

SAXONY SANTA CLAUS

HANS RUPPERT WALKS ALL THE WAY FROM RUSSIA.

A Great, Gallant Figure, With Top Boots and Mighty Pack—Christmas Customs of the Fatherland—Procession on Christmas Eve.

Hans Ruppert is the name of the Santa Claus of Saxony given by the simple, pious peasantry. "Hans Ruppert will arrive tonight!" the children of Saxony cry all along the dark, darkening twilight of Christmas eve, as they flatten their little Saxon noses against the cottage window panes, peering out along the winter roads for "our Hans Ruppert."

Hans Ruppert comes from Russia, from its silent mysteries of steppe and of snows. But he is not a Slav. Hans Ruppert is not the traditional Santa Claus of the Teuton land—a jolly old man with curly beard and winking smile. "Hans Ruppert is a tall, brawny, peasant looking fellow," say the good Saxony folk with a sublime earnestness as if they had seen him. Hans Ruppert has muscles minted from their own brave life of gray toil. Hans Ruppert walks all the way from afar, from the Asiatic Russland and, at every step he takes toward the Caucasus chain, at every stride up and up, still up the ledges of its rock and bluff and brae, across its brawling streams, now down on the other side of its stern shoulder shadowed in the star calm, at every pace past the Russian villages twinkling through the night mists like sparklets struck off from the czar crown way off there above the Neva, as he foots it grandly—this great, grand, gallant Hans Ruppert—his top boots that at the beginning of the long Christmas march reached only below the knee, grow taller and taller, still higher—until when he hears the Rhein-strom murmur and the golden voice above the Lorelei rock, and at last at the gates of Berlin sees the mighty gleam of the army of the vaterland, the Hans Ruppertish boots are up to the loins, cuirassier fashion, accordion wrinkled and mirror in their mighty polish the very "Sword of My Illustrious Grandfather!"

On his back, through all his long trudge tonight, Hans Ruppert carries his pack. It is a pack of good things. There is no Christmas tree within that mighty bundle, Hans! The peasant children have made the tree all ready for Hans in the diligent purchase from their little Saxon pennings on the market day. Hans Ruppert brings the garments for the Christmas tree. Here in his pack is the Christ child's hair, the gold and silver filigree which Hans will twist across the branches with his own brawny hands. Here are the candles, the Christ child's eyes, and the toys and the gifts, "the blessings that drop from the hands of Baby Jesus."

And now the procession forms at 8 o'clock on Christmas eve to go to see what Hans Ruppert has brought to the little family. The procession begins with grandfather and grandmother, on whose seamed and yellowed cheeks glistens the gentle tear of age. Then follow the father and the mother and the unwedded uncles and aunts, and now the children, according to age and size, who are awed in anticipation of "our Hans Ruppert" on the other side of that door toward which the procession is now moving. They stand up on tiptoes and peer behind father's stalwart frame, rebuked by das mutterchen, with a solid Saxon cuff on the unwilling ear. "Ach, mutterchen, it's heilige Nacht!" pleads the father, and mother moderates. Here are the servants of the household, wearing their good Christmas starch of check apron stiffness. How it stands out in its buckram beauty! If it were possible—which the dear Herr Gardener of us all forbids—the apple cheeks of the good house girl glow with a more fruity glisten as she gazes down upon the spheric circumference of starch. The housemaid's smile is laundered, too, and it never leaves her lips until that mysterious door off there is opened by grandfather's trembling old hand, and now some one in the Christmas procession has struck the sweet, resonant, prolonging chords of the zither, and the hymn rises as one "pure concert" along the whole of the household's heart.

O heilige Nacht! Stille Nacht! The door is thrown open, and only the stalwart spirits—the Erdgeiste who guard the scallions and volutes of the Teutonic verb—can comprehend the meander and the meaning of the family's exclamations now. Hans Ruppert has done it all! Hans Ruppert has done it all! The tree glistens into gracious charm. It is the aurora of the Divine Child.

