Yes Virginia

Back in 1897, little Virginia O'Hanlon wrote the following letter to the editor of the New York Sun: "I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun it's so.' Please tell me the truth—is there a Santa Claus?" The editor wrote a newspaper and literary classic in reply to this childish plea. It is reprinted here:

"Yes, indeed!

"Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age—they do not believe except what they see—they think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

"All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little.

"In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

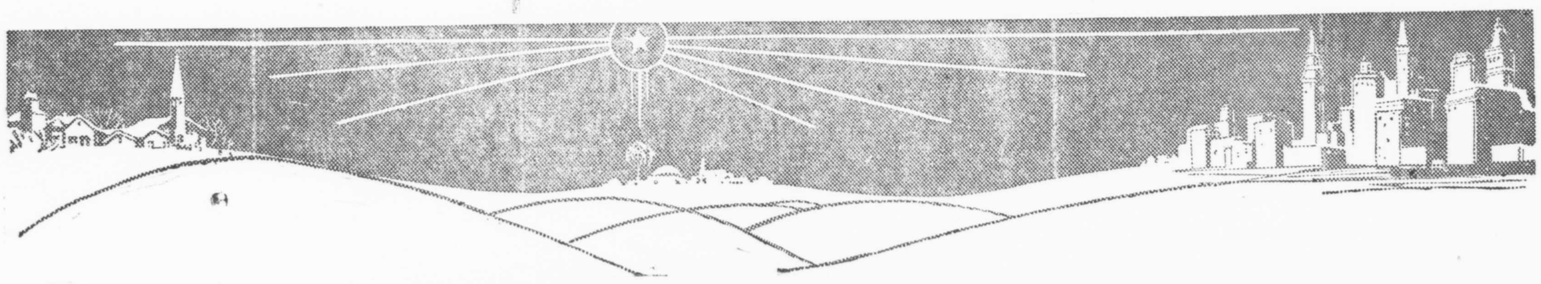
"He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

"Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies!

"You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus—the most real things in the world are those neither children nor men can see.

"Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there—nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

"You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, or even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside the curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond.

"Is it all real?—ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

"No Santa Claus! Thank God! —he lives, and he lives forever—a thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."