

## 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.



HEREVER it occurs, Christmas is king of the holidays. In the northern hemisphere, 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 thronged Maiden lane was T'maagdie 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 benedictions 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. Bundles 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 Scroggie" 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 outside, 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.

oner's couch, the hand that shaded the lamp touched him on the shoulder, and a sweet and silvery voice—a woman's voice—asked him, "Do you want eat?" The young Pole, awakened suddenly by the glare of the lamp, by the touch and words of the female, rose up on his couch and with eyes only half opened said in German, "What do you want?" "Give the man something to eat at once," said Castanos, when he heard the result of the first experiment, "and let him go. He is not a Frenchman. How could he have been so far master of himself? The thing is impossible."

But though Leckinski was supplied with food he was detained a prisoner. The next morning he was taken to a spot where he could see the mutilated corpse of the Frenchman, who had been cruelly massacred by the peasantry of Truxillo, and he was threatened with the same death. But the noble youth had promised not to fail, and not a word, not an accent, not a gesture or look betrayed him.

Leckinski, when taken back to his prison, hailed it with a sort of joy. For twelve hours he had had nothing but gibbets and death in his most horrid forms before his eyes—exhibited to him by men with the looks and the passions of demons. He slept, however, after the harassing excitement of the day, and soundly, too, when in the midst of his deep and deathlike slumbers the door opened gently, some one drew near his couch, and the same voice whispered in his ear:

"Arise and come with me. We wish to save your life. Your horse is ready." And the brave young man, hastily awakened by the words, "We wish to save your life; come," answered still in German, "What do you want?" Castanos, when he heard of this experiment and its result, said the Russian was a noble young man; he saw the true state of the case.

The next morning early four men came to take him before a sort of court martial, composed of officers of Castanos' staff. During the walk they uttered the most horrible threats against him, but true to his determination he pretended not to understand them.

When he came before his judges he seemed to gather what was going on from the arrangements of the tribunal and not from what he heard said around him, and he asked in German where his interpreter was? He was sent for, and the examination commenced.

It turned at first upon the motive of his journey from Madrid to Lisbon. He answered by showing his dispatches to Admiral Siniavin and his passport. Spite of the presence and the vehement assertions of the peasant, he persisted in the same story and did not contradict himself once.

"Ask him," said the presiding officer at last, "if he loves the Spaniards, as he is not a Frenchman?" "Certainly," said Leckinski, "I like the Spanish nation, and I esteem it for its noble character. I wish our two nations were friends."

"Colonel," said the interpreter to the president, "the prisoner says that he hates us because we make war like banditti; that he despises us, and that his only regret is that he cannot unite the whole nation in one man, to end this odious war at a single blow."

While he was saying this, the eyes of the whole tribunal were attentively watching the slightest movement of the prisoner's countenance, in order to see what effect the interpreter's treachery would have upon him. But Leckinski had expected to be put to the test in some way, and was determined to baffle all their attempts.

"Gentlemen," said Castanos, "it seems to me that this young man cannot be suspected; the peasant must be deceived. The prisoner may pursue his journey, and when he reflects, on the hazard of our position he will find the severity we have been obliged to use excusable." Leckinski's arms and dispatches were returned, he received a free pass, and thus this noble youth came victorious out of the severest trial that the human spirit can be put to.—H. K. in New York News.

**Peccolities of Nervous Women.**  
Says a physician who is a specialist in nervous diseases: "The vagaries of nervous women would fill a volume. I have, however, a profound respect for their sincerity and a deep sympathy with their victims. One of my patients, a fine looking woman, with a splendid physique, is reduced to a condition bordering on insanity by a high wind. If she is out in it her misery is heightened. She says she has a dazed, confused feeling that amounts to bewilderment, and she feels as if any moment she would lose her hold on reason and sense." "Another of my patients cannot endure to hear toast crunched between the teeth of another person. She can eat it herself, but has to leave the table if another does, so great is her distress. In other respects she is a woman of strong character. It would be interesting to trace the origin of such apparently causeless conditions."—New York Times.

**The Zither.**  
The zither is a stringed instrument which has not as yet a very great following in New York. It has the sweetness of the guitar and mandolin, with the depth and richness of the harp. In the hands of an expert performer, who thoroughly understands the scope of the instrument, no music can be more delicious. It is somewhat difficult to learn, is played with both hands, a shield being worn on the thumb of the right hand, and has from thirty-one to forty-four strings.—New York Press.

