

CHRISTMAS IN THE EMERALD ISLE.

Written for the Review,

By HON. P. E. C. LALLY.

Christmas in Ireland is in a secular sense at least, very like Christmas with ourselves. There is a Kris Kringle feature that is exactly like Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas in this country.

Children know their Kris Kringle comes down the chimney in the same mysterious way that Santa Claus does here, and disappears in the same silent and unaccountable manner.

And so too with the same implicit confidence in good old Kris, as our children have in Santa, in his thoughtful kindness, unequalled generosity and inexhaustible supply of good things, the children in Ireland hang their stockings on the spacious chimney places, feeling that their faith will not be shaken, nor their confidence misplaced, and certainly Kris remembers them with sweets, fruits, toys, nicknacks and things more substantial, too, at times, as the parental purse may have responded in advance to the pressing solicitations of the elder members of the family.

What salvos of praise ascend from ten thousand thousand children's throats to their never failing friend and benefactor, kindly, generous old Kris Kringle. Woe unto the iconoclast who would shatter the faith of those little ones in the existence of their idol.

Christmas trees are not the rule, especially in the country. They are however put up, loaded and picked, in the towns and villages, and Kris invariably shows up with sleigh-bells "from Lapland" to dispense the offerings.

But whether in town or country, the children of the poor and the rich are alike made happy. Everyone is remembered. No one is forgotten.

Oh, to be sure, there are exceptions. There are some who may perchance be evicted—left by the wayside to die that the landlords may have a game preserve; there must be some gloomy realities to bring to the people's mind even at the blessed Christmastide a reminder of the bane of the country, the substance and shadow of alien government. Barring such however, even in a secular way, the Christmas in Ireland is a time of serene and supreme happiness.

In a religious sense Christmas in Ireland is the superlative feast of the year; the chief holiday of the season; the one day in the calendar to which above all others the people look forward with anxiety, desire, solicitude, and impatience, a religious longing for its presence and it is observed, honored and celebrated by the people of that country with a zeal ardent, humble, sincere and inspiring, with a devotion warm as the sunshine and constant as God's love.

The great religious event of the day is the Midnight Mass.

This is said or sung, as circumstances admit, in every church, and it is thrilling to see the honest country folks troop to church in tens, hundreds, yea in thousands, across the country over hill and vale, hearing or seeming to hear the song that ravished the ears of the Shepherds near Bethlehem as "A great multitude of the Heavenly Host" sang to human ears for the first time "Glory be to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will," to see these people en masse approach the sacred tribunal of Penance, and receive the Body and Blood of our dear Lord in the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist from the hands of their beloved Irish Sogarth Aroon is thrilling and inspiring in the extreme.

The religious celebration mentioned refers exclusively to the Catholic portion of the people of that country.

The Episcopalians celebrate the day in a religious manner also, but not with the apparent zeal with which their Catholic compatriots do.

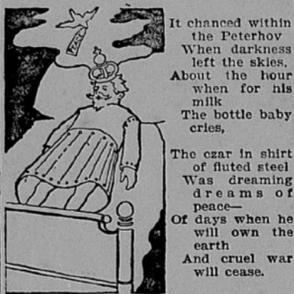
The Nonconformists, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, &c., in Ireland pay, or at least twenty-five years ago in Ireland paid little or no attention to the religious features of the day.

The religious exercises over at about the noon hour, or earlier, the afternoon is by the young men devoted to athletics, hurling, football, running, wrestling, skating, swinging the heavy sledge, the light one, throwing the twenty-five pound shot, putting the fifty-six pound weight, and kindred sports.

All in all the athletic sports on Christmas day assume in Ireland something of the proportion football does with us on Thanksgiving. The participants enter the lists with just as much confidence, strive for success with just as much determination, are coached as industriously, cheered as heartily, as they are here or elsewhere, and are encouraged by relatives, inspired by lovers and hooted by antagonists pretty much as we see here when the occasion is and the spirit moves thereunto.

And so too the evening brings defeat and disaster to the vanquished; joy, satisfaction, congratulation, as well as the plaudits of the multitudes to the victors, while the happy Christmas tide passes away leaving a religious as well as a secular joy to sweeten and sanctify the lives of the people.

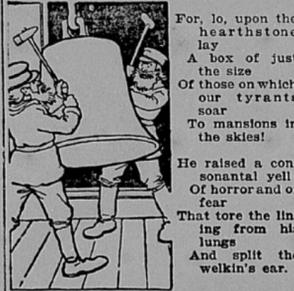
AN XVII DICH AUSKI BY PETER MARTHUR



It chanced with the Peterhov When darkness left the skies. About the hour when for his milk The bottle baby cries, The czar in shirt of fluted steel Was dreaming dreams of peace— Of days when he will own the earth And cruel war will cease.



Great Ivan Akerschooski rose. That chef of high renown, Whose privilege it is to do The royal pan-cakes brown. But when he reached the kitchen range To light the morning fire He saw a sight that made his skin An icy sweat perspire.



For, lo, upon the hearthstone lay A box of just the size Of those on which our tyrants soar To mansions in the skies! He raised a consonantal yell Of horror and of fear That tore the lining from his lungs And split the welkin's ear.



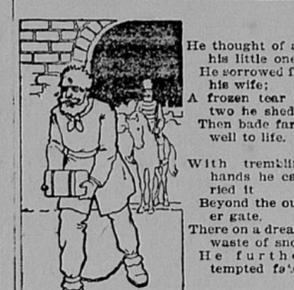
The sentinels and warders came— Oh, where was Davis then? The scene was one that should be shown By his immortal pen. They raced and chased in ballad style (See Percy, Kipling, Scott). They banged the tocsin on the tower. The culverin they shot.



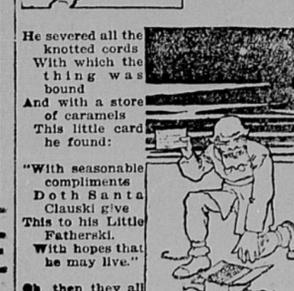
Now Tolstoi great and Turgeneff And Nathan Haskell Dole! Oh, may the saints have pity on Each nihilistic soul! Effsoons Sherlockski Holmesokoff Unearthed an awful clew— The mothers of St. Petersburg Will long that morning rue.



He found within the palace walls A nihilistic plot. Ten men with high explosive names Were on the instant shot. They then brought forth a convict who To death was doomed next day And promised him a pardon if He'd take the thing away.



He thought of all his little ones, He sorrowed for his wife; A frozen tear or two he shed, Then bade farewell to life. With trembling hands he carried it Beyond the outer gate. There on a dreary waste of snow He further tempted fate.



He severed all the knotted cords With which the thing was bound And with a store of caramels This little card he found: "With seasonable compliments Doth Santa Clauski give This to his Little Fatherki. With hopes that he may live." Oh, then they all came offski quick And to themselves they fell— Now, is not this as quaint a tale As ever bard did tell?

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