

# BY AN UNSEEN HAND

A Story of the Secret Society Known as the "Ragged Thirteen"

By Edward Hughes.

## CHAPTER IV. (Continued.)

"You're dying for curiosity to know who I am, and why I came here," said she, when she had sipped the cold drink, "and that's where an Englishman gets the better of his hot-headed countrymen—you don't show it a bit. Well, I'll tell you all about myself when I've got my breath properly."

For the next three or four minutes I had leisure to observe her more closely, and I could see that she was, most probably, not out of her teens, and her recent exercise had brought a red flush to her cheeks that set them off in marked contrast to the delicate white tint of her forehead. I was still looking at her, when she turned towards me.

"I must begin," said she, "by telling you my name. Well, I'm Miss Nora Courtney, if you please, and some say that I'm the Honourable Miss Courtney, but that doesn't matter; and I'm some relation to him yonder that was following me. I live with my father in the next house between this and the town, and it's very likely if you stay here long enough you'll meet me one of these days running his messages, by reason that our servants are so stupid, and then if you saw me carrying a jug, or something, you'd be too proud to speak to me. My father has had a heap of trouble, and it's altered him from what he's just as kind now as ever he was when they don't bother him. There'd do you want to hear any more about such a promising pair of people?"

"To be sure I do," I said. "You have hardly told me anything about yourself."

"Well, to begin again, then," she said, "I'm just nineteen, and my head's as empty of knowledge as—as this glass is of drink."

I took the hint and her glass, and when I had filled it she continued—

"I can neither read nor write—that's how my father has brought me up. 'Sure,' he says, 'if you can't do either you won't get into mischief signing bills, and that like, as I've done myself.' Well, this man who was after me just now is some relation of mine, though what I don't exactly know. It's a sort of riddle like that about 'if Dick's father was Jack's son—you know, well, he goes by the name of D'Orville. I found out the way to spell the name afterwards, and his mother is a Corsican lady, and they tell me that these people are hard to beat in the way of nursing their bad temper."

"I don't know what ails Maurice, but something's gone wrong with him, and he's got my father into the bother, and if I'd had my letters at his fingers' ends I might have found out something about it to-day. He comes at odd times to see us when the fit takes him, and it's glad I am when he goes."

"Do you know," and here she dropped her voice, "do you know that he and his mother tried to put my father in a madhouse, or threatened to, but he got out of their clutches somehow and took a droll revenge upon Maurice? My father can leave only a certain part of his property to me, by reason of some law or other. Law's very bothering isn't it? And when he dies, Maurice, my cousin, or whatever he is, comes for a lot, so to spite them father lets nearly all of his tenants go rent free, and a nice time of it the man will have who tries to collect it. And so here am I, that ought to be living in a castle, taking shelter in a gentleman's house, and I not knowing his name."

"I can guess what you'd like to be asking: 'What made me come here?'"

Well, I'll tell you, for you look as if you could be trusted, and it's very comforting to have someone to speak to. I got into Maurice's room to-day unbeknown to him, and there I found his keys in the lock of the box he always brings with him, and—do you know how curious a girl I am—well, I am—I opened it and found some books with writing in them, and I was pretending to myself that I could read them, when he came in and caught me. Ah! you should have seen the evil look of him. I believe he's a dynamiter or a Fenian, no less. I don't know how I got past him, but I did, and out I rushed, and the door slammed to and I locked it, for the key was on the outside. And then I ran for it, and I saw your door open and rushed in, and here I am. Now what are you going to do with me?"

"See you safe home," I said; "and if you ever care to call upon me in a proper way—that is, I mean—if you'll come and see me, I shall be delighted."

"Would you, though? Would you really?"

"Yes, really," I said; "and—ah! that's Mrs. Graves I hear, surely—as you've appeared so opportunely, you will let me offer you a cup of tea?"

"Not this time, thank you. I'll be going now. I can slip in, and none of them the wiser. Goodbye, and many thanks for your kindness, and don't forget that it's a princess who's thanking you."

Thus it was that I first saw Nora Courtney, with the roses still fresh on her cheek and in all the sweetness and purity of her maidenhood. I was aroused by the quick step of Maguire.

"What luck?" I asked as he rushed in.

