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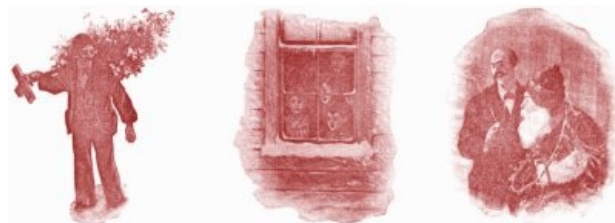
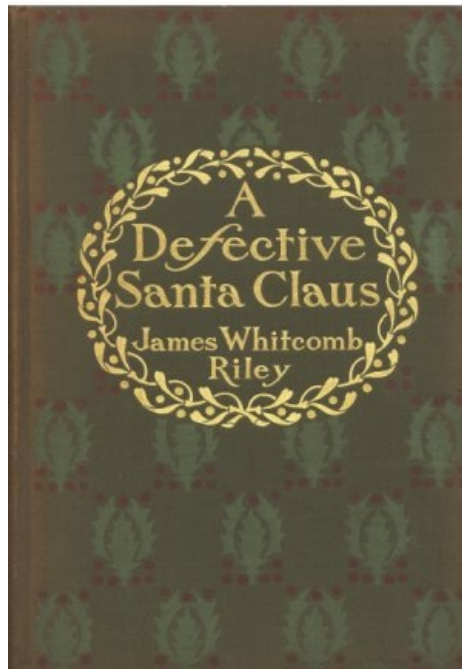
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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DEFECTIVE SANTA CLAUS \*\*\*



## A Defective Santa Claus



# **A Defective Santa Claus**

**JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY**

*With Pictures by*  
**C. M. RELYEA**  
*and*  
**WILL VAWTER**

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## ***DEDICATION***

*To*  
HEWITT HANSON HOWLAND

WITH HALEST CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
AND FRATERNAL

*Little Boy! Halloo!—halloo!  
Can't you hear me calling you?—  
Little Boy that used to be,  
Come in here and play with me.*



## A Defective Santa Claus



## A Defective Santa Claus

Allus when our Pa he's away  
Nen Uncle Sidney comes to stay  
At our house here—so Ma an' me  
An' Etty an' Lee-Bob won't be  
Afeard ef anything at night  
Might happen—like Ma says it might.

(Ef *Trip* wuz *big*, I bet you he  
'Uz best watch-dog you ever see!)  
An' so last winter—ist before  
It's go' be Chris'mus-Day,—w'y, shore  
Enough, Pa had to haf to go  
To 'tend a lawsuit—"An' the snow  
Ist right fer Santy Claus!" Pa said,  
As he clumb in old Ayersuz' sled,  
An' said he's sorry *he* can't be  
With us that night—"Cause," he-says-ee,  
"Old Santy *might* be comin' here—  
This very night of all the year



I' got to be away!—so all  
You kids must tell him—ef he call—  
He's mighty welcome, an' yer Pa  
He left his love with you an' Ma

An' Uncle Sid!" An' clucked, an' leant  
Back, laughin'—an' away they went!  
An' Uncle wave' his hands an' yells  
"Yer old horse ort to have on bells!"  
But Pa yell back an' laugh an' say  
"I 'spect when *Santy* come this way  
It's time enough fer sleighbells nen!"  
An' holler back "Good-by!" again,  
An' reach out with the driver's whip  
An' cut behind an' drive back Trip.

An' so all day it snowed an' snowed!  
An' Lee-Bob he ist watched the road,



In his high-chair; an' Etty she  
U'd play with Uncle Sid an' me—  
Like she wuz he'ppin' fetch in wood  
An' keepin' old fire goin' good,

Where Ma she wuz a-cookin' there  
An' kitchen, too, an' ever'where!  
An' Uncle say, "'At's ist the way  
Yer Ma's b'en workin', night an' day,  
Sence she hain't big as Etty is  
Er Lee-Bob in that chair o' his!"  
Nen Ma she'd laugh 't what Uncle said,  
An' smack an' smooove his old bald head  
An' say "Clear out the way till I  
Can keep that pot from b'ilin' dry!"  
Nen Uncle, when she's gone back to  
The kitchen, says, "We *ust* to do



Some cookin' in the *ashes*.—*Say,*  
S'posin' we try some, thataway!"  
An' nen he send us to tell Ma  
Send two big 'taters in he saw

