

THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

The Latham Foundation Story Service
for the Public Schools

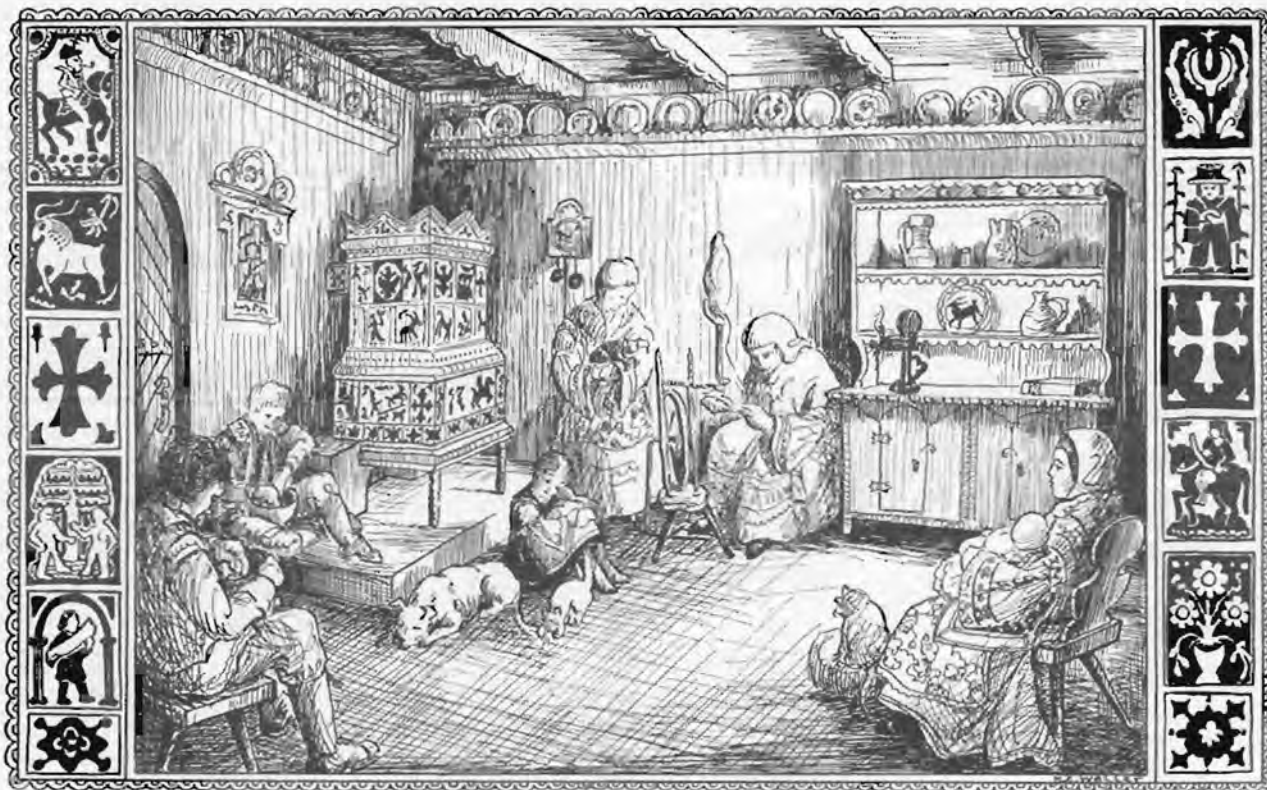
Number 31

"Alexander and Caesar and myself founded empires, but upon what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love. And today, while my armies have forgotten me, millions would die for him. What an abyss between my misery and the eternal reign of Christ."—*Napoleon's tribute to Christ, whose birthday we celebrate this month (written at St. Helena).*

ROSA'S CHRISTMAS EVE

Adapted from a story by Rosa Fischer Scheiber
By DOLORES WILKENS KENT

A True Story of a Great Singer and a Little Girl



H. WELER

ROSA'S AUSTRIAN HOME

A little girl, Rosa Fischer, sat one winter's evening in her home in an old Austrian farm house, close by the big tiled stove, in which could be heard the crackling of burning wood, giving a comfortable warmth throughout the room.

The men-folk of her family were peeling dry pumpkin seeds to be pressed into oil; the girls and women were spinning flax at the humming wheels; flax that would be spun into thread, woven into linen, and bleached on the green grass when the summer came.

At present the snow was high upon the ground and Christmas was drawing near. Rosa's father was telling stories, as they gathered about the fire, while her tiny baby sister, lying in her mother's arms, gazed at the light of the kerosene lamp as though it were a star.

Castor, the dog, slept on a rug under the table, and several cats dozed cozily on cushions or upon someone's knees. The stock in the stable were warmly

sheltered and well fed; comfort and happiness dwelt under the old-fashioned roof.

This was about fifty years ago, before electricity, radios, automobiles and airplanes were even thought of in this faraway Austrian country-side.

Suddenly, a lovely thing happened—a letter was brought to Rosa, by her brother, who just returned from the village, a letter and a photograph; the picture of a beautiful woman, in a beautiful dress. It was the great opera singer—Lilli Lehmann.

The little girl was overcome with joy and sat as though in a trance, while her father read the letter aloud.

Rosa loved animals dearly and having kind, understanding parents, the farm was a place where all the horses, cows, pigs, chickens, geese and ducks, and the dear house pets were all splendidly cared for, warmly sheltered and well fed. Rosa, however, learned that

the poor birds suffered greatly from lack of food in the bitterly cold winters of Europe. So every day she would feed the wild birds, not only on her parents' farm, but in the nearby forest.

These kind deeds were noticed by the neighbors, who had spoken to others about them, and gradually the news had traveled on and on, as news will, until it reached the ears of the German singer and actress, Madame Lilli Lehmann, world-famous as an artist and equally well known to all animal lovers as one who labored constantly in behalf of dumb creatures. She was a member of countless humane societies of Europe and even America.

To hear was to act with Madame Lehmann and she immediately wrote a charming little note to Rosa, expressing her pleasure in hearing of the little girl's kindness in caring for the forest birds.

Rosa was thrilled to the heart, as any child would be, and the whole family aided her in composing an answer to this wonderful new friend.

Several letters were exchanged and then one day the most marvelous one of all arrived! It contained an invitation to celebrate Christmas eve with Madame Lehmann in her home at Gruenwald, near Berlin.

Rosa was beside herself with joy. Just to see Germany was an event for this little girl who had hardly gone beyond the tiny village near her father's farm; and best of all to spend the greatest feast time of the whole year, Christmas Eve, with her idol, Lilli Lehmann.

It was more than one small girl could grasp all at once. And Rosa wandered about in a dream, while her mother, nearly as excited as herself, prepared her things for the visit.

Rapturously clasping Castor about the neck Rosa would tell him all about it; the cats, too, had to hear the story; she even whispered it to the birds as she scattered their crumbs.

At last the day came! Clothed in a warm blue coat and hood, Rosa embraced her mother and brother, patted her loved animals a last good-bye, warned her brother not to forget to feed the birds during her absence, and climbing into the big sleigh with her father, she was rapidly driven away behind the fat, dappled-gray horses to the station.

There she was put in charge of the conductor on the train going to Gruenwald. Rosa felt a bit tearful as the dear face of her father and the familiar scene faded into the distance. But the pleasant interest of the passengers and the cordial greeting of the white-clad woman who acted as a sort of porter on the train, put her at her ease, while a delicious breakfast of coffee and crisp brown rolls helped to banish homesickness.

Soon the golden-red sun appeared above the horizon, "Germany's sun," thought Rosa, as she gazed out of the windows of the car. The train had crossed the Austrian-Germany boundary line and Rosa's homeland lay far behind.

The train was enchanting to the little girl; the trim, uniformed guards, the formality and politeness, the ever-changing scene, the coming and going of the passengers. The day passed speedily and they arrived in Gruenwald in the late afternoon.

A smiling old man met her at the station. He

escorted her to a waiting carriage, behind a smart pair of bay horses, and while they drove through the snow-covered streets, he began to talk; pointing out the buildings of interest, the parks, and beauties of this lovely suburb of Berlin.

At the entrance to a big, fine looking home with many verandahs and a little steeple over the iron-wrought gate, they stopped. The old coachman got down to open the gates, then they drove slowly in. The trees in the garden were glistening with icicles in the clear, bright sunshine. Coming down the steps and walking toward them in this setting from fairy-land, was a tall, beautiful woman, in a red dress—it was Lilli Lehmann.

She helped Rosa from the carriage and greeted her warmly and they went on to the house, two little dogs gamboling beside them, the birds twittering overhead in the trees.

They were joined in the hall by another charming woman whose gray hair was worn in a crown of neat braids, Madame Marie Lehmann, the sister of Lilli, and herself a singer of note.

They talked, laughed, and joyously escorted Rosa upstairs to a dainty bedroom, where a hot cup of tea awaited the little guest. Then she was persuaded to lie down and have a nap before dinner.

When Rosa woke up it was night and the sisters stood smiling beside her bed. "Time for dinner," said Madame Lilli. Rosa hurriedly got ready and went down with them.

What a beautiful dining-room it was! The long table, laden with fine china, silver and cut-glass, sparkling on the snow-white damask cloth, was a revelation to the little country girl. She felt shy. The servants, too, embarrassed her, but soon the charming ease and graciousness of her hostesses made her forget and she enjoyed a delicious dinner.

She was sleepy again after that, as they sat chatting, around the big parlor stove. Rosa had told them all about her birds and the farm. They were interested in every detail, until Madame Lilli noticed her weariness, and remarking that as the next day would bring Christmas Eve, little girls should get their special beauty sleep. They kissed Rosa good-night and she was shown to her room by a rosy-checked maid who helped her undress.

A fine, long sleep in the big, soft bed and then it was morning! The morning of the great celebration!!

In her cozy breakfast-room, with a green tiled stove and comfortable couch, Lilli Lehmann bade Rosa "Good morning." After breakfast she stood beside Madame Lehmann at the open window to watch the feeding of the birds. A little Christmas tree was placed outside, covered with bits of cake and cookies, fruit, nuts and other bird delicacies. The twittering and chattering that went on was tremendous, every bird known to Germany seemed to be coming and going amid the branches of this strange tree. The birds would look, with their bright, black eyes, at the lovely woman with the blossom-white hair in the window as though to say, "We know you. You feed us every day with your kind hands, scattering the crumbs from your own table, but today is a feast! We know! We know!"

The songs that poured from their little throats, as

satisfied, they flew up into the tall fir and pine trees of the garden; hymns of thanks and praise to their kind benefactress.

Afterwards Madame Lehmann went into her music room and gave a few lessons to some chosen pupils, while Rosa listened, enchanted, to these song birds of another kind. She almost laughed at the funny exercises, but the real song part she enjoyed. After a light luncheon they went for a walk; the two Lehmann sisters, with Rosa. The two little dogs happily dancing along beside them.

They walked quite into the country, through the fine, wide streets of the town. By the time they returned it was getting late and the wonders of Christmas Eve were to begin. First the fine dinner and then the tree. She had seen much scurrying back and

artist in the making, absorbed with delight the beauty about her.

The dinner! Well, it wasn't half over when Rosa wondered how she was going to eat another mouthful. Such a marvelous meal, ending with the big plum pudding, and ice cream in dainty little forms; Rosa had a white swan with a red cherry in its mouth. Then cakes of all descriptions. And for the little guest a large wreath coffee cake, covered with nuts and filled with goodies, to take home to her family. How happy that made Rosa that her dear ones could share in the feast.

At last it was over and they assembled in the parlor, some friends arriving who had been invited for the tree, and with the servants bringing up the rear they proceeded to the other room.

As they were about to open the door Madame Lilli said "Wait," and gently covered Rosa's eyes with her hand. Then, "Now, look!"

And Rosa looked! Never had she seen such a Christmas tree. Never had she imagined one so gorgeous! Straight to the ceiling it rose, its dark, sweet smelling branches laden with glittering ornaments and sparkling tinsel snow; the candlelights reflecting color upon color and at the very top a shining silver star, the Star of Bethlehem; and around and about the tree packages galore.

What an hour of pure delight Rosa had! Gifts, more than even her kind parents had ever dreamed of, were all for her. Toys, books, candies and dainty things to wear; a pretty purse with her name engraved upon it, filled with shining pieces of silver and one big gold piece; gay ribbons, a complete winter outfit of ruby colored velvet—dress, hat and coat. And with this wonder costume went bronze boots with tassels!

No little girl of today, when children have so many pretty things, can ever know what those bronze boots meant to Rosa.

To crown all there was a dainty little gold bracelet and a locket that hung on a velvet ribbon from Madame Lilli's own neck. This is still worn, a gift beyond price, by Rosa.

There were beautiful presents for everyone and Rosa shyly gave two boxes of delicious Austrian sweetmeats to the Lehmann sisters that her mother had carefully prepared and put in her valise.

The little dogs had their share, too, but Munchie and Baby nearly quarreled over their cookies and it took quite a few moments to calm the growls. At the height of the festivities Rosa saw Lilli Lehmann slip a heavy wrap over her shoulders and quietly go out of the room. The maid, Elsa, noticed her look of wonder and said in a low voice: "Madame Lehmann is going to see the poor gentleman next door."

"Oh, is there a poor gentleman next door?" asked Rosa, "It is such a fine, big house I thought they were rich people."

Elsa laughed. "He is a *poor rich* old gentleman, for he is sick and all alone except for the servants. His wife and children are dead. Madame Lehmann and her sister run in to see him every day; she had a little basket of gifts and dainty sweets in the hall to take over."

This was a new thought. The wonderfully fine place, all the wealth in the world, and yet the owner was poor and lonely. Why she was far richer in her

(Continued on Page 4)



Artist HANS VOLKMER

Courtesy of S. HIRZEL, Publisher

Lilli Lehmann and Daktel Baby

forth of the servants and now Madame Marie warned Madame Lilli that both she and Rosa were not to venture near a certain big parlor, where the tree was being trimmed. They were among the special guests and must be surprised.

Rosa dressed hurriedly, putting on her very best dress of pale pink cashmere, with white lace at the neck and wrists and a huge pink silk sash tied in a big bow at the back, white stockings and high white shoes completed the costume, and she felt very grand, indeed, as she went down to dinner at the sound of the tinkling little silver bell.

Her cheeks were crimson with excitement and her blue eyes shone with happiness. She did not realize what a pretty picture she made as she hesitated in the door-way of the dining-room, but her hostesses smiled with pleasure and she was placed in the seat of honor between them.

Such a beautiful table! A large wreath of holly formed the centerpiece, the bright green leaves and red berries gay against the white cloth, tall silver candlesticks repeating the Christmas colors in their red candles; candies and spiced or pickled fruits placed here and there in crystal or silver dishes. Rosa's family were well-to-do farmers but they did not have the elegance of this table and Rosa, a little

ADDRESS TO TEACHERS

As delivered by Dolores Wilkins Kent at the Rosecrucian Fellowship, San Francisco, during the week dedicated to the Animal Kingdom.

Upon the balance wheel of kindness rests today the destiny of the world. We are witnessing the dawn of a new peace movement, sponsored by the leaders of thought and backed by the aspirations of all civilized humanity.

If the seeds of kindness had been planted in the youthful heart of Caesar, the history of Rome might have been different. The bloody imprint of cruelty is on every page of the book of life.

Juvenile crime is seriously troubling state and federal government; the narcotic evil is grasping in its pale distorted hands the very flower of the nation. It is imperative that statesmen, educators and parents should work together to save the most cherished possession—the child.

In order to do this a weapon to protect itself must be given to the one in danger and one of the surest weapons seems to be humane education. Its value as a cornerstone in the character building of the child is being proven in our public schools.

We are having the pleasure of seeing the seeds that the Latham Foundation planted some years ago ripen to a beautiful harvest in many of the surrounding schools.

The reports from superintendents, principals and teachers show the ethical value of humane education in developing the relations of the child to its classmate, teacher and parents as well as to the animal.

Our school magazine, story-board and play projects, poster and essay contests and the Kind Deeds Club established in the schools by our lecturer, all this work co-relating and blending with the curriculum of study, are developing the sense of responsibility, personal relationship, and kindness in the pupil, not only for the animals or bird pets he may have or contact, