

just as he reached his office door he met a man coming away, with a paper in his hand. It was a messenger from the bank, with a notice of a note of Mr. Bascom's, payable on the 26th of December.

"Oh yes, to-morrow," said Bascom.

"Oh no, to-day!" said the man.

It took a good while, and much argument and proof, to convince old Bascom of his mistake. He had just time to get to the bank and pay his note. Then he rushed home and interviewed the servant; and finally he was satisfied that he must have slept all through Christmas Day.

"It's an outrage!" he said, as he reflected how much money he had thrown away under a delusion. "Here I have wasted a day and spent hundreds of dollars, because I thought it was Christmas; when all the time it was the day after!"

"Didn't you have a good time?" asked the servant, timidly.

"Yes," replied Bascom; "I did have a good time. Haven't had such a good time since I can remember! But it was all a mistake, don't you see?"

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Bascom," said the servant, "if you had a good time, I don't think it was a mistake."

"According to that, I might have a good time every day of the year!" snorted old Bascom.

"Yes," said the servant, "every day of the year."

"Humph!" said old Bascom, "that's a proposition I must take time to consider. But there is something in it."

The Chief of the City

By Katharine Pearson Woods

Many hundred years ago there stood in a certain country a very strange city. In one quarter of it were the palaces of the rich, built of rare and beautiful marbles, with wide flights of white steps leading up to the stately entrances, richly decorated with carving, statuary, and golden tracery. The windows were filled with painted glass, on which were depicted the brave deeds of kings and nobles; and through these the many-colored radiance fell upon gallant knights in glittering armor, and on fair and lovely ladies in robes of silk, velvet, and gold embroidery, with rubies, pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones shining on neck and arm, and long transparent veils floating over their beautiful shoulders; there were also esquires and waiting-women to attend upon these, prancing steeds to carry them, noble hounds to come at their whistle, and hawks for their wrists, hooded with velvet, with silver bells upon their sharply taloned feet. Even the little pages who brought them the red wine in golden goblets were themselves the sons of princes and nobles, and some day would be kings and chiefs in their turn. Everything was as splendid as possible.

But in the lower quarter of the city things were quite otherwise. Here the houses were of wood, old and worm-eaten, or perhaps mere mud huts, with no window, and only a little low opening left for a door. The people here, so far from being dressed in silk and velvet, had scarcely rags to cover them; and as for golden goblets and dishes of silver, they had very little food of any kind, and were glad, when they obtained some, to eat it off the very stones of the pavement, so hungry were they. Yes, they were very poor, and sometimes very wicked, for the wild, desperate-looking men, with shaggy, unkempt hair, and faces unshaven, would sometimes lie in wait for a golden-spurred knight, or a well-fed burgher with his golden chain across his breast, and hold him to ransom for gold, with which they could keep their wives and babies a little longer from starving. As for the poor mothers, with their puny, pinched infants at their withered bosoms, they did nothing worse, when they met the lovely ladies, with their handsome cavaliers at their bridle-rein, than to hold out their thin hands appealingly for alms; but this was enough to take away the appetites of the ladies for their dinners; and, instead of sending the meal to the poor mother, as you would think would be natural, they were apt to clap her into prison

for disturbing them and spoiling their ride. So you can judge for yourself who was wicked, and why. You have doubtless found out long ago that the dreadful thing about this city was that the people did not love each other. If some were rich and happy, the others envied and tried to injure them; and if the rest were poor and miserable, nobody cared.

Nobody cared? I talk too fast; somebody did care, for there was always Christopher. And Christopher was the king's son.

He had cried, when he was a tiny chap in frocks and silken ribbons, over the misery he saw around him, and when he was a man he tried so hard to set things right that the courtiers thought him crazy. But there were no asylums then in which insane people could be taken care of, any more than there were hospitals for them when they were ill; for, as I tell you, nobody cared. And this, for a person like Christopher, who was no more crazy than you or I, happened to be not a bad thing; for, instead of shutting him up, they only turned him out of the Court; so he went to live in an old ruined palace that had once been the king's, and earned his living by making shoes. There were very few shoemakers in those days, and Christopher soon became a particularly good one; and as he charged only the rich, and gave his work to the poor for nothing, you can imagine that he did not lack employment. The old palace in which he lived had long been the abode of the poor, and was in a very bad condition; the marble steps had great wide cracks in them, the golden tracery on the walls had been scraped off and sold, the stained glass of the windows had been broken and its place supplied by foul and tattered garments; all the carved work had been so maltreated that there was not a single figure in the entablature or a statue in the paved court but lacked a limb, a nose, or an eye.

