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Santa Claus

Banjo Paterson

"Halt! Who goes there?" The sentry's call
Rose on the midnight air,
Above the noises of the camp,
The roll of wheels, the horses' tramp —
The challenge echoed over all:
"Halt! Who goes there?"

A quaint old figure clothed in white,
He bore a staff of pine,
An ivy-wreath was on his head.
"Advance, oh friend," the sentry said,
"Advance, for this is Christmas night,
And give the countersign."



"No sign nor countersign have I,
Through many lands I roam,
The whole world over, far and wide,
To exiles all at Christmastide,
From those who love them tenderly
I bring a thought of home.

"From English brook and Scottish burn,
From cold Canadian snows,
From those far lands ye hold most dear

I bring you all a greeting here,
A frond of a New Zealand fern,
A bloom of English rose.

"From faithful wife and loving lass
I bring a wish divine,
For Christmas blessings on your head."
"I wish you well," the sentry said,
"But here, alas! you may not pass
Without the countersign."

He vanished — and the sentry's tramp
Re-echoed down the line.
It was not till the morning light
The soldiers knew that in the night
Old Santa Claus had come to camp
Without the countersign.

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