"Oh, may the Banshee fly away with them! It's the reader," says one of them, "that isn't satisfied." "What reader?" says I. "My reader," he says. "Ah, maybe he hadn't the tune of the brogue," I said, or perhaps 'twas the Italian that bothered him. See now, let me give you a passage," and I took up my writing and read him that bit about my adventure in Florence, and when I'd finished there he sat, turning over leaf after leaf of some papers before him with one hand, and waving me out with the other. Well, then I said something to him in Irish—and it wasn't a blessing—and I banged his door and marched off to the next publisher on the list, and with him I left it, and mighty civil the people were,

but they'll bundle it out, like the others did. Ah! Jack, Jack! why ever did you make me an author, to break my heart?"

## CHAPTER V.

### The Curse of the Ragged Thirteen.

There were several reasons why I did not give Maguire an account of the visit with which I had been honoured. In the first place, it was so unorthodox that a long explanation would have been necessary to account for it; and, secondly, I had heard Nora Courtney's story on the strength of the fact that I seemed like one who might be trusted. Moreover, I should very likely never see her in the house again, since I could not return her visit, and from what she told me, it was highly improbable that her father would call upon me.

Maguire kept firing away at the publishers with his big gun, whilst he brought his smaller artillery—short stories and the like—to bear upon the autocrats of the publishing world was sublime in its audacity, and many times resulted in the return of his MS. editors of papers and magazines and the way in which he ordered up the unread.

"Ah! they don't know a good thing when you see it!" he would burst out, as the postman once more brought the wanderer home safely. "It's my firm belief, Jack, that Shakespeare was lucky to write when he did, for if he'd written in these days, when there's so many at the game, he'd have been a fortunate fellow if he had't got a small library of printed matter, and letters with the 'Editor's compliments and regrets,' or a note about want of space or some such polite information. I don't think they've time to read half what they get."

Then, he would seriously consider the advisability of making pipelights of the MS. until talked over by persuasive tongue, and convinced that he had maligned the race of editors, he would spend half the day doing it up again, baiting it with a letter that might prove tempting enough to lure and land some publisher.

The weeks went by and brought us to the beginning of August, and all this time I had never even caught a glimpse of Miss Nora Courtney, though I had often seen her father, whose identity I had established by referring to the proprietor of the hotel patronized by the elderly Irishman.

I patrolled the streets at all likely and unlikely hours, but it was of no avail, and I began to suspect that the young lady was purposely avoiding me.

One day I strolled somewhat farther afield than usual, and found myself in the midst of a wood, and as I rambled on from one glade to another I could not but be astonished that these sylvan scenes existed in such close proximity to London. I was in the heart of the wood when I caught sight of a figure dressed in white lying in the shade of an oak, and as I drew near I recognized Miss Courtney. She was stretched in an easy attitude on the grass, apparently studying a book that lay open before her, and so absorbed was she in its contents, and so soft was the carpet of verdure on which I trod, that, without her being aware of my presence, I was able to reach over her shoulder, to notice that the book, a child's primer, was well thumbed and dog-eared.

The solitude of the place she had chosen for her study, and the condition of the book that bore silent testimony to her application, gave me the idea that she had become ashamed of her ignorance and was trying to teach herself, so instead of startling her by speaking, I slipped away noiselessly, and, making a circuit, came from another direction. This time I contrived that she should hear me while I was still at a distance, so that before I reached her she had hidden away her lesson-book.

She greeted me with easy courtesy. "Sure, you frightened me," she said, as I took her hand.

"I'm very sorry," I answered; "but what brings you into these wilds, Miss Courtney? Are you studying botany?"

"No, I'm not—I'm learning my letters. I didn't see you at first, so I hid my book."

The blush that spread over her face made her so passing beautiful that I was sorry it was so evanescent.

"And how are you getting on with your studies?" I asked. "I hope you won't think it rude of me to ask. You know, you told me that you couldn't read."

"Well, sometimes I think I'm doing grandly, and then I come to a big word, and I can't tell whether I read it right, or when I say it out loud it it never seems to sound like any word I know, and, of course, I don't tell my father, for he wouldn't help me, and if he found me trying to read, maybe he'd tear up my book."

"Will you let me help you?" I asked, sitting down beside her. "Do! I should be delighted; and you'll get on ever so much faster. Let me hear you try. Where have you got to?"

After a little more persuasion she shyly opened her primer and pointed to a row of words of three syllables.

"It's here I'm trying," she said; and then began the first of a series of lessons that brought the keenest pleasure to the teacher, given as they were with the woods for a schoolroom, and God's best piece of handiwork, a lovely and innocent maiden for a pupil.

