

*Back in 1897 little eight year old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the New York Sun in which she asked whether or not there was a Santa Claus.*

*Her letter and its reply has since become world famous. We are reprinting the letter and the Editor's answer.*

Dear Editor:

I am eight 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

"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 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 Virginias. 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 to 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? Oh, 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."

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In the Austrian village of Hallein on Christmas eve, 1818, the schoolmaster, Franz Gruber, composed a hymn called "Song of Heaven," and sang it in church the following night. A man from a nearby town happened to hear it and, being impressed, memorized its words and music, which he later taught to a traveling quartet. By 1854, thirty-six years later, the piece had become so famous throughout the world that a search was made for its unknown composer, and Gruber was found. The obscure and impoverished schoolmaster then learned that his song had become the most beloved church hymn of all time, and that its name had been changed to "Silent Night."

. . . The Ashlar