

attraction of geniality and good feeling to all who come within its magic circle. Its leaping and dancing flames adding a sparkle to even prosaic conversation, and filling the pauses with musical silence.

Most of all has its banishment taken from the joys and imaginative glories of the Christmas festival, and defrauded the children of our wiser and more scientific age of their ancient heritage in Santa Claus and his legendary visits: the fearful joy to childish ears of listening for the patter of reindeer hoofs upon the snow covered roof, the tinkling of fairy bells, and the mysterious descent of the rotund and saintly figure through the labyrinthine chimney throat, unsorbed by smouldering embers to deposit in the traditionary stockings ranged along the mantel such wonderful and delightful gifts.

Far remote from town and city in isolated country house and wood-side cabin the tutelary divinity is still the Kriss Kingle of early love, whose rites of mystery and merriment are still celebrated under the holly and the mistletoe by rustic swains and apple-checked maidens, and a younger generation of Jack Horners who after the time-honored tradition on this auspicious day still sit in chimney corners eating generous slices of Christmas pie, whereof each fresh discovery of hidden plum maketh fresh occasion of wonder and gratulation.

Apples are roasting on the broad hearthstone, and on the high chimney piece are shining pewter tankards and flagons, wherein at stated times sparkleth and foameth the newly drawn cider. Here when the air is yet redolent of roast goose and plum pudding, and the delicate sweet herbs which enter into the composition of stuffing dear to the heart of childhood—now circlet the family group their number

augmented by the cheerful faces of friends and neighbor, and the arrival of some far-dwelling son or daughter. The little ones graciously permitted to sit up "for this night only," underesthwhile nestling beside grandmamma's big chair, deep in the discussion of the several merits of dolls and hobbyhorses, have been tucked into curtained beds, each with a wooden-limbed doll or furry dog clasped to the infantine breast, the spirit whereof walketh through the fairyland of infant dreams.

Outside the wind rattleth the casement, and the frost gathers its fern like tracery over the pane, while inside the red brand falling down sendeth a storm of sparks up the roaring chimney.

The dark-eyed daughter, her round cheek shielded from the ruddy blaze by the family newspaper, readeth therefrom the tale of witchcraft or of ghost-haunted dwelling. The solitary skater on lonely ice-mantled pool lingereth to eat yet one more marvellous and fantastic flourish ere he turneth away to join the light and warmth and jocund laughter of the home circle. Far off along the level country roads is heard the faint music of merry sleigh bells where rustic beaux and belles are gathering in gay cavalcades at some country inn for the dance.

Returning townward the lights twinkle bravely along streets deserted for once by the hum and bustle of trade. The passer by encounters only here and there a hurrying passenger or vehicle going to or returning from some festive scene. For to-day the tradesman and the man of business have laid aside the cares of the work day world, and every eye beams a welcome, and every tongue is ready the friendly salutation.

As if the solemn and joyful news