

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

SANTA CLAUS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON, December 18, 1895.



SANTA CLAUS at the White House! How his reindeer sledges gallop over the roof, and how his pack goes easily down the great chimneys. He

has visited the place so often that he knows just the easiest way to the second floor, where the babies sleep, and down further to the big room below, where the Christmas tree stands, and to the wood fireplace, about which the stockings of Ruth and little Esther hang. He stops a moment on the way and takes a peep at Father Cleveland. The President is sleeping soundly, his round form making a mountain of the bed clothes. He lies upon his back, and the night lamp on the table casts a sickly glow over his worn features. He looks weary and old, for the troubles of the office seekers and the cares of the state have followed him to bed. As Santa Claus looks at him his laughing eyes grow serious. He whispers to himself that such a face will never do for Christmas morning, and with feet which move the softer from the snow upon them, he steps to the side of the sleeping man and over his troubled features he breathes his Christmas greeting.

"Peace on earth: good will to men!"

As he does so the President's brow clears. His soul is filled with the thought of Christmases past, and in his dreams he travels back to the days when as a poor preacher's son he hung his stocking at the chimney side and prayed for Santa Claus. As old Kris Kringle looks, his own memory brings back that picture of innocence and faith, and his heart feels even more tender than before, as he throws a kiss at little Ruth and Esther, who are sweetly sleeping in an adjoining room, and prepares to make his way through the fireplace down to the rooms below.

There he unloads his pack. He fills Esther's little stockings and stuffs with candy those which the fat legs of little Ruth have touched, laughing as he does so at the big stockings which hang beside them, and which the children have borrowed for the time of their papa and their mamma, for fear their own may not be large enough. He decorates the tree with dolls and toys. He strings upon it glass balls of every hue, and with tinsels makes it shine like the silver and golden bushes of fairyland. There are presents by the hundreds for him to hang upon its branches. The babies of the White House have many friends, and the most honorable of our statesmen send them Christmas gifts.

At last, however, the work is done

and Santa Claus stops for rest. He is tired; the night is late, and the morning is almost come. He started upon his travels when the sand man first began to throw his dust in sleepy children's eyes, and this White House visit completes his long night's work. He sinks back into the President's big arm-chair, looks at the tree and talks. How his words came to me I dare not tell. It may have been that the toy phonograph which was intended for little Ruth, and which was placed upon the tree recorded them. It has never worked since then, I know, and has been sent back as useless to the store from whence it came. I can only say that every word is true, and that the big-eyed Brownie who guards the White House children heard it all and will corroborate my statements.

Said Santa Claus: "There, that's a good job done! How the children will hop up and down and dance about that tree. How Ruth will scream with joy and Esther clap her hands. How papa Grover will grow young again and Mamma Frances smile. I like the White House best when it is filled with children, and I hope the day of childless Presidents has passed away forever. How dreary these rooms were about eight years ago, and how they brightened when Mary and Benjamin McKee and the little Harrisons came in. We had four good Christmas days and four good trees, every branch of which was loaded down with gifts."

At this the Brownie jumped from out the tree and sat down on the stool at Santa's feet. He asked the old man questions and Santa Claus went on:

"The first great day for Grandpa Harrison—I mean Christmas day, of course; there are no great days but Christmas—the fun began with a big tin horn, blown by Mrs. Dimmick. At this the White House family came together and Great-Grandpa Dr. Scott and Grandpa Harrison formed them into line. Little Ben McKee and Mary walked side by side, and in double file the children and the grownups marched into this room. The toys were not put on the tree, but piled up under it, and Mary had a dozen dolls, a toy piano and a full doll housekeeping outfit. Ben was most delighted with a toy steam engine, which really went by steant and puffed its way about the room. There were presents for the President and Mrs. Harrison and all the White House servants, and Black Jerry, the butler, I remember, grinned all over when he was handed out an order for a turkey and a pair of gloves. There were games in which the ninety-year-old Dr. Scott played with little Ben, and Ben and Mary recited German poems as Christmas greetings to their grandparents."

"What!" said the Brownie, as his round eyes grew big. "Babies speaking German!"

"Yes!" said Santa Claus. "And these are just the words that little Mary said:

"Grossmamma Dir Gottes Le gen
Gluck Und Freund auf aller Wegen
Und Gesundheit: aller best
Zu den Schoenen Welnachtsfest."

Then Baby McKee gave something of the same kind to the President. It was

written out in German text, and it reads something like this:

"Meinen Grosspapa dem lieben

Hat dies eversen ich verschrieben—"

Here the Brownie, who evidently did not understand German, broke in. "Yes, Santa, that is very nice, but wasn't it rather stiff for Christmas?"

"Yes, perhaps so," was the reply. "But it suited the President, who, just between us, is a little bit stiff himself. He seldom unbends to any one, but Baby McKee so wrapped himself about the old man's heart that the two made me think of 'Old Abe' Lincoln and lively little 'Tad.'"

Here the Brownie's eyes grew from pennies into saucers and his round mouth opened wide until it became a big round hole in his fat, round face, as he gasped out: "And did you know Tad Lincoln?"

"Yes, indeed," said Santa Claus. "I knew him and loved him. He wanted all other boys to have as good a time as himself, and I remember how one stormy Christmas day he brought a crowd of hungry, ragged newsboys to the White House kitchens. The cook, a surly, bead eyed, thin lipped bachelor, was basting the Christmas turkey and hot mince pies were smoking on the range. A savory smell of steaming dainties floated forth and made the boys' mouths water. But the cook with anger in his eye, raged at young Tad and told him to take his ragged squad away. How Tad's eye flashed. He told the boys to wait and ran off to his father. He flew upstairs, but his father was not in. He found him in the yard walking toward the war department and talking with Secretary Seward upon affairs of state, and ran to him and cried:

"Papa! papa! Isn't that our kitchen, and can't I bring those poor, cold, hungry boys in here to eat?"

"President Lincoln stopped. Tad, seized him by the hand and excitedly went on.

"Papa, I want those boys to have a good, warm dinner. They are cold, and almost starving, and two of them have soldier papas. And, papa, I want to tell you that I am going to discharge that cook, if he don't give us some turkey and mince pies. Say, can't I, papa? And isn't that our kitchen?"

"I remember," Santa Claus went on, his great round stomach moving convulsively up and down as he laughed with in; "I remember how Mr. Seward smiled and how Tad's father's face grew tender as he told him to run along and feed the hungry boys. And Tad did feed them, too! He stuffed their stomachs full and as they went away he loaded them with candy and with nuts from the store which I had thrust into his own stockings."

"How many Christmas mornings I've spent here," Santa Claus went on. "Here I came to fill the stockings of Nellie Arthur, when her father was the President. She was a sweet child, too, and it was through her that thousands of poor children got their Christmas dinners. She organized a Christmas club, to which the richest children of Washington belonged and joined with her in making presents and in giving dinners to the poor. I wonder if there will not be such a thing this year. Frances Cleveland, Mollie Vilas and Pauline Whitney, with other girls, dined two thousand little children in this way on Christmas eight years ago."