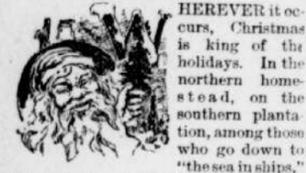


ROYAL KRIS KRINGLE

THE KING WHOSE SCEPTER IS A HOLLY BRANCH.

How St. Nicholas Became the Santa Claus of Today—Christmas as It is Celebrated North and South—An Old Plantation Scene.

[Copyright, 1892.]



HEREVER it occurs, Christmas is king of the holidays. In the northern homestead, on the southern plantation, among those who go down to "the sea in ships,"

and among the people of all civilized lands, it is the one season of the year marked by a reign of hospitality, merriment and open heartedness. It recalls to the old the pleasures of youth, and transports many an absent one back to his own fireside and quiet home.

In the early annals of New York city, when it was Nieu Amsterdam and the sturdy Stuyvesant was commander in chief; when our now crowded Broadway was below Wall street and known only as plain Heere straat; when our business throtted Maiden lane was T'maagde paatje—"The Maiden's Path"—where the red checked Dutch girls went to hang their clothes; when the meat market was on Bowling Green, and the present City Hall park a public pasture outside the city wall, the 24th and 25th of December were dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of the colony. It was his image that constituted the figurehead of the ship that brought the first Dutch emigrants to this shore. It was he who gave his name to the first church within the walls, and whose benisons were most solemnly invoked in the hour of trouble by all Dutchmen on land and sea.

To the Dutch boys and girls St. Nicholas was a jolly, white bearded, little, old man, smoking his long stemmed pipe, and in their fancies driving through the air over town and country, oceans and deserts, sending through space the sharpest of whistles to the wonderful reindeer team that carried the wonderful sleigh. These little Knickerbockers have passed away forever, but the children of today still keep up the devotion of the children of 1650 for St. Nicholas, only they now call him Santa Claus. He is the same friend, the same little, low built, chubby, merry, mysterious ancient who loves children of all ages and all countries.

The manner in which his coming is celebrated differs according to the habits and associations of the people. In the great cities and the country towns, for days and weeks beforehand, the markets and stores, the streets and avenues proclaim the approach of the fete. The whole community abandons itself to foraging expeditions. Baskets and baskets are everywhere—on men's shoulders and in their hands, in wagons and coaches, filling the aisles of street cars and trundling through the highways in wheelbarrows. Women and children, husbands, bachelors and sweethearts struggle beneath their weight. There are gifts for boys and girls, presents for men and women, and heaps of presents for grandfathers and grandmothers. "Old Scrooge" is there, crowding paterfamilias in his endeavor to buy the biggest turkey and make amends for his meanness to his bookkeeper during the year, while materfamilias declares to herself that her Christmas shall be the handsomest among all the neighbors.

Now comes Christmas eve—the fairy time of the little ones. And who shall describe it? The old mantel, with its row of stockings, large and small; the expectant looks of the youngsters as they linger around the fireplace wondering what Santa Claus will bring; the creeping into bed and listening, while the grown folks are making merry over their eggnog and mulled cider, for any sign of the coming of the old gentleman down the chimney; then, when the house is still, the mysterious movements of the happy parents as they produce the Christmas gifts from their hiding places and tie them up in the most provoking knots; the commotion in the house long before dawn when the children bounce from their beds to see what the King has sent them; the chorus of chuckles and gables of delight as they gather around the bedside of the sleepy father and mother and arouse every one in the house to display the liberality of the God of gifts—who shall, who can tell the story of such a happy time?

By and by the bells in the steeples call the good people all to church and chapel, and away they go, flocking through the streets in their best clothes and with their gayest faces. Closed stores and a general cessation from labor give a Sabbath sanctity and reserve to the day out-echo, very different from the Christmas echoes of the night before. A little later we are seated at the Christmas dinner, each one nervously impatient to attack the heaped up viands. The turkeys and geese and chickens that caused such a stuffing of baskets on Christmas eve are set out stuffed in turn upon the tables, and soon after lots of little boys and girls are in the same condition.

The feast ended, other pleasures follow. The old folks gather around the big fireplace to enjoy the outpouring of good feeling and honest interchange of affectionate attachment which abound at this season. The young people betake themselves to the frolics of a sleigh ride, while the children repair perhaps to the neighboring hills and ponds to try the new sleds and skates. This is the Christmas of the average home circle throughout the north and west.