Christopher lived in a little room over the archway by which one entered the courtyard. A narrow stairway, which had been once protected by a balustrade of solid gold, gave access to this room from the court; and its one large window looked out upon the street. The balustrade had been broken away, and there remained only a few of the pillars of marble which had once supported it; if Christopher had not been very careful he might have fallen between them when he came home of a dark night, after carrying his finished work about the city. It seemed a hard life and a poor one, for a person who had once been a king's son; but the people would not change and Christopher could not, and so it went on until years had passed and Christopher's father and brothers had passed away with them. He was an old man now, with a long white beard flowing down over his cobbler's leather apron, and most people had forgotten that he had ever been a king's son. Even Christopher himself very seldom remembered it. But that was because there was no one who thought less frequently of Christopher than Christopher himself.

One cold winter's night he sat in his little room working busily, for it was the eve of the blessed Christmas, and, if no one else in the city kept that feast, Christopher was resolved to have a gift for each one that he knew, rich and poor, beginning with the king himself. He was very happy, and the little room was as clean as wax, the furniture polished until it shone again. The old window, high up in the wall, he had filled with fragments of painted glass, which he had found lying on the staircase or in corners of the courtyard; they did not match very well, to be sure, but when the sun shone they filled the little room with all sorts of colored lights and queer figures; Christopher said they were better than company for him.

Now, while he worked and smiled and loved every one, of a sudden there came a knock at his door; neither a bold knock nor a timid one, this; but firm and gentle, as of one who had a right to enter, and low down on the door, as if from the hand of a child. And, indeed, a Child it was who stood in the doorway when Christopher had said, "Come in;" a Child in a soft white robe, with bare feet, large, loving, wistful blue eyes, and golden hair floating over his shoulders. Such wonderful hair! for of a sudden, behind him, the sunset, long since departed, flashed into

unearthly radiance, while the painted window glowed like a rainbow, and filled the room with a glory that cannot be told.

The Child looked at Christopher, and his eyes were deep and true. "Dear Christopher," he said, "desire of me now a Christmas gift."

Christopher did not hesitate; he was poor and hungry, for he had spent his last penny in leather for the shoes which he meant to give away; as for a gift for himself or a Christmas dinner, he had not even thought of them. "Oh!" he cried, "that my people might love one another!"

The Child smiled, as children will when they know something too good to tell, and, crossing the floor as lightly as a dream, he sat down beside the shoemaker and took from his hands the shoes he was making for the King. And, how I cannot tell, there grew under the tiny fingers, as he worked with Christopher's tools, a pair of shoes that seemed formed of living light. And upon one of these were written in diamonds, "For the Chief of the City," and on the other, "For him that doth serve."

And when they were finished, the Child said, "Because thou hast toiled faithfully, dear Christopher, through many years, and there is much against thee, therefore I have come to thy help. Let us bear these to the Chief of the City, that he may learn that to be indeed chief he needs must love most and serve most."

And so they went together down the broken marble steps, the Child in his pure white robe and his floating golden hair, and Christopher in his leathern apron; and the sun rose and shone through the great arched window, and filled the room with the strangely beautiful forms, lest it should be empty during Christopher's absence; and it was Christmas Day.

The King sat on his throne in the midst of his palace, for he, too, was keeping his Christmas in his own way. On one side of the throne stood the First Lord of the Wardrobe, with ten new royal robes and twelve suits of armor, from which the King was to choose his apparel for the banquet; on the other side, the Head Cook had brought the bill of fare for the day, as long though not as fat as himself, for his Majesty's approval. And, just entering the door, the Royal Physicker might be seen, his great horn spectacles perched on his learned nose, and his crimson velvet train borne by two little black boys, while a third bore on a golden salver a crystal flagon of tonic for the royal appetite. All around were knights and nobles, lords and ladies, bearing each a Christmas gift for this monarch, who believed that to be Chief of a City meant, not to serve, but to be served by all that were therein.

When Christopher and the Child came into the audience-chamber, a great hush fell on the motley assembly. It was not because of the Shoes of Light which Christopher carried on a fragment of crimson-painted glass, for these scarce any one looked at, except it were the First Lord of the Wardrobe; and certainly Christopher, in his snow-white beard and his cobbler's apron, was not a figure to awe or silence any one. The courtiers drew together, and the ladies held each other's hands, or leaned on each other's shoulders, weeping; then a gentle stir passed through the room, as when the south wind sweeps over a field of bending wheat; arms were outstretched, and every face wore a smile; for, as you know very well (oh! very well do you know it!), wherever a Child comes, there enters also Love.

The King, however, seemed not at first to notice the Child, all his attention being fixed upon the Shoes of Light. "Welcome, my Christopher," he cried in glee; "this time thou hast outdone thyself; we shall indeed be royally shod; now what reward dost thou desire for this thy Christmas gift?"

"Only your Majesty's permission," said Christopher, kneeling, "to endue your royal feet with the shoes at this moment."

