

**ST. NICHOLAS: HIS LEGEND
AND HIS ROLE IN THE
CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AND
OTHER POPULAR CUSTOMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649712458

St. Nicholas: His Legend and His Role in the Christmas Celebration and Other Popular Customs
by George H. McKnight

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GEORGE H. MCKNIGHT

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Alinari
G. da Fabriano. St. Nicholas with Conventional Emblems along with Mary Magdalene,
St. John, and St. George.

St. Nicholas

His Legend and His Rôle in the Christmas
Celebration and Other Popular
Customs

By

George H. McKnight

Illustrated

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

1917

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

PREFACE

A FEW years ago, while trying to trace the history of certain Christmas customs, I was unavoidably brought into contact with St. Nicholas. A closer acquaintance with that amiable personality was the result, and acquaintance gradually deepened into veneration and affection. In the same year in which began my closer acquaintance with St. Nicholas, I was so fortunate as to be brought face to face with some of the quaint pictures in which Italian painters, with so much charm, have represented the various episodes in the life of the saint. I was led to believe that others would enjoy the pictures, not all of them readily accessible, and that a wider knowledge of St. Nicholas would greatly enlarge the circle of his friends. The present book was the result.

My aim has been, not to offer an exhaustive study of all the difficult questions that are connected with the name of St. Nicholas, but to bring together, from somewhat scattered sources, the elements in his life story. The kindly acts

recorded of him have lived in popular memory and have flowered into some of the most generally cherished of popular customs. In St. Nicholas the reader will come in contact with a personality of unique amiability, whose influence has permeated popular customs for many centuries and has contributed much of sweetness to human life.

My original contribution to the subject has been slight. In the notes I have attempted to indicate my indebtedness to other writers, although the amount of this debt I have not been able adequately to show. To the artists who have represented with feeling and with charm the scenes in the life of St. Nicholas, this book is most indebted, and for them I wish to bespeak a major part of the reader's attention.

G. H. McK.

COLUMBUS, O.,
July 16, 1917.

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