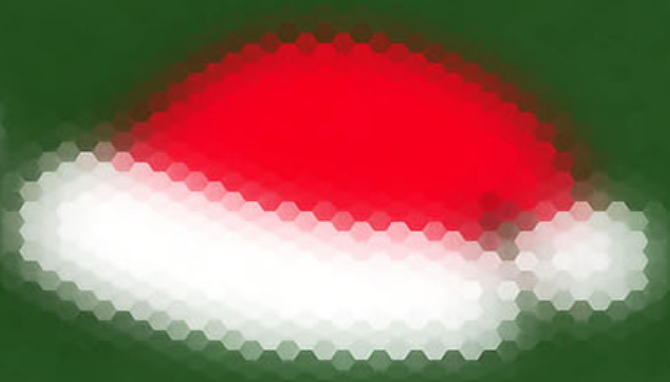


**THOMAS NELSON PAGE**



# **SANTA CLAUS'S PARTNER**

**MUSAICUM CHRISTMAS SPECIALS**

**Thomas Nelson Page**

# **Santa Claus's Partner (Musaicum Christmas Specials)**

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## **To My Father**

*who among all the men the writer knew in his youth was the most familiar with books; and who of all the men the writer has ever known has exemplified best the virtue of open-handedness, this little Book is affectionately inscribed by his son,*

THE AUTHOR

# Chapter I

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Berryman Livingstone was a successful man, a very successful man, and as he sat in his cushioned chair in his inner private office (in the best office-building in the city) on a particularly snowy evening in December, he looked it every inch. It spoke in every line of his clean-cut, self-contained face, with its straight, thin nose, closely drawn mouth, strong chin and clear gray eyes; in every movement of his erect, trim, well-groomed figure; in every detail of his faultless attire; in every tone of his assured, assertive, incisive speech. As some one said of him, he always looked as if he had just been ironed.

He used to be spoken of as "a man of parts;" now he was spoken of as "a man of wealth—a capitalist."

Not that he was as successful as he intended to be; but the way was all clear and shining before him now. It was now simply a matter of time. He could no more help going on to further heights of success than his "gilt-edged" securities, stored in thick parcels in his safe-deposit boxes, could help bearing interest.

He contemplated the situation this snowy evening with a deep serenity that brought a transient gleam of light to his somewhat cold face.

He knew he was successful by the silent envy with which his acquaintances regarded him; by the respect with which he was treated and his opinion was received at the different Boards, of which he was now an influential member, by men

who fifteen years ago hardly knew of his existence. He knew it by the numbers of invitations to the most fashionable houses which crowded his library table; by the familiar and jovial air with which presidents and magnates of big corporations, who could on a moment's notice change from warmth—temperate warmth—to ice, greeted him; and by the cajoling speeches with which fashionable mammas with unmarried daughters of a certain or uncertain age rallied him about his big, empty house on a fashionable street, and his handsome dinners, where only one thing was wanting—the thing they had in mind.

Berryman Livingstone had, however, much better proof of success than the mere plaudits of the world. Many men had these who had no real foundation for their display. For instance, "Meteor" Broome the broker, had just taken the big house on the corner above him, and had filled his stable with high-stepping, high-priced horses—much talked of in the public prints—and his wife wore jewels as handsome as Mrs. Parke-Rhode's who owned the house and twenty more like it. Colonel Keightly was one of the largest dealers on 'Change this year and was advertised in all the papers as having made a cool million and a half in a single venture out West. Van Diver was always spoken of as the "Grain King," "Mining King," or some other kind of Royalty, because of his infallible success, and Midan touch.

But though these and many more like them were said to have made in a year or two more than Livingstone with all his pains had been able to accumulate in a score of years of earnest toil and assiduous devotion to business; were now invited to the same big houses that Livingstone visited, and

were greeted by almost as flattering speeches as Livingstone received, Livingstone knew of discussions as to these men at Boards other than the "festal board," and of "stiffer" notes that had been sent them than those stiff and sealed missives which were left at their front doors by liveried footmen.

Livingstone, however, though he "kept out of the papers," having a rooted and growing prejudice against this form of vulgarity, could at any time, on five minutes' notice, establish the solidity of his foundation by simply unlocking his safe-deposit boxes. His foundation was as solid as gold.

