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FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS

How Unhappy King Learned a Lesson From Peasant Lad



IN the very, very long ago there dwelt in a country across the sea a king who was very, very unhappy. He often felt so tired of life as he lived it that he sometimes wished to die. And he would sit on his throne and sigh deeply. And his courtiers would vie with one another in trying to make their monarch's existence less unbearable. But they fawned upon him and flattered him, and bowed down before him in the humblest manner. And all the time the king hated them for their humbleness and servility. But being a king, he held himself aloof from his fellow-beings, and retained a haughty reserve.

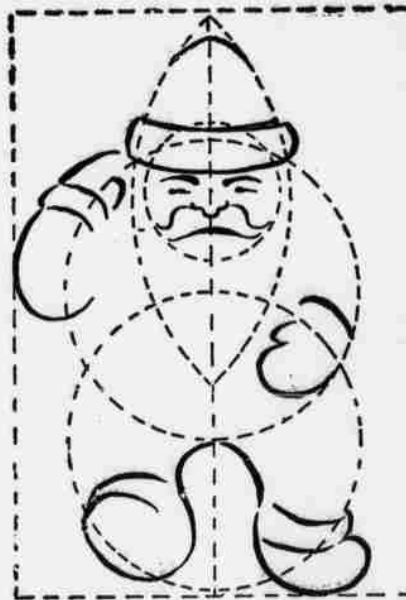
One day while driving in his coach of gold and silver, the king beheld a little peasant boy on the banks of a river, fish-

would be made to suffer the penalty. But to their great surprise, the king smiled—for the first time in months—and again spoke to the peasant boy:

"If I pay you a golden coin for the fish you haven't yet caught, will you come and speak with me? I, your king, beg this favor." And again the king smiled in an amused way.

"Oh, if you are willing to pay me for my lost time why I will come and speak with you, sir," agreed the peasant boy. And he arose and approached the king's coach. The outriders opened an avenue so that he might walk to the side of the coach. To their utter astonishment the king made room for the boy inside of the coach and bade him be seated beside him. The boy looked up and shook his head: "No, sir, a peasant boy is not fitting company for a king. I prefer to remain afoot on ground and talk with you."

"You are a strange and bold boy," declared the king, a bit out of temper.



AN EASY WAY TO DRAW A PORTRAIT OF OLD SANTA

ing. The child looked up at him, smilingly. Then, without removing his cap and failing to bow respectfully before his monarch, the boy returned to his work, pulling out of the water a fine fish. The king was so deeply impressed by the boy's happy face that he called to his coachman to stop, as he would speak with the peasant boy.

As the coach stopped, the king called to the lad: "Come hither, youth."

But the lad sat quite still beside the bank, holding to his fishing rod. "Come hither, I command you!" So spoke the king in imperious tones, beckoning to the peasant boy.

"But I must not leave my rod, sir," explained the boy. "I have a fish nibbling at the bait, and I must watch the line."

"Do you know who I am?" questioned the king in a severe tone.

"Yes, sir. You are the man the people call king. I would not know you but for your coach and retinue." The boy spoke in the easiest manner possible, without the least show of embarrassment. The coachman and outriders trembled for the child's fate, for they feared he had offended his king and

"And why do you dare to refuse me—your king?"

"If you are my king, then I am your subject," said the boy. "And we each owe the other certain liberty. I must live my way and you your way."

Now it was the king's turn to be astonished and banishing the frown which had begun to gather on his brow, he said: "You interest me, youth, and I shall get out of my coach and sit beside you while you fish. Will that please you—my subject?"

"I have no objection to your sitting on the banks of the river, for it is yours as well as mine," explained the boy.

The king laughed outright. "Why, youth, don't you know that river—and all the land about it—belongs to me, the king and ruler over this land?"

The boy shook his head: "That river is not yours any more than it is mine—even though you be a king. You cannot bridle it or change its course. You cannot stop its waters, or cause them to flow. It is God's river, and so is the land all about it. And you the God's creature as I am God's creature, and when he bids us leave this life you are as powerless to disobey as I am. So, I