Pa's b'en a-keepin' 'cause they got  
The premiun at the Fair. An' what  
You think?—He rake a grea'-big hole  
In the hot ashes, an' he roll  
Them old big 'taters in the place  
An' rake the coals back—an' his face  
Ist swettin' so's he purt'-nigh swear  
'Cause it's so hot! An' when they're there  
'Bout time 'at we fergit 'em, he  
Ist rake 'em out again—an' *gee!*—  
He bu'st 'em with his fist wite on  
A' old stove-led, while Etty's gone



To git the salt, an' butter, too—  
Ist like he said she haf to do,  
No matter what *Ma* say! An' so  
He salt an' butter 'em, an' blow

'Em cool enough fer us to eat—  
An' *me-o-my!* they're hard to beat!  
An' Trip 'ud ist lay there an' pant  
Like he'd laugh *out loud*, but he can't.  
Nen Uncle fill his pipe—an' we  
'Ud he'p him light it—Sis an' me,—  
But mostly little Lee-Bob, 'cause  
"He's the best *Lighter* ever wuz!"  
Like Uncle telled him wunst when Lee-  
Bob cried an' jerked the light from me,  
He wuz so mad! So Uncle pat  
An' pet him. (Lee-Bob's ust to that—



'Cause he's the *little*-est, you know,  
An' allus has b'en humored so!)  
Nen Uncle gits the flat-arn out,  
An', while he's tellin' us all 'bout

Old Chris'mus-times when *he's* a kid,  
He ist cracked hickernuts, he did,  
Till they's a crockful, mighty nigh!  
An' when they're all done by an' by,  
He raked the red coals out again  
An' telled me, "Fetch that popcorn in,  
An' old three-leggud skillut—an'  
The *led* an' all now, little man,—  
An' yer old Uncle here 'ull show  
You how corn's popped, long years ago  
When me an' Santy Claus wuz boys  
On Pap's old place in Illinoise!—





An' your Pa, too, wuz chums, all through,  
With Santy!—Wisht Pa'd be here, too!"  
Nen Uncle sigh at Ma, an' she  
Pat him again, an' say to me

An' Etty,—“You take warning fair!—  
Don't talk too much, like Uncle there,  
Ner don't fergit, like *him*, my dears,  
That 'little pitchers has big ears!"  
But Uncle say to her, "Clear out!—  
Yer brother knows what he's about.—  
*You* git your Chris'mus-cookin' done  
Er these pore childern won't have none!"  
Nen Trip wake up an' raise, an' nen  
Turn roun' an' nen lay down again.  
An' one time Uncle Sidney say,—  
"When dogs is sleepin' thataway,



Like Trip, an' *whimpers*, it's a sign  
He'll ketch *eight* rabbits—mayby *nine*—  
Afore his fleas'll wake him—nen  
He'll bite hisse'f to sleep again

An *try* to dream he's go' ketch *ten*."  
An' when Ma's gone again back in  
The kitchen, Uncle scratch his chin  
An' say, "When Santy Claus an' Pa  
An' me wuz little boys—an' Ma,  
When she's 'bout big as Etty there;—  
W'y,—'When we're *growed*—no matter *where*,'  
Santy he cross' his heart an' say,—  
'I'll come to see you, all, some day  
When *you*' got childerns—all but me  
An' pore old Sid!'" Nen Uncle he  
Ist kindo' shade his eyes an' pour'



'Bout forty-'leven bushels more  
O' popcorn out the skillut there  
In Ma's new basket on the chair.  
An' nen he telled us—an' talk' low,

"So Ma can't hear," he say:—"You know  
Yer *Pa* know', when he drived away,  
Tomorry's go' be Chris'mus-*Day*;—  
Well, nen *tonight*," he whisper, "see?—  
It's go' be Chris'mus-*Eve*," says-ee,  
"An', like yer Pa hint, when he went,  
Old Santy Claus (now hush!) he's sent  
Yer Pa a postul-card, an' write  
He's shorely go' be here tonight....  
That's why yer Pa's so bored to be  
*Away* tonight, when Santy he  
Is go' be here, sleighbells an' all,



To make you kids a Chris'mus-call!"  
An' we're so glad to know *fer shore*  
He's comin', I roll on the floor—  
An' here come Trip a-waller'n' roun'

An' purt'-nigh knock the clo'eshorse down!—  
An' ETTY grab Lee-Bob an' prance  
All roun' the room like it's a dance—  
Till Ma she come an' march us nen  
To dinner, where we're *still* again,  
But *tickled* so we ist can't eat  
But pie, an' ist the hot mincemeat  
With raisins in.—But *Uncle* et,  
An' *Ma*. An' there they set an' set  
Till purt'-nigh supper-time; nen we  
Tell him he's got to fix the Tree  
'Fore *Santy* gits here, like he said.