Ah! they were happy hours—happy then, in that they brought me the pure joy that came of her presence; happy to think of now, because their memory tinged with no trace of sorrow, will bide with me until we know that fuller fellowship of soul that shall reach down through the ages of eternity!

Surely no pupil was ever more grateful for help, or more light-hearted over her tasks, than she was, and her perseverance and patience converted the stumbling-blocks of one day into the fairly easy words of the next, until at last her reading was so good that it was high time she should take to the pen.

Every night I blessed that little primer for the way in which it brought us together. To be sure, I might easily have bought another, but then I should have missed the touch of her hand as we thumbed and fingered the book together, and have lost the moments of bliss when her hair, tossed by the wind, swept over my cheek.

It seems to me that I can hear her rippling laughter now as I heard it when I told her that Persia's famous King would have frowned upon her had she dared to address him as "Exercises."

"Ah! why," she said, "didn't they give the man a decent name, like—Maurice, or William, or—Jack?" and the mix gave me a glint from her eye, and whispered the last name so softly that I went home delighted.

I can see, too, the light that glowed in her glorious eyes, and the colour that came and went as I read to her of this or that famous knight's deeds, done in honour of his lady; and the look of pleasure that made her face radiant, did I but praise her, as is beautiful in the remembrance now as it was in the actual beholding then.

Though no one but ourselves knew of our meetings, which were thus somewhat clandestine, she saw no harm in them, and they were so pleasant to me that I never raised the point, for to the pure all things are pure, and in this respect she matched the angels of heaven!

Then came the lessons in writing. We made use of a pencil, and how sweetly she bothered me! first? And sure, she'd never get the turn of this letter, or the twist of that, and why weren't they all as easy to make as o's?"

When September was ending, and the air began to grow chilly, and the leaves to flutter down upon us in all the glory of their autumn colours, she brought me her first letter, and I waited to read it until I was alone, and read it over and over again until it was mine by heart. Just a few simple words of thanks, just a wish that she could do something for me to repay me for my patience and kindness, just a hope that some day we should meet again, and then the "Yours, gratefully, N. C." She spelt it "greatfully," and I kissed the word, because it showed me that I must teach her again some day.

And all this time Maguire was spinning romances, his star of hope shining resplendent in the zenith when some story was accepted, and waning towards the literary horizon, or setting altogether for a while, when his book came back, as come it did with a regularity that had long since passed the stage of monotony. And to keep him working—and he was happier so—and to leave me free to give my lessons I advised him to rewrite portions of his work, to touch it up here and there, and to illustrate it more freshly, so that it fared forth fatter each time, until it was bulky indeed.

Now that the meetings in the woods were over I cast about for some means of seeing Nora in a legitimate manner, and I made use of my father's failings to aid me in my endeavor. Having at last presented myself a sufficient number of times at the bar to make my face familiar, and after running a great risk of losing my character for sobriety, I was at length invited into the inner sanctum, where the higher class patrons assembled to enjoy their grog and an innocent game of cards.

And here I was privileged to address Mr. Courtney for the first time, and the manner of my approach, which I was careful to make as deferential as possible, won upon him to accept the cigar I proffered, and before the evening was over we had exchanged the evening's greetings, which I drew an awful picture, he promised to call upon me.

And, mirabile dictu, he proved himself a man of his word, and two days afterwards he bore down upon us in the orthodox way, dressed in his best, though there were traces of someone's deft fingers in the neatly-mended gloves, and his cravat—for he was old-fashioned to wear one—had assumed a more befitting position than when I had last had the pleasure of beholding it. There were creases in his well-worn frock-coat, and his trousers were of a cut that was not Poole's, and, although he was somewhat of a wreck, what was left of him proclaimed that he had once been a good-looking, well-set-up man.

Maguire had looked himself up in his den, and had my visitor been a Prince of the Blood Royal the author would not have vouchsafed to have bestowed upon him the light of his countenance, so that I had to do all the entertaining.

"You're very pleasant here, Mr. Tremayne," said my guest, as he sipped his port, for tea was tabooed—"you're very pleasant here; and he waved his hand as though the country for miles around were mine. "And I'm sorry that it isn't in Ireland we are, where I could ask you to come and see me in the castle where the Courtneys have reigned ever since—well, ever since the Flood. But I'll maybe go back again, and then if you're ever over there I'll be proud to do the honours."

I told him that I should be only too delighted to gaze upon so venerable a pile, and when, on parting he signified that he should be pleased to see me at any time I thanked him sincerely, and promised myself that he should not be disappointed.