"It is thine, my Christopher," said the King. So there sat the monarch, and there knelt Christopher; and neither of them remembered that Christopher was also a king's son; one because he never thought of himself, and the

other because he never thought of any one else. Then Christopher said, lovingly: "But, indeed, dear King, the Shoes of Light, which we call also the shoes of Loving Service, are not my work, but that of the Child."

To this the King made no reply, but, while the change was made in his foot-gear, he sat and looked steadfastly into the beautiful, wistful eyes of the Child. And when the shoes were on, he held out his arms, and the Child came gladly, and nestled in his bosom, while a strange, wonderful light shone round them from the beautiful golden hair, and sparkled in the diamonds on the Shoes of Light, which almost, in the silence, seemed to speak aloud—"For the Chief of the City," and "For him that doth serve."

Then suddenly the King rose to his feet, and his eyes were bright. "Dear Christopher," he said, "thy coat is thin and thy shoes are old; let me clothe thee royally out of my abundance." And he took from an attendant a mantle of velvet bordered with minever, and threw it over Christopher's shoulders, and also over his leathern apron. From another groom of the chambers he took boots of Cordovan leather, and put them upon the feet of the old man, who wept for joy, not because of his fine array, but because Love had entered another heart than his own in that strange city.

But to the Child the King gave only his royal crown, which he took from his own head. And now befell the strangest thing of all, for as soon as the crown touched those gleaming waves it crumbled into dark and unsightly dust; whereat the monarch only smiled. "It is well," he said, "for is it not ever the uncrowned king who reigns most securely in the hearts of his people?"

Then he took in his the hand of the Child, and, followed by Christopher and all the Court, he went out into the city. And wherever there was misery—and where was there not?—the Child made pause, and the King with him, and together they sought to find the remedy. So that the new apparel that had been bought for the banquet was soon exhausted, and likewise the whole royal wardrobe; and as for the dinner itself, it was ordered to be spread in the great square, and all who would were bidden to eat thereat. And also, because of the Shoes of Light on the King's feet, the shoes of all the Court became Shoes of Loving Service, which thing had never been known in that city before. So that all the lords and all the knights and ladies sent to their homes for their rich garments and fine apparel, and put them upon their poor neighbors; and also they added their own Christmas dinners to the royal banquet, and all dined together for that one day like brethren. Moreover, when the child showed them the mud hovels and the wretched huts in which dwelt the poor, they fell to work, every man and woman of them, to repair and build; and they erected hospitals also, in which the sick might be healed, or, at the least, might die in peace; and schools, where the children might be taught; and playgrounds for them, with green grass and flowers. And when the summer returned, those of them who had palaces without the city, where there were birds and fields and streams of running water, bade their poor neighbors to be their guests, that all might rejoice together.

For now I must tell you that it proved that the King was not the only one who had forgotten that his own flesh and blood were dwelling, cold and hungry, among the poor; for as they went about the city on that Christmas Day there were cries from one and another of the Court to some wretched man or woman, "My father!" or "My son, have I found thee!" or "Is it indeed thyself, my daughter?" For as in that city no one had loved another, it had been easy for even a father or a sister to wander away and be lost in poverty and misery. But in the light that flowed from the golden hair of the Child the well-known faces were again remembered.

Now came the hour for the feast, the wonderful Christmas dinner. And indeed it was a beautiful and wondrous sight. For at the head of the table sat the Child, with the King at his right hand and Christopher at his left, the great happy tears falling down the old man's cheeks and into his long white beard. Next to Christopher was the Royal Physicker, his crimson mantle rumpled and his spectacles

awry, from the hard work he had done that day, physicking the sick poor, and planning for the hospitals. Next to him sat the Head Cook, who had prepared the feast, as being worthy of all honor from those who ate it; and afterwards came all the city, some in rich apparel, some in oddly assorted raiment, a plumed cap matching strangely with a leathern jerkin, and the cape of silver cloth with the ragged gown. But all were content, and every face wore a smile, because at last they loved one another.

Then the King rose in his place and began to speak. "My trusty and loving friends," he said—but there he paused, for the words sounded as though he never had spoken them before; and, moreover, there is little to say when all has been done. Therefore the King sat down again; and now the Child rose, and spread out his little hands in blessing. And as they looked upon him, the light from his golden hair became brighter than eye could behold, and still it brightened, until it was more glorious than the sun; then it faded away, and the form of the Child had vanished, but the love that he had brought remained, and they knew that on the next glad Christmas Day he would again return.

Therefore they went on loving, as I have already told you; and the name of that city was changed, and it was called "the City of Loving Service," and so it is even unto this day.

But Christopher returned to his bare and empty room and went on making shoes for the people. He was very happy, because the old palace was in good repair, and the people loved each other; whether they loved him, or knew what he had done for them, he did not even think. And there he still sits waiting for next Christmas and the coming of the Child, and wearing always his cobbler's leathern apron.