We go nen to the old woodshed—  
All bundled up, through the deep snow—  
"An' snowin' yet, *jee-rooshy-O!*"  
Uncle he said, an' he'p us wade

Back where's the Chris'mus-Tree he's made  
Out of a little jackoak-top  
He git down at the sawmill-shop—  
An' Trip 'ud run ahead, you know,  
An' 'tend-like he 'uz *eatin'* snow—  
When we all waddle back with it;  
An' Uncle set it up—an' git  
It wite in front the fireplace—'cause  
He says "'Tain't *so* 'at Santy Claus  
Comes down *all* chimblies,—least, tonight  
He's comin' in *this* house all right—  
By the front-door, as ort to be!—



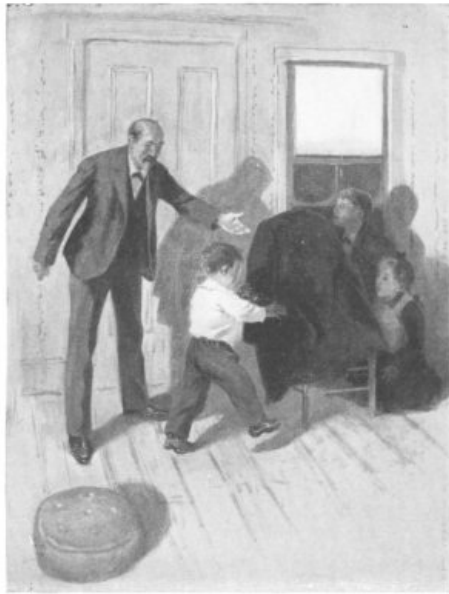
We'll all be hid where we can *see*!"  
Nen he look up, an' he see Ma  
An' say, "It's ist too bad their *Pa*  
Can't be here, so's to see the fun

The childern *will* have, ever' one!"  
Well, *we*!—We hardly couldn't wait  
Till it wuz dusk, an' dark an' late  
Enough to light the lamp!—An' Lee-  
Bob light a candle on the Tree—  
"Ist *one*—'cause I'm 'The Lighter'!"—Nen  
He clumb on Uncle's knee again  
An' hug us *bofe*;—an' Etty git  
Her little chist an' set on it  
Wite clos't, while Uncle telled some more  
'Bout Santy Claus, an' clo'es he wore  
"*All maked o' furs, an' trimmed as white*



*As cotton is, er snow at night!"*  
An' nen, all sudden-like, he say,—  
*"Hush! Listen there! Hain't that a sleigh*  
*An' sleighbells jinglin'?"* Trip go *"whooh!"*

Like *he* hear bells an' *smell* 'em, too.  
Nen we all listen.... An'-sir, shore  
Enough, we hear bells—more an' more  
A-jinglin' clos'ter—clos'ter still  
Down the old crook-road roun' the hill.  
An' Uncle he jumps up, an' all  
The chairs he jerks back by the wall  
An' th'ows a' overcoat an' pair  
O' winder-curtains over there  
An' says, *"Hide quick, er you're too late!—*  
*Them bells is stoppin' at the gate!—*  
*Git back o' them-'air chairs an' hide,*



'Cause I hear *Santy's* voice outside!"  
An' *Bang! bang! bang!* we heerd the door—  
Nen it flewed open, an' the floor  
Blowed full o' snow—that's *first* we saw,

Till little Lee-Bob shriek' at Ma  
"There's *Santy Claus!*—I know him by  
*His big white mufftash!*"—an' ist cry  
An' laugh an' *squeal* an' dance an' *yell*—  
Till, when he quiet down a spell,  
Old *Santy* bow an' th'ow a kiss  
To him—an' one to me an' Sis—  
An' nen go *clos't* to Ma an' stoop  
An' kiss her—An' nen give a whoop  
That *fainted* her!—'Cause when he bent  
An' kiss her, he ist backed an' went  
Wite 'ginst the Chris'mus-Tree ist where