I managed to let a week pass, and then, after a vain effort to induce Maguire to accompany me—he was in the throes of a marvellous plot—I set out alone to make my formal call, little dreaming that I was to have the pleasure of meeting the gentleman to whose temper I owed my introduction to Nora. Yet so it was, for Mr. D'Orville and his mother was visiting the Courtneys; but, although I was presented to the son, I had not the pleasure of meeting the lady.

And a striking man was this relative of Nora, standing nearly six feet high, with broad shoulders and a commanding presence—a born captain, of men, had he but been able to control himself; handsome undoubtedly, with

clean-cut lips and firm jaw, and eyes that seemed to look you through, so piercing was his gaze.

Courtly and polished in manner, and yet always giving one the idea that one had to do with a volcano of a man, who might blaze out at any moment (as no doubt he had done when he surprised Nora in his room). I judged him to be over forty, but though passion had left some lines on his face, his glossy black hair showed never a trace of grey.

He greeted me pleasantly, and, choosing for his topic of conversation a subject in which I was particularly interested, he impressed me most favorably, for he gave me the opportunity of airing my views, and confined himself to remarks that served to draw me out further and further. There are many, I know, who would have found too much of the Frenchman in him to please them; but, to my mind, he seemed to have taken the better part of his nature from his mother—that is, so far as one regarded him superficially. His manner may have been nothing more than a veneer, but how much better this than that he, or anyone else for that matter, who has an ugly exterior, should be for ever showing it. I like plain, straightforward folk; but if a man has a temper, I think all the better of him if he does not show it on any and every occasion.

I had very little chance of speaking to Nora alone, and indeed we exchanged but a few commonplace remarks, so as I bade them "Good afternoon" I could not help feeling that this legitimate method of seeing my late pupil might be all that propriety allowed, but that it was not half so pleasant as when we two were together, away yonder in the woods.

Still, I must take the good the gods sent me, and so I planned a little dinner-party for a day in the following week, and I dispatched Graves with invitations to Mr. and Miss Courtney and friends, and to the rector and his good lady, who had been kind enough to look me up several times, and I was delighted when the Irish party accepted en masse, and felt that I should get over the non-acceptance of the Church party, who pleaded a previous engagement.

Then I found that Mrs. Graves and I had very different views with regard to dinners in general, and this one in particular, and she must have such and such help in the cooking department, and someone to wait at table besides Graves, and I don't know what paraphernalia in the kitchen to get through her culinary efforts in a creditable manner. I didn't stint her in any way, and as the day drew nigh she became as autocratic as if the whole place belonged to her, and as though the lives of all in it were at her disposal.

Then came my first disappointment with regard to what I intended to be a recherche repast that should linger long in the minds of those who partook of it.

Maguire had a letter from a firm in Edinburgh, who seemed to be nibbling at his back, and who offered to pay his expenses if he would go to see them, and as this was only the day before the great event, and as I could not persuade him to put off starting, even for an hour, away went with him the fun and the witty conversation that I had looked to him to supply.

But a still greater blow was in store for me. It was four o'clock on the afternoon of the eventful day. I had gone over the wine list, and had worried Graves until disgust was writ large upon his face. I had arranged and laid my plans for their amusement afterwards, and finally had settled myself down to a comfortable smoke, when I heard the bell announcing a visitor, and, wondering what caller had chosen this particular day to look me up, I awaited the appearance of Graves with some curiosity.

"Miss Courtney, sir, wishes to speak to you. She's in the drawing-room."

Nora! What could she want? I had to wait but a very short time to know, for even before I had released her hand she had entered into explanations.

I've brought you a letter, Mr. Tremayne, from my cousin. He has had to leave us in a great hurry, and he hadn't been out of the house five minutes before father went off to his club, as he calls it. I could sit down and cry my eyes out, for I've the loveliest dress you ever saw, and he's been bothering me all the week with dress clothes, getting them altered and that, and now we shan't be able to come at all. Read Maurice's letter, I think he's done it all to spite us. I hate his black face and his evil eyes, and if it wasn't that he's spoilt it all, I'd be glad that he's gone."

It was a most polite epistle with which I had been favored. The writer regretted that his mother had received an urgent message calling her to the North of Ireland, and as the matter did not admit of the slightest delay, she was starting at once, and he must needs accompany her, as she was not strong enough to undertake so long a journey alone. Would I therefore accept their apologies, and believe that the loss would be theirs, not mine? They hoped at some future date to regard that he's gone."

