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We know
books



J.R.R. Tolkien

Letters From Father Christmas

Edited by Baillie Tolkien



HarperCollins *Publishers*

Introduction

TO THE CHILDREN of J. R. R. Tolkien, the interest and importance of Father Christmas extended beyond his filling of their stockings on Christmas Eve; for he wrote a letter to them every year, in which he described in words and pictures his house, his friends, and the events, hilarious or alarming, at the North Pole.

The first of the letters appeared in 1920, when John, the eldest, was three years old; and for over twenty years, through the childhoods of the three other children, Michael, Christopher and Priscilla, they continued to arrive each Christmas. Sometimes the envelopes, dusted with snow and bearing Polar postage stamps, were found in the house on the morning after his visit. Sometimes the postman brought them, and the letters that the children wrote themselves vanished from the fireplace when no one was about.

As time went on, Father Christmas' household became larger, and whereas at first little is heard of anyone else except the North Polar Bear, later on there appear Snow-elves, Red Gnomes, Snow-men, Cave-bears, and the Polar Bear's nephews, Paksu and Valkotukka, who came on a visit and never went away. But the Polar Bear remained Father Christmas' chief assistant, and the chief cause of the

disasters that led to muddles and deficiencies in the Christmas stockings; and sometimes he wrote on the letters his comments in angular capitals, using a thick pen because he had a fat paw.

Eventually Father Christmas took on as his secretary an Elf named Ilbereth, and in the later letters Elves play an important part in the defence of Father Christmas' house and store-cellars against attacks by Goblins. These attacks would often explain why it had not been possible to fill the children's stockings with what they had wished for, instead being replaced by substitutes.

In this new edition of the book is presented every example of Father Christmas' shaky handwriting, in his letters and on the stamped envelopes which carried them, and all the pictures that he sent are here reproduced. Also included is the alphabet that the Polar Bear devised from the Goblin drawings on the walls of the caves where he was lost, and the letter that he sent to the children written in it.

The continued popularity of Letters from Father Christmas shows that the book has found an enthusiastic audience among readers young and old. Many families have even incorporated it into their family Christmases – reading one letter on each day leading up to Christmas Eve – so it seems certain that the magic of Christmas will go on for ever.

FROM FATHER • CHRISTMAS



Christmas House
NORTH POLE



1920

LOVE to
Daddy, mummy
Michael & Auntie
& Mary

Dear John,

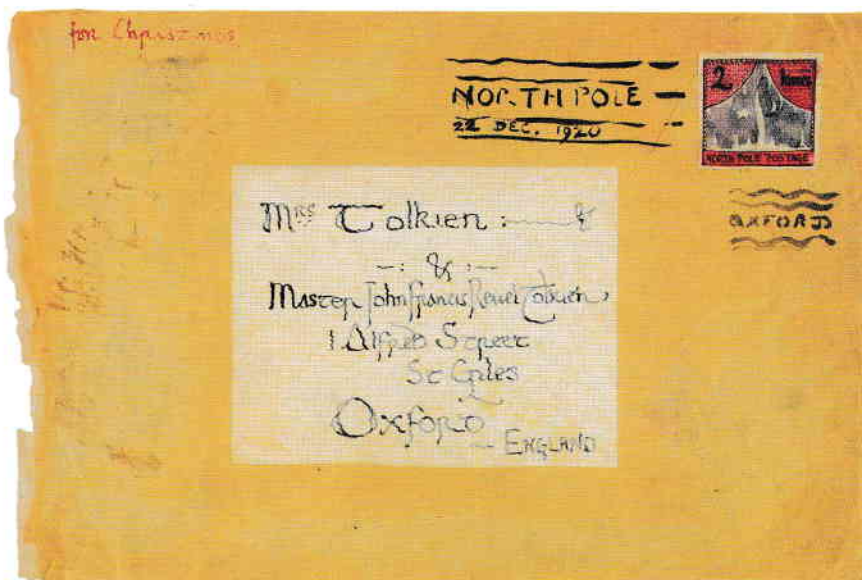
I heard you ask Daddy
what I was like & where
I lived. I have drawn
ME & My House for you.
Take care of the picture.
I am just off now for
Oxford with my bundle
of toys - some for you.
Hope I shall arrive in
time: the snow is very
thick at the NORTH POLE
tonight: Yr loving Fr. Chr.



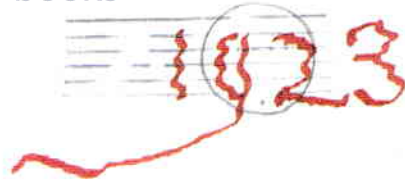
Christmas House,
North Pole
22nd December 1920

Dear John

I heard you ask daddy what I was like and where I lived.
I have drawn Me and My House for you. Take care of the
picture. I am just off now for Oxford with my bundle of
toys – some for you. Hope I shall arrive in time: the snow
is very thick at the North Pole tonight. Your loving
Father Christmas







North Pole

Christmas Eve: 1923

My dear John,

It is very cold today and my hand is very shaky – I am nineteen hundred and twenty four, no! seven! years old on Christmas Day, – lots older than your great-grandfather, so I can't stop the pen wobbling, but I hear that you are getting so good at reading that I expect you will be able to read my letter.

I send you lots of love (and lots for Michael too) and Lotts Bricks too (which are called that because there are lots more for you to have next year if you let me know in good time). I think they are prettier and stronger and tidier than Picabrix. So I hope you will like them.


Now I must go; it is a lovely fine night and I have got hundreds of miles to go before morning – there is such a lot to do.

A cold kiss from
Father Nicholas Christmas

Christmas Eve : 1923
3408
Northole

My dear John

It is very cold to day and
my hand is very shaky and
I am nineteen hundred and twenty
~~four~~ ^{no! seven!} years old on Christmas day,
I'm older than your great-grandfather,
so I can't stop the pen working,
but I hear that you are getting
so good at reading that I expect
you will be able to read my letter

Send you lots of love and lots for
Michael too and Lotts Brickles
(which are called that because there
are lots more for you to have next year
if you let me know in good time)
I think they are prettier and stronger
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Fr. Nicholas Christmas