And then the good Saxon muscles fall to, and fall, too, on supper. Now, the supper is a sweet feature of this great evening, 1897. For only once a year does the marzipan come round—marzipan, that dear cake, crusted with powdered almonds. Only once a year does "stoken" come round, that dearest cake with raisins—raisins plucked by Hans Ruppert in that faroff mystery—raisins that grew and hadn't anything to do with sour grapes.

But the supper passes, and the night is deepening. The eyes of childhood are drooping. The family rises and again circles the Christmas tree, hand in hand now, perhaps for the last time on earth. Who can foresee the years? May the dear Christ child guard us all!—New York Commercial Advertiser.

THE SONG OF THE FROST KING.

BY W. TYLER OLCOTT.

I'm king of the Alpine heights; I'm lord of the snow-capped peaks; For me the avalanches roar, And the "cold-wrought silence" speaks.

I dwell in a palace of gleaming snow, Where the cloud-mists dream of the sunset glow. At my heels the wind-dogs cringe; At my word they swiftly dash In mad career, over all the world, For they fear my stinging lash; And the dawn-pink lingers alone for me In the glorious light of the golden sea.

I'm king of the rock-bound crests; I'm lord of the rugged steep; For me the frost-sprite weaves a veil, And the sluggish glacier creeps, I'm monarch of Earth's vast solitude, Where the frost and the cold forever brood.

A CHRISTMAS WOOING

BY E. B. BARTEN.

There has been many a memorable Christmas in my life, scared and scared as it is by Time's rebuffs, but none is so fixed in my mind as that of 18—, none that comes back to me with so stirring, so boldly—outlined, so sweet a memory.

Perhaps it is as well not to dilate on my personality in that year, except to say that I was fresh from college, and full of the energy with which we all begin the real battle of life. Perhaps I was handsome. I thought so, at least, although I was not vain, and I am quite sure that one other certainly agreed with me. I was at—but I must stop desecrating on myself, for I cut but a sorry figure in this tale.

Among my circle of acquaintances at college was Eugene Kerr, wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, keen-souled and bright-eyed, dark-featured and handsome, taller than I by several inches, and with a nature as free and open as his speaking sparkling eyes. It was to his home that I had been invited to spend the holidays before engaging in the business of which I was destined to become the head in a few years.

At the Kerr home, a delightful country residence near New York, I was but one of a gay young party, for the Kerr family kept open house for a score of friends during the holidays. As usual at these gatherings, we were thrown together continually, and my whole soul had suddenly gone out to the sister of my friend Eugene. Her head was covered with dark, shining, chestnut hair, luxuriant hair, that looked all the more luxuriant, perhaps, by reason of the careless way in which it was wrapped about her head. The great gray eyes were set deeply under a straight wide brow. A delicate nose that would turn up a little when she lifted her head, and a splendidly-cut, clever, wide mouth, the lips of which parted every now and then with a sweet smile, were there. This was her face, and it was fair enough; but it was her figure, her glorious, graceful, full, yet supple figure that struck me most.

Nor was she averse to my attentions, yet I noticed from time to time a coldness in the voice and face of Mrs. Kerr, the mother of my young friends. She was a stately matron, and in her sweeping black velvet dress and softly falling delicate white lace, which nestled about her head and throat, looked strikingly handsome.

Grace—that was the name of the daughter—seemed at times to be under the spell of the mother's eye. I noticed that the conversation would lag when the elder woman entered the room, and that all the airy gaiety and sprightliness of the daughter would disappear under the withering glance of the mother.

There was a secret, a mystery

which I had determined to fathom and so I proceeded about it in anything but a diplomatic manner, for I was young and thoughtless. My whole soul had become wrapped up in Grace. She was the ideal woman I had pictured in my dreams, and I had determined that she must be mine at any cost.

I look back to those days with wonderment, more perhaps at my own temerity under the circumstances, for I did not even know that I was loved in return.

"Gene," I remarked, one morning, after I had lain awake all night planning and hoping, "I want to talk with you about a matter that concerns me nearly—concerns us both."

He looked at me in some little amazement. Then putting his arm through mine, laughingly pushed me along, saying, "Well I should judge from your long face, it's something serious. Drive it away, old man, don't consort with your cares during the holidays. Never worry in December. January is an awful good month for broken vows, worriments and all that sort of thing."

