

CHRISTMAS CLASSICS



THOMAS NELSON PAGE

A CAPTURED  
SANTA  
CLAUS

# **A Captured Santa Claus**

**Thomas Nelson Page**

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*Cover Design: @mei - Fotolia.com*

*Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck  
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9  
Deutschland*

*ISBN: 9783849647568*

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## **A Captured Santa Claus**

### **I - Christmas At Holly Hill**

Holly Hill was a place for Christmas! Holly Hill, the old rambling Stratford homestead in Virginia, on its high hill, looking down the long slope and across the wide fields to the far woods rimming the sky. From Bob, the veteran, within a month of his teens, down to brown-eyed Evelyn, with her golden hair floating all around her, when Christmas came everyone hung up a stocking, and the visit of Santa Claus was the event of the year.

They went to sleep the night before Christmas—or rather they went to bed, for sleep was long far from their bright eyes—with delightful expectations and thrills along their backs, and with little squeakings and gurglings, like so many little white mice, and if Santa Claus had not always been so very prompt in disappearing up the chimney before daybreak he must certainly have been caught. For by the time the chickens were crowing in the morning there would be an answering twitter through the house, and with a patter of little feet and subdued laughter small, white-clad figures would steal through the dim light of dusky rooms

and cold passages, opening doors with sudden bursts, and shouting "Christmas gift!" into darkened chambers, at still sleeping elders. Then they would scurry away in the gray light to rake open the hickory embers and revel in the exploration of their bulging, overcrowded stockings. Not Columbus was to be envied when those discoveries were being made. What was a new world to those treasures! The thrill of the new jack-knife remains after forty years—it had four blades, each worth a province. Envy Columbus? Perish the thought!

Such was Christmas morning at Holly Hill in the old times before the war—those times of Memory and Romance.

Thus it was that at Christmas, 1863, when the blockading lines were drawn close and there were no new toys to be had for love or money, there were much disappointment and some murmurs at Holly Hill. The children had never really felt the war until then, though their father, Major Stafford, had been off, first with his company and then with his regiment, since April, 1861. War was on the whole a pleasant experience to the boys—so many strangers came by. Battles were so interesting, and there was a bare chance of their seeing one, in which Bob was to lead a charge and capture the commanding General.

But when Christmas came and there were no presents, no "real" presents, war was realized. It was a terrible thing. From Mrs. Stafford down to little tot Evelyn there was an absence of the merriment which Christmas always brought with it. The children's mother had done all she could to collect such presents as were within her reach, but the youngsters were much too sharp not to know that the presents were "just fixed up"; and when they were all gathered around the fire in their mother's chamber that