**Fine Clothes.**  
"The soil of California is so fruitful," said a native of the Golden State, "that a man who accidentally dropped a box of matches in his field discovered the next year a fine forest of telegraph poles." "That's nothing to my state," said a native of Illinois. "A cousin of mine who lives there lost a button off his jacket and in less than a month he found a brand new suit of clothes hanging on a fence near the spot."—Texas Sittings.

ACCORDING to statistics recently published by the census bureau the proportion of owned farms in Iowa is 70.43 per cent. Among every one hundred families, thirty-three farms are owned free of encumbrance, and thirty-seven are mortgaged, while thirty families hire the farms.

PAUL BOYNTON has sailed for Europe. He has been in New York City for three weeks arranging matters so that he may become the worthy successor of Buffalo Bill as a novel showman. He has leased Buffalo Bill's old quarters in Earl's court, and next May will begin an exhibition called the World's Water show. He proposes to represent all the big rivers of America, from the Mississippi down, and to exhibit every kind of boat afloat from an Indian canoe up. He will give a parade on the Thames with a hundred men and women walking on water shoes, playing ball as they float up and down the river. He will bring from America Indians for the canoes and whole families of niggers with the flat bottomed boats of the southern bayous. He will give old fashioned clam bakes on the grounds, something never heard of on this side of the ocean and will introduce every form of aquatic sport known.

THE Arab's proverb about letting a camel put his nose through the tent door to warm it, is illustrated by the Woman's Annex at Harvard. That venerable institution has at least been forced to admit the ludicrousness of the "Annex" and as it dares not turn the young women out it has concluded to let them entirely in on the same basis as the male undergraduates. This is eminently sensible. But the tout ensemble of the affair is marred by the rumor that the condition of letting these women in is \$250,000, which they have undertaken to raise for the endowing still further that insatiable university. Of course that would be bribery and corruption anywhere outside the suburbs of Boston.—Journal.

THE suggestions that the interstate commerce law has wholly abolished instead of amended, and that a new start be taken from the bottom is not a bad one. If the recent decision of Judge Gresham is to be regarded as a final termination that commission has no judicial functions and cannot invoke the power of the courts to enforce its extra-judicial functions, then it is evident that a court with special jurisdiction in such matters and comprising a part of the judicial branch of the government, is the thing that is needed to restrict railroad combination and extortion. With effective and judicious laws regarding transportation and a court fully empowered to enforce such laws the interest of the people would find protection. The public is thoroughly tired of fruitless efforts to enforce the present law and would like to see a new deal all around.—Bee.

On beginning its career the oyster is so small that two million oysters would only occupy a square inch. In six months each individual oyster is large enough to cover a nickel and in twelve months a quarter. The oyster is its own architect and the shell grows as the fish inside grows, being never to small. It also bears its age upon its back, for on its shell are successive layers overlapping one another, technically termed "shots" and each one marks a year's growth. By counting them the age of the oyster can be determined. Up to the time of its maturity—that is when four years of age—the shots are regular and successive; but after that time they become irregular and are piled one upon another, so that the shell becomes bulky and thickened. Fossil oysters have been seen of which each shell was nine inches thick, whence they may be judged to be 900 years old. One to two million oysters are produced from a single parent and their scarcity is accounted for by the fact that man is not the only oyster eating animal. The starfish loves the oyster and preys upon it unceasingly. A variety of whelk is also very fond of young oysters, to get at which it bores right through the shell and sucks the fish up through the hole thus made.

PROF. W. E. ANDREWS, who made such a gallant and brilliant fight in the congressional race of the Sixth district, has received and accepted the position of private secretary at the hands of Governor-elect Crouse. Prof. Andrews is one of the rising republicans of Nebraska, and Judge Crouse is to be congratulated on his first appointment.—Bee.

THE city of Lincoln is well pleased to act as host to the Nebraska State Teacher's association, which began its annual session at the University Tuesday evening. Everything that we have is at the disposal of this useful and flourishing organization. Our educational institutions especially have open doors and a warm welcome for the visitors. The Journal wishes them a pleasant meeting on the social side, and a profitable session in all that makes for the strengthening and upbuilding of the educational interests of the state.—Journal.

WHETHER President Harrison intends, like his predecessor, to embody the results of his experience in an extension of the civil service rules before he goes out of office is not yet apparent, but the outcry of the democratic press sounds as if there may be a probability of it. Why not? If civil service is good for one set of government employes who knows but it may be just as good for another set. There is nothing like going ahead when you have a good thing Grover extended it to the railway postal clerks just before he passed off the stage four years ago, and the president is thinking extending it to fourth class postmasters. There are only 80,000 of them, and it is a tolerable safe experiment when the service has been put in such excellent conditions by Mr. Wanamaker.—Journal.

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