On the mahogany table-desk before him lay now a couple of books: one a long, ledger-like folio in the russet covering sacred to the binding of that particular kind of work which a summer-hearted Writer of books years ago inscribed as "a book of great interest;" the other, a smaller volume, a memorandum book, more richly attired than its sober companion, in Russia leather.

For an hour or two Mr. Livingstone, with closely-drawn, thin lips, and eager eyes, had sat in his seat, silent, immersed, absorbed, and compared the two volumes, from time to time making memoranda in the smaller book, whilst his clerks had sat on their high stools in the large office outside looking impatiently at the white-faced clock on the wall as it slowly marked the passing time, or gazing enviously and grumblingly out of the windows at the dark, hurrying crowds below making their way homeward through the falling snow.

The young men could not have stood it but for the imperturbable patience and sweet temper of the oldest man

in the office, a quiet-faced, middle-aged man, who, in a low, cheery, pleasant voice, restrained their impatience and soothed their ruffled spirits.

Even this, however, was only partially successful.

"Go in there, Mr. Clark, and tell him we want to go home," urged fretfully one youth, a tentative dandy, with a sharp nose and blunt chin, who had been diligently arranging his vivid necktie for more than a half-hour at a little mirror on the wall.

"Oh! He'll be out directly now," replied the older man, looking up from the account-book before him.

"You've been saying that for three hours!" complained the other.

"Well, see if it doesn't come true this time," said the older clerk, kindly. "He'll make it up to you."

This view of the case did not seem to appeal very strongly to the young man; he simply grunted.

"I'm going to give him notice. I'll not be put upon this way—" bristled a yet younger clerk, stepping down from his high stool in a corner and squaring his shoulders with martial manifestations.

This unexpected interposition appeared to be the outlet the older grumbler wanted.

"Yes, you will!" he sneered with disdain, turning his eyes on his junior derisively. He could at least bully Sipkins.

For response, the youngster walked with a firm tread straight up to the door of the private office; put out his hand so quickly that the other's eyes opened wide; then turned so suddenly as to catch his derider's look of wonder; stuck out



his tongue in triumph at the success of his ruse, and walked on to the window.

"He'll be through directly, see if he is not," reiterated the senior clerk with kindly intonation. "Don't make a noise, there's a good fellow;" and once more John Clark, the dean of the office, guilefully buried himself in his columns.

"He must be writing his love-letters. Go in there, Hartley, and help him out. You're an adept at that," hazarded the youngster at the window to the dapper youth at the mirror.

There was a subdued explosion from all the others but Clark, after which, as if relieved by this escape of steam, the young men quieted down, and once more applied themselves to looking moodily out of the windows, whilst the older clerk gave a secret peep at his watch, and then, after another glance at the closed door of the private office, went back once more to his work.

Meantime, within his closed sanctum Livingstone still sat with intent gaze, poring over the page of figures before him. The expression on his face was one of profound satisfaction. He had at last reached the acme of his ambition—that is, of his later ambition. (He had once had other aims.) He had arrived at the point towards which he had been straining for the last eight—ten—fifteen years—he did not try to remember just how long—it had been a good while. He had at length accumulated, "on the most conservative estimate" (he framed the phrase in his mind, following the habit of his Boards)—he had no need to look now at the page before him: the seven figures that formed the balance, as he thought of them, suddenly appeared before him in facsimile. He had been gazing at them so steadily that now even when

he shut his eyes he could see them clearly. It gave him a little glow about his heart;—it was quite convenient: he could always see them.

It was a great sum. He had attained his ambition.

Last year when he balanced his books at the close of the year, he had been worth only—a sum expressed in six figures, even when he put his securities at their full value. Now it could only be written in seven figures, "on the most conservative estimate."

Yes, he had reached the top. He could walk up the street now and look any man in the face, or turn his back on him, just as he chose. The thought pleased him.

Years ago, a friend—an old friend of his youth, Harry Trelane, had asked him to come down to the country to visit him and meet his children and see the peach trees bloom. He had pleaded business, and his friend had asked him gravely why he kept on working so hard when he was already so well off. He wanted to be rich, he had replied.

"But you are already rich—you must be worth half a million? and you are a single man, with no children to leave it to."

"Yes, but I mean to be worth double that."

"Why?"

"Oh!—so that I can tell any man I choose to go to the d—I," he had said half jestingly, being rather put to it by his friend's earnestness. His friend had laughed too, he remembered, but not heartily.

"Well, that is not much of a satisfaction after all," he had said; "the real satisfaction is in helping him the other