"But why can't you and Mr. Courtney come?" I asked.

"He face flushed as she answered me. 'I've told you,' she said, 'where he's gone to. Maurice has driven him there with some words they had. You've servants to wait on you that don't know his ways, and I'd die of shame if they saw him like he will be at seven o'clock.'"

"Let me go and bring him away. I'll be careful not to offend him. Do, will you?"

She came close to me, and laid her hand on my arm.

"For my sake—don't, Jack. You don't know all. There was a time when it little I seemed to care; but—but it's different somehow now."

I think that when I heard the word "Jack" drop from her lips I forgot all about her father and the grand function that was to have been, and I only remembered that she had called me by my Christian name, and to hear that was more to me than all the pleasure that the best dinner-party in the world could afford.

"You're not going all the way back Nora," said I, and I was quick to follow her lead, and spoke as though she had come miles; you're not going back

without some refreshments. I'll tell Mrs. Graves to send us some tea," and giving her no time for refusal, I rang the bell, and Graves was duly bidden to bring up the tray.

I played the tyrant to the full. I carved her sit in one of the quaintly-carved chairs that she only half filled; I troubled her for another cup, with all the horrors of dyspepsia confronting me; I made her listen whilst I played one or two Irish airs; and finally I opened a book and persuaded her to read me a page, so that her teacher might judge of her progress.

"It's very lonely you must be without your friend," said she. "Maurice saw him going off from the station yesterday. What do you do with yourselves in the evening? Do you play cards?"

"No! we've never had a game. I don't think Maguire cares about it. In fact, I've never heard him say whether he knows anything about playing. I can only manage a hand at whist, and I'm not much good at that."

"Ah! you should play 'spoiled fives.' That would suit you. It's easy to learn, and it's a nice game for two, but maybe you would not care to play anything so vulgar."

"It can't be vulgar if you play it." "Now, Mr. Tremayne, you're not Irish enough yet to pay compliments. So don't try to."

"Well, will you teach me how to play this game?" said I. "There's a card-table yonder," and going across to it I found a pack, and stood shuffling the cards before her.

Truly this was the most unconventional teaparty at which I had ever assisted.

"'Spoiled fives is too easy,' she said. 'Now, if you don't know cribbage, I should like to teach you that, because you've taught me so much. But I haven't time to stay any longer now. Look, it's nearly five o'clock.'"

The mention of cribbage brought back to my mind what Anguish had told me.

"Don't bother," I said, "about the time. It doesn't much matter, seeing that our dinner-party is ruined. Look here! There's a hand that I should like you to count for me. It won't take you a minute, and then I'll walk back with you."

I sorted out a six, seven, eight, and two aces, and laid them on the table before her.

As we sat I was facing the door, and she had her back to it.

"That!" she cried, "why, anyone who can play at all knows what that hand is. Why, it's the—"

(To Be Continued.)

## WOULD HAVE BEEN IN A FIX.

### A Young Man's Ruse to Find Out If His Girl Really Cared for Him.

The young man in love is an interesting creature. Given a sympathetic listener, he will tell many things in a voice that is awed, because what he is telling seems so holy to him. Such a young man said:

"I couldn't feel sure my girl really cared for me, so I wrote myself this telegram: 'Will you go as an accountant for a tea firm in China at a salary of \$60 per week? Start Thursday. Answer at once.' I signed the name of a fictitious firm, and showed the girl the telegram as soon as I got to her house that night. She read it, and then she looked at me gravely. 'What do you think about it?' she asked. 'I don't know what to think,' said I. She mused a little while. 'Do you want to go?' she asked me. 'If I wasn't for you I'd want to go,' I answered. Then she said, in a faint voice: 'Do whatever you think best.' 'I'd go if it wasn't for you,' I replied. She sat very still, looking at the fire. Then, all of a sudden, she began to cry. 'Oh, don't go! don't go!' she wailed. 'Don't go and leave me all alone. What would I do—what would I do—without you?'"

So I told her I wouldn't go. It is a grand thing to have a girl care for you so much as that. I know that this girl loves me truly. "If I had been this girl," said the young man's listener, "I should have said: 'Accept the offer, and we'll be married at once and start for China together.'"

The young man grinned. "Gosh! I hadn't thought of that!" he admitted. "Wouldn't I have been in a fix, though, if she had said that?"