"Gene, I'm going to blurt it out and have it over with. I'm head over heels in love with your sister!"

"Walter!"

"If I haven't mentioned it before I will say the above is my given name, although it really has nothing to do with the story. There was that in Eugene's face which fairly dazed me. He seemed terror-stricken at my abrupt but simple announcement. All the acts of my life passed before me, for I was in vain endeavoring to find a cause for his consternation, and then I poured out my soul.

"Truly, Gene, there can be nothing against me. I have some wealth, excellent prospects, I am not a roue—"

"Hush, my boy," cried Eugene. "It isn't that! why my sister has been engaged for a year, and do you think my mother would ever forego a coronet! It's impossible!"

"Engaged! A coronet! What do you mean," I cried.

"I mean simply this," he replied, putting his hands on my shoulders. "Grace was abroad with mother, a year ago as you know. At that time—please remember that this is all confidential, it's a family secret—Lord Deerland fell madly in love with Grace and proposed for her hand. Mother accepted the young man with alacrity, and I think Grace likes him. The formal announcement is to be made after the holidays and they are to be married in the spring. That's all there is to the story, my boy, and now don't make a fuss over it, but just accept the inevitable."

I presume I looked crestfallen after this disclosure and for twenty-four hours kept to my room, determined to get over my chagrin and not to spoil the Christmas party by any hasty departure.

On the following day, the day before Christmas, I summoned all my courage and went down stairs, into the midst of the gaiety. The expression on Mrs. Kerr's face had undergone a delightful change. She fairly beamed on me, and a lurking suspicion filled my mind. "Gene had undoubtedly told his mother and sister all, for it no other way could I explain the rhapsodic expression on the mother's face and the sadness that seemed to have come over the younger woman. That of course was simply pity, I argued. She was like all the others, ready to play the coquette though she knew she would break a heart or two.

By a most fortunate chance I received a message late in the morning which summoned me to the city for a few hours on a matter of business. Eugene had arranged a sleighing party for the afternoon, and this I was forced to forego. My train left shortly after noon, and I was waiting at the station scanning a paper, my thoughts on a sweet face in the Kerr

(Continued on Page 3)



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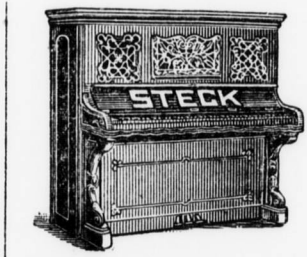


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Hints for the Stout. There is but little place in the economy of nature for the woman of superfluous flesh, says the London Daily Mail. But what is she going to do about it, poor thing? If she begins to take care in time; if she starts weight-reducing practices when first she notices a little tightness about her bodies and belts the process need not be so very long or so very trying. She must have a great deal of exercise and a great deal of fresh air. Two hours of really vigorous exercise every day—of brisk walking that brings perspiration to the skin; of brisk bicycle riding, or of horse riding, according to her means and tastes—is not too much. Hot baths are part of the weight-reducing regime, but as they are also sometimes strength reducing they should be taken with care. Foods containing starch should be avoided. That means the banishment of untoasted bread, of potatoes, and of sweets from the daily bill of fare. Fats are also to be shunned. There should be but little butter and milk used. In the way of definite exercises for the reduction of flesh about the waist and hips—the places where most women suffer from overweight—there is one to be lightly recommended. The candidate for slimness should assume what is known as "the position of a soldier"—shoulders back, chest out, chin in, and ears, shoulder and hips in a vertical line. She must bend from the waist until she touches the floor, but without bending the knees, and this she must do often every morning. Many People Cannot Drink coffee at night. It spoils their sleep. You can drink Grain O when you please and sleep like a top. For Grain-O does not stimulate; it nourishes, cheers and feeds. Yet it looks and tastes like the best coffee. For nervous persons, young people and children Grain O is the perfect drink. Made from pure grains. Get a package from your grocer to day. Try it in place of coffee. 15 and 25c. 8dqt

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