The candle's at Lee-Bob lit there!—  
An' set his white-fur belt afire—  
An' blaze streaked roun' his waist an' higher  
Wite up his old white beard an' th'oat!—

Nen Uncle grabs th' old overcoat  
An' flops it over Santy's head,  
An' swing the door wide back an' said,  
"Come out, old man!—an' *quick* about  
It!—I've ist *got* to put you out!"  
An' out he sprawled him in the snow—  
"Now *roll!*" he says—"Hi-*roll-ee-O!*"—  
An' Santy, sputter'n' "*Ouch! Gee-whiz!*"  
Ist roll an' roll fer all they is!  
An' Trip he's out there, too,—I know,  
'Cause I could hear him yappin' so—  
An' I heerd Santy, wunst er twic't,



Say, as he's rollin', "*Drat the fice't!*"  
Nen Uncle come back in, an' shake  
Ma up, an' say, "Fer mercy-sake!—  
He hain't hurt none!" An' nen he said,—

"You youngsters h'ist up-stairs to bed!—  
Here! kiss yer Ma 'Good-night,' an' me,—  
We'll he'p old Santy fix the Tree—  
An' all yer whistles, horns an' drums  
I'll he'p you toot when morning comes!"

It's long while 'fore we go to sleep,—  
'Cause down-stairs, all-time somepin' keep  
A-kindo' scufflin' roun' the floors—  
An' openin' doors, an' *shettin'* doors—  
An' could hear Trip a-whinin', too,  
Like he don't know ist *what* to do—



An' tongs a-clankin' down *k'thump!*—  
Nen some one squonkin' the old pump—  
An' *Woooh!* how cold it soun' out there!  
I could ist *see* the pump-spout where

It's got ice chin-whiskers all wet  
An' drippy—An' I see it yet!  
An' nen, seem-like, I hear some mens  
A-talkin' out there by the fence,  
An' one says, "Oh, 'bout twelve o'clock!"  
"Nen," 'nother'n says, "Here's to you, Doc!—  
*God bless us ever' one!*" An' nen  
I heerd the old pump squonk again.  
An' nen I say my prayer all through  
Like Uncle Sidney learn' me to,—  
"O Father mine, e'en as Thine own,  
This child looks up to Thee alone:



Asleep or waking, give him still  
His Elder Brother's wish and will."  
An' that's the last I know.... Till Ma  
She's callin' us—an' so is *Pa*,—

He holler "*Chris'mus-gif!*" an' say,—  
"I'm got back home fer *Chris'mus-Day!*—  
An' Uncle Sid's here, too—an' he  
Is nibblin' 'roun' yer *Chris'mus-Tree!*"  
Nen *Uncle* holler, "I suppose  
Yer *Pa's* so proud he's froze his nose  
He wants to turn it up at us,  
'Cause *Santy* kick' up such a fuss—  
Tetchin' hisse'f off same as ef  
He wuz his own fireworks hisse'f!"

An' when we're down-stairs,—shore enough,  
*Pa's* nose *is* froze an' salve an' stuff



All on it—an' one hand's froze, too,  
An' got a old yarn red-and-blue  
Mitt on it—"An' he's froze some more  
Acrost his chist, an' kindo' sore

All roun' his *dy*-fram," Uncle say.—  
"But Pa he'd ort a-seen the way  
*Santy* bear up last night when that-  
Air fire break out, an' quicker'n *scat*  
He's all a-blazin', an' them-'air  
Gun-cotton whiskers that he wear  
Ist *flashin'*!—till I burn a hole  
In the snow with him, and he roll  
The front-yard dry as Chris'mus jokes  
Old parents plays on little folks!  
But, long's a smell o' tow er wool,  
I kep' him rollin' *beautiful!*—



Till I wuz *shore* I *shorely* see  
He's *squenched*! W'y, hadn't b'en fer *me*,  
That old man might a-burnt clear down  
Clean—plum'—level with the groun'!"

Nen Ma say, "*There*, Sid; that'll do!—  
Breakfast is ready—*Chris'mus*, too.—  
Your voice 'ud soun' best, sayin' *Grace*—  
Say it." An' Uncle bow' his face  
An' say so long a *Blessing* nen,  
Trip bark' *two* times 'fore it's "A-men!"





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