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Is There a Santa Claus?

FIFTY-NINE years ago an eight-year-old girl wrote to the editor of the New York Sun asking an age-old question. As an expression of Yuletide goodwill we publish the editor's answer which appears as fresh today as it was when it was first printed September 21, 1897.

The editorial, written by Francis P. Church, is reprinted through the courtesy of the New York World-Telegraph and Sun.

"We take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:—

Dear Editor:
I am 8 years old.
Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.
Papa says "If you see it in 'The Sun' it's so."
Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O'Hanlon,
115 West 95th Street,
New York City.

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginia. There would be no childlike faith, then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

"You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

"No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

GEMS OF THOUGHT

A year indoors is a journey along a paper calendar; a year in outer nature is the accomplishment of a tremendous ritual.—Henry Beston.

As I See It

by Elmore Philpott

Tale of a Horse

AMONG the beautiful Christmas cards that came to our house this year were some showing the animals looking at the baby Jesus.

I got to thinking about the animals in my own life. Take the first horse I ever knew. I met her around Christmas time 1900.

Her name was Dolly, she was fat, and rather small, and white as milk.

She had been sold to my father by a Hebrew rag merchant, with a keen sense of humor. Dad bought Dolly at a bargain price and did not know till later why the seller smiled.

Dolly never ran when she could walk, never walked when she could stand still, never stood still in an upright position when she could lie down.

Moreover, when she did lie down she had a way of doing so in a place which stained brown her fat white rump. When she arose, the only way to make Dolly presentable was to wash her with soap and water. That took time and did not always put my father in the fit frame of mind to preach a good sermon.

BUT Dolly had to have a special aversion to going to church. She refused to move faster than the proverbial snail. Finally, from many vain applications, our buggy whip broke right in half.

I think it was at about that time dad gave up riding behind the horse and took to walking to church, rehearsing his coming sermons, in a mumbled low voice.

That left me in charge of he remaining half of the broken buggy whip—which I plied from the front seat. But it was no use. Dolly never ran more than twenty conservative steps in her whole life.

THEN we had Gypsy, a fine blooded mare, who could run like lightning, and was as gentle as a dove. She was a light chestnut in color.

On one Christmas, we suddenly missed one of the smallest boys in our numerous tribe. He was just old enough to toddle and we found him in the barn, with Gypsy. He was affectionately hugging Gypsy's two hind legs. A nervous horse might have kicked the youngster to death—but not Gypsy. She was as gentle with baby humans as she was with her own colt.

IN MY army days one horse taught me a good lesson.

Riding down a steep hill in England around Christmas 1915, one of the horses just ahead of me suddenly bucked and threw a fat sergeant over her head.

The whole battery convulsed with laughter. But when my little mare reached the precise spot where the sergeant had been humiliated she suddenly repeated the precise trick with me as victim. The only difference was, I was thrown about three times as far and the fellows in the battery laughed three times longer.

THE horse I rode most of the first world war was a tall fast coal black beauty, originally from Argentina. His name was Spot, for he had one large white spot in his forehead.

Spot hated war and everything connected with it. He would try all sorts of tricks to avoid going toward the front line. He could smell death and danger in the wind. And in the end, he bled to death from enemy wounds.

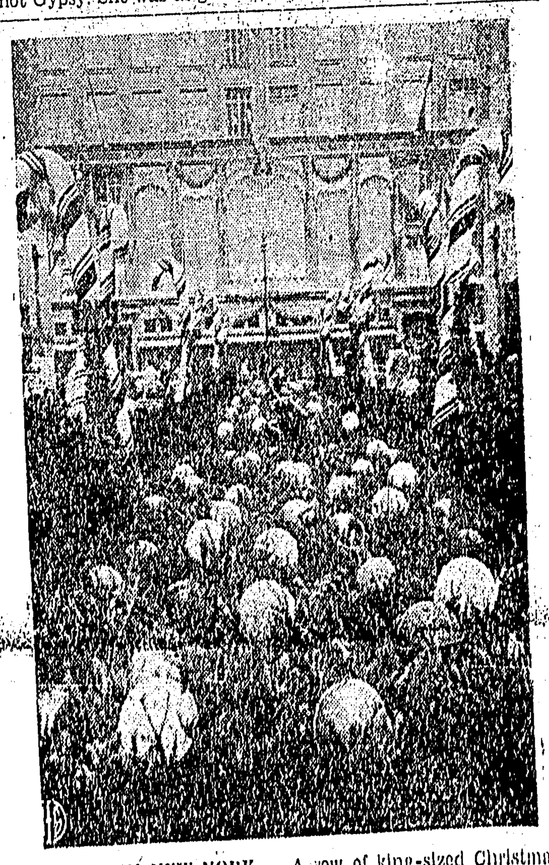
Two Women Die In Collision

CASTLEGAR, B.C. (CP)— Two Kinnaird women, a mother and her married daughter, were killed Saturday in a head-on collision about a mile south of this Kootenay Valley town.

Dead are Mrs. Anne Julie Hardie, 50, and Mrs. Carolyn Douglas Walker, 22.

Police said the two women were passengers in a small car driven by Roy Englund of Castlegar.