## Genuine Gratitude.

The portly gentleman in the black cut-away coat lighted his cigar, leaned against the bar and puffed away contentedly. Like most New York bar-rooms, it was a cosmopolitan place, full of many sorts of people. A lean, hungry-looking individual, with grimy hands and the beard of an anarchist, approached the portly gentleman cautiously.

"I say, boss, could you let me have a nickel?" he began, tentatively.

"What's the trouble?" asked the other.

"Well, you see, the fact is, I haven't a cent, and I was out on an awful spree last night—and I want a beer."

He got the nickel. He looked at the coin meditatively for a time, and then at his benefactor.

"Say," he ejaculated, at last, "I wish I had another nickel, so I could treat you."—New York Mail and Express.

## A Hen Story.

Another hen story comes from the farm of Henry Van Boerum, near Jamaica. Henry has a choice flock of Plymouth Rocks. One of the hens has been in the habit of producing a fine egg every day. During the last few weeks her production has fallen off. Mr. Boerum went to a grocery the other day and was astonished to see the hen walk in go over to a nest and lay an egg. Then she got up and clucked until the grocer gave her a handful of corn.

The grocer said the hen entered the place one morning about three weeks ago and deposited an egg upon a lot of bagging. He rewarded her with a handful of corn, and she had visited him every day since, about meal-time, laid her egg and received payment.—New York World.

## Price Makes the Demand.

"But if you could sell these suits for \$5 last month, how does it happen that you want so much for them now?"

"That's the trouble, my friend. We couldn't sell these suits for \$5. No body wanted them at that price. At \$9.99 they are going off like hot cakes."—Chicago Tribune.

## Carl Care to the Winds.

Holly berries red and bright,  
Wealth of candles flick'ring light,  
Christmas in the air!  
Childish faces all aglow,  
Outside sleigh bells in the snow—  
Banished is dull care.

## Older wiseheads for the time.

Join in sport and song and rhyme—  
Happy Christmastide!  
Mem'ry brings back golden youth,  
Eyes then seeing only youth,  
Ever at its side.

## Joy tonight is crowned the queen

Of the festive Christmas scene,  
May her rule be long!  
None can claim a rebel heart  
With her followers forms a part—  
Theirs a gladsome song!

## A Bit of Deception.

She stood beneath no chandelier  
Entwined with mistletoe;  
I glanced the hall-length far and near,  
I looked both high and low;  
No license for a kiss was hung,  
'Twas near a failure flat,  
When lo, I spied a sprig among  
The feathers on her hat.

Roy Farrell Greena.

## Old English Customs.

It was customary in former days, in Cornwall, England, for the people to meet on Christmas eve at the bottom of the deepest mines and have a midnight mass.

In some parts of Derbyshire the village choir assemble in the church on Christmas eve and there wait until midnight, when they proceed from house to house, invariably accompanied by a keg of ale, singing "Christians, Awake!" During the week they again visit the principal houses in the place, and having played and sang for the evening, and partaken of the Christmas cheer, are presented with a sum of money.

In Chester and its neighborhood numerous singers parade the streets, and are hospitably entertained with meat and drink at the various houses where they call.

The "ashton fagot" is burned in Devonshire. It is composed entirely of ash timber, the separate branches bound with ash bands and made as large as can be admitted to the floor of the fireplace. When the fagot blazes a quart of cider is called for and served upon the bursting of every hoop or band around the fagot. The timber being green and elastic, each band bursts with a loud report.

In one or two localities it is still customary for the farmer, with his family and friends, after partaking together of hot cakes and cider (the cakes being dipped into the liquor previous to being eaten) to proceed to the orchard, one or the party bearing hot cake and cider as an offering to the principal apple tree. The cake is formally deposited on the fork of the tree and the cider thrown upon the cake and tree.

A superstitious notion prevails in the western parts of Devonshire that at 12 o'clock at night on Christmas eve the oxen in their stalls are always found on their knees as in an attitude of devotion.

One John Martyn, by will, on Nov. 28, 1729, gave to the church wardens and overseers of the poor of the parish, St. Mary Major, Exeter, £20, to be put out at interest, and the profits thereof to be laid out every Christmas eve in twenty pieces of beef, to be distributed to twenty of the poorest people in the parish, said charity to be continued forever.

## Santa Will Stay.

There are a lot of people who love to wag their jaws and tell the children plainly there is no Santa Claus.

## No Santa Claus—what nonsense

Down childish throats to ram,  
You might as well inform them  
There is no Uncle Sam!

R. K. Munkittrick.