The Christmas of the rich is also a fairyland in which for one day at least nothing save the spirit of Kris Kringle enters the voluptuous heaven with its ornament of gas jets, its carpeted floor, softer than clover, its perfumed air, embroidered curtains and gorgeous Christmas tree, all aglow with light and color, where are gathered a fashionable throng

of old and young awaiting the bestowal of costly gifts.

But in the background of even this pleasant picture is another—the families of the poor, the labyrinths of wretched homes and teeming tenement houses, the prisons and hospitals. They are not forgotten. The rich man has spared from his abundance that the hard pressure of poverty may for the moment be lightened, and charitable hands deal out the stores of good things that make one and all feel as if the spirit of Christmas was indeed the angel of the day bringing the old time message, "Peace on earth and good will to men."

F. G. DE FONTAINE.

Yves Man.



Wife—Is there anything else, dear, that you would like to hang on the Christmas tree?
Husband—Yes. Those triplets.

Christmas in the Land of the Czar.

Throughout the Ukraine, or little Russia, Christmas is observed as a great sacred day. Weeks before Christmas preparations for welcoming the so-called "Christmas kutia" (barley grits) are going on in a peasant's hut. The hut is whitewashed, the floor and polatia (bed of boards) are scrubbed, the holy images, or ikons, on the walls are adorned with coarse linen towels embroidered, and a few crosses, neatly made of straw or hay, are nailed upon the ceiling and wall.

A bench covered with hay is placed at the corner under St. Nicholas' image, upon which rests the pot with the sacred kutia.

The head of the family, after offering prayer and expressing a few wishes before the kutia—such as that the next summer's crop may be abundant, or that general prosperity may crown his home—takes his seat at the head of the table. His example is followed by the rest of the members.

The pot with the kutia is soon placed before them, and after a few more little formalities is devoured with great appetite. After this is done all dress themselves in their best clothes and start out to church.

December.

Oh, happy hearts, list to the chiming bell
Oh, yearning souls, list to their sweet refrain
It is the echo which forever tells
Of "peace on earth" amid its joys and pain.
Wreath the holly berries and pale mistletoe
In garlands for the joyous Christmaside.
The year is buried, and the chastening snow
Falls like a benediction far and wide.
—Clara Lee Puckette in New Orleans Picayune.

A Bad Neighborhood.



Dashaway—Well, Uncle Ebony, what are you going to have for your Christmas dinner?
Uncle Ebony—I-ze givine to have a fat and sassy turkey, sah.

Dashaway—Why, I thought you told me not long ago you didn't expect to have one.
Uncle Ebony—No, sah, I didn't; but I done moved out ob dat neighborhood since den.

A Plea.

Dear Santa Claus, I've got to go
To bed—it's late, you see—
So lie on, please, for you must know
Just what to bring to me.



I want a pair of skates, a knife,
A pony that can trot;
I want a nice big drum and fife,
And all the books you've got.
I want a kite, with miles of string,
And several Christmas trees;
But when you come this year don't bring
Another baby, please.

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In this department we will be glad to publish notices of regular and special services of all the churches in the city. Pastors, or those authorized by them, are invited to furnish information as to any changes for each week, not later than Thursday evening of the week previous.

First Methodist Episcopal Church South, Rev. J. L. Pierce, pastor. Preaching Sabbath 11 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday school, 9:30 a.m. Class meeting, 4:30 p.m. Sunday, and 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Prayer meeting 8 p.m. Thursday.

Methodist Mission, supplied by Rev. L. E. Jackson. Preaching 7:30 p.m. Sunday. Class and prayer meeting Friday, 7:30 p.m. Sunday school 3:00 p.m. Sunday.

First Baptist Church, Rev. W. S. Penick, D. D., pastor. Preaching Sabbath 11 a.m. and 8:15 p.m. Sunday school 9:30 a.m. Prayer meeting Wednesday night 8:15. Ladies' Mission Society meets at 5 p.m. first Sunday in each month.

Allendale Baptist Mission, Rev. W. S. Penick, pastor. services 8 p.m. Sunday school 4 p.m. Prayer meeting Thursday night at 8 o'clock.

Holmesville Baptist Mission, Rev. W. S. Penick, pastor. Sunday school 4 p.m. Prayer meeting Tuesday night at 8 o'clock.

Presbyterian Church—Pastor, Rev. M. VanLear, D. D. Services: Sunday school, 9:30 a. m. Preaching, 11 a. m. Prayer meeting, Wednesday, 7:30 p. m.

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