St. Nicholas Day in South Germany

By Katharine Farrand Reighard

It is quite as though the children in South Germany had the joy of two Christmas Days. On the sixth of December comes St. Nicholas Day, a holiday given up to the children.

Last year in Freiburg the mild, bright day was ushered in by the clanging and ringing of bells, and the hurrying of the people to early mass. There is usually a holiday in the schools, and the result was the streets were swarming with children going about and exchanging and displaying the curious compounds of cakes and bread made in the images of fierce old men.

St. Nicholas appears to different families in various guises. To some children he comes as a punishment for all the wrong-doings of the past year, and to others as a jolly, good old man, who is a sort of a forerunner of Christmas.

For a week beforehand the shops, and especially the bake-shops, were festive with the gay toys and fascinating cakes and bread images of St. Nicholas. These figures oftentimes are of an old man with a bundle of switches in his hand, in the act of chastising a small child, or perhaps leading a small boy away on account of his badness.

The children look forward to the day with great eagerness, tempered with just a bit of anxiety as to what St. Nicholas might do in case he found out they had not always been walking in the way of righteousness.

On the evening before St. Nicholas Eve, usually after supper, a tinkling of bells is heard announcing the arrival of St. Nicholas. The door-bell rings vigorously, and he appears in the room where the family and children, in various conditions of mind, have gathered to greet him. He is very much like our own jolly St. Nick, with a merry round face, with a nose like a cherry, and the other characteristics so well known. He has a bag on his back stuffed with things both good and bad, and, rubbing his hands, he greets the company, and then calls each child by name and asks him in regard to his actions in the past year and his promises for the future. If the record is good and he can recite a bit of a verse or jingle, it pleases St.

Nicholas mightily, and he rewards his goodness by a small gift with fruit and cakes. After each child has been rewarded according to his deserts, good St. Nicholas departs with many flourishes and much tinkling of bells to go to the other children in the town. The effect seems good on the little ones, and the behavior until Christmas-time is remarkably good. On Christmas Day the Christ-child appears and brings the gifts for this good behavior.

St. Nicholas often appears dressed as a bishop, with a miter on his head and a scepter in his hand. This venerable old man, in his long white robes and long snowy hair and beard, is very effective in his appearance. After the customary recital of verses and bestowal of gifts, he gives a long lecture to the parents as to their government and details of treatment of the children, and the children are admonished to obey their parents and be good, and to tell him what they would like the Christ-child to bring them for Christmas.

In North Germany the Christmas-man comes, as our own Santa Claus, on the twenty-fifth of December, and it is he jointly with the Christ-child that bestows the gifts around the Christmas-tree for the children and grown-up folks.

The custom of keeping St. Nicholas Day in South Germany seems to be due partly to the large proportion of Catholics there, and partly to the greater persistency of the people in keeping up their local customs. It is a source of pleasure to parents that their children should celebrate the old festivals with the very forms they themselves once observed.

This festival in the South German provinces is treated as only a prologue to the great day that is to follow. It is the children's great festival of the whole year. It seems to be a slight variation from the St. Nicholas Day in South Austria, where they have no Christmas in our sense of the word. There the celebration of the nativity of Christ is a religious festival in the Church and little more.

The character of St. Nicholas in Austria is usually taken by a young man versed in the Church catechism. He is arrayed in a long white robe with a silken scarf and a miter and scepter. He sometimes has with him two angels dressed somewhat like choir-boys, each of whom carries a basket or bag, and along in the background follow a troop of devils with blackened faces, horns, and other distortions that only small boys can devise. They are bound together with chains, which they rattle furiously. In the twilight of the fifth of December the bishop makes his rounds to the various houses where the children are collected in parties. He enters with the angels, while the devils wait outside.

A great silence falls upon the assembled company, and the children are called up and examined religiously. This is carried out with great seriousness. If the trial is passed successfully, the angels step forward and give the child gifts and nuts and cakes of fantastic forms; or, if he fails, he has to stand aside.

When the inquisition is over, the devils are allowed to enter and frighten the children, but not to touch them, and amuse them with their strange dances and antics. Their whole appearance is farcical, and for the evening they are allowed great license and fun in the village. After St. Nicholas has departed the children go to their homes, with the expectation that St. Nicholas will visit each house separately and be more generous and bring them more gifts. So, after saying their prayers with more than usual earnestness, they put baskets and dishes on the window-sills and go to bed. The parents later put their simple gifts in these places.

The sixth of December, the real day of the feast, is celebrated in the churches alone. The celebration of this day in this way does not seem at all out of keeping with the lives of the simple people.

After knowing about and after having seen this festival, St. Nicholas appears especially interesting to any one concerned with literary history. And when we think of some of the scenes in the miracle-plays, they seem more comprehensible to us, and we can understand why it was that a great deal of horse-play was introduced in the most sacred subjects.