Two other passengers in the death car, Jean Hardie of Kinnaird and George Pellegrin, believed to be of Prince George, were taken to hospital. Pellegrin was released after treatment for minor injuries.



CHRISTMAS IN NEW YORK — A row of king-sized Christmas bulbs resting in a bed of evergreens and fenced in by huge candy canes forms an impressive holiday greeting for strollers and shoppers making their way through New York's Rockefeller Center. The large organ display, piping out holiday music, on the front of Saks Fifth Avenue store in background creates an impressive backdrop for the scene.

DELIGHTFUL CUSTOM — Judy Sundstrom, 20, a Chicagoan junior at Mundelein College, was chosen to reign over the doings after being picked as Lucia at a celebration of the Festival of Lights by a Swedish-American organization in Chicago. In Sweden, the festival first was held to honor the Italian martyr, Santa Lucia, whose story was spread by early Christian missionaries. Her feast day gradually also became an occasion for celebrating the shortest day of the year in the Swedish latitudes.

OTTAWA DIARY

By JAMES R. NELSON

When the final sale is rung up on the nation's cash registers tonight, and the retail merchants go home along with their thronging customers to decorate the Christmas trees and relax for a day, they'll do so with mixed feelings, but for the most part satisfaction.

According to all indications, the Christmas trade this year has been a good one, moderately higher than a year ago across the country as a whole. But the increase in business seemed somewhat dampened. It wasn't as great as most businessmen had expected.

It will be some weeks before official figures are compiled. They deal with national averages, and conditions vary from region to region, from one part of a community to another, even.

The general trend seems to be, however, that most people have plenty of money to spend. The government's appeal for more second-thoughts on purchases of consumer goods on credit hasn't been too successful when it came to buying Christmas gifts.

The government's appeal has not been answered as readily as it hoped even in large purchases. Although land and building purchases can't generally be considered part of the Christmas trade, it is known—as part of the trend—that people are finding capital in the form of mortgages from private funds, rather than the banks.

That would all add up to circumstances seeming to point to a really big boom in the Christmas trade this year. But it has been dampened.

Retailers have noticed a definite growing demand for quality goods, real price competition, and real reluctance on the part of shoppers to buy things in a hurry. A good many men's shirts, women's blouses, household linens, and that sort of thing were fingered thoughtfully by Christmas shoppers before they plunked down their money.

Shoppers want more quality and more variety. This has meant that retailers have had to lay in larger inventories. Inventories are reported to be at an unusually high level.

This may result in one "good" thing for the little shopper in the next few weeks. Post-Christmas sales are likely to be bigger and better in most parts of the country as the retailers try to reduce their year-end stocks.

GM Pays Out $20,000 For Suggestions

OSHAWA—General Motors of Canada paid more than $20,000 to its employees in Oshawa and Windsor during the first nine months of this year for suggestion plan submissions, W. A. Wecker, president of GM announced today.

Highest individual award paid to date in 1956 was $1,777 to Robert Simmons, Light Reject department, Truck Division. Mr. Simmons received this award for a suggestion that saved both material and labour.

A total of 2,364 suggestions were submitted by 1,739 employees. Of these, 717 submissions qualified for cash awards. Since the beginning of the year an average number of 8,354 employees have been eligible to participate in the award plan.

Under the plan, employees submit suggestions for improving production and office efficiency, conserving materials, and increasing safety on the job.

Prospector Presumed Dead

VANCOUVER (CP)—One of two prospectors who vanished last September in the Bulkley lake of northern B.C. is officially presumed dead.

Mr. Justice H. J. Sullivan ruled that well-known prospector Albert Bruce Goodridge can be presumed dead. J. R. Lakes, executor of Goodridge's estate, reported that Goodridge left Williams Lake, B.C., by plane with Herbert John Lloyd Sept. 8.

They were seen a week later when they took off from Bulkley House, and the plane was last sighted about 12 miles south of there the same day.

Courtesy, Caution Bywords For Safe, Happy Christmas

Special to The Daily News

TORONTO— A special safe driving appeal to motorists was made today by William A. Wecker president of the Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, who urged drivers to be "safety conscious" during the busy Christmas season.

"What better time than Christmas is there for each of us to show fellow drivers co-operation and courtesy?" Mr. Wecker asked.

"Everyone can and should make 'courtesy' and 'alertness' his first driving principles," Mr. Wecker added. "If we do so, we can look forward to a sharp reduction in needless accidents that bring loss and grief to Canadians."

Mr. Wecker reminded drivers that highways would be crowded during the Christmas season.

"Make courtesy and caution your byword, and I am sure that it will be a happy and merry Christmas for all," he said.

"Big Ben" On Air Again After Overhaul

LONDON (Reuters)—Big Ben, the bell whose chimes mean London and home to Britons all over the world, "broadcasts" again Sunday morning after a rest of more than five months.

The booming bell, in St. Stephen's clock tower at the houses of Parliament, and its clock have been getting a thorough overhauling since July.

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Greetings to All
'Tis the season to be jolly...and happy are we to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas.
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Our heartfelt greetings to all our friends. May they be blessed with peace, health, and good cheer.
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To all our friends, we extend warm wishes for a Holiday that is full of love and joy. A Merry Christmas to all!
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