standing alone to one side. In the Norse mythology he signified Night, as Balder signified Day.

"Why dost thou not throw something at Balder?" asked Loki.

"Because," answered Mimir, "I can not see, and I have nothing to throw."

"Come, then," said Loki, "do as the rest do, and honor Balder, by throwing this twig at him. I will guide thee arm."

Mimir took the Mistletoe and, guided by Loki, threw it with all his strength at Balder, who fell lifeless, pierced by the dart.

"Thus fell Balder the Good," says the old Norse legend, "by the bough of the unchristened Mistletoe."

The grief and rage of the gods was intense at this cruel termination to their banquet, and feeling that light and joy had been taken from them, they gave way to sorrow and fear, as their efforts to release Balder failed. He, the pallid daughter of Death, who held him captive, "in the plains of Niffheim where dwelt the Dead," were frustrated by the machinations of Loki.

They resolved to avenge themselves. Having captured Loki, they confined him in a gloomy mountain canon, and bound him at the foot of a huge rock, on the summit of which lay the noxious serpent, who dropped poison on his face, but his wife, Freyja, was faithful to him, remained by his side, and caught the drops as they fell, in a golden chalice. It was only when she was forced to turn aside to empty the goblet that the venom touched Loki, and he shrank and writhed to escape the burning drops; these struggles shook the earth and caused earthquakes. There Loki will remain till Ragnarok, the twilight of the world, when the gods, the Earth and all the deities of the universe will be destroyed by the powers of evil, the companions of Loki. Only Odin, the All Father, will remain and gather around him on the plains where Asgard once stood, the gods regenerate and purified by fire, and then a new and better world will arise, in which Balder will come again with his unconscious slayer, Mimir, and all evil will cease, and light and darkness will dwell together in unity.

After the final purification by suffering and fire and the regeneration to which the Nordens looked as the means of the ultimate adjustment of good and evil, and from which they did not exempt even their gods, the influence of good was to prevail. Balder would reappear, radiant, beautiful, joyous as before; and Loki, the spirit of evil, be no more heard of.

## CHRISTMAS CORSETS

Are they possible?  
Are they very possible.  
Are they acceptable?  
Mothers, please take notice.  
Daughter would like a "beauty."  
A fine extra pair for "fine wear."  
The materials range to the finest silk. Or perhaps one for general wear would be best.

One of the long best models is a very safe choice.  
No doubt it may be fitted after Christmas if there's any line wrong.

## Only Two Realities.

Billy—So yer didn't get nuthin' but a jackknife and a sled for Christmas?  
Tommy—Yes, dat's all I got worth speakin' of. Dere wuz a suit of clothes, and an ocercoat, and a hat or two, and some underclothes, and a book of poems, and some stockin's and gloves, and some collars and cuffs, and a few other things like dat, not worth speakin' of. Man and Woman.

## A WOEFUL TASK.

(Kansas City Journal.)  
"You look harassed. You should have done your Christmas shopping earlier."  
"I've done my shopping. Now I'm trying to convince the children that they want what I got for 'em."

Warm bread or cake and, in each, warm food of any kind, should never be put away in a covered tin or dish. The steam makes molding certain. Vegetables become soggy and unfit for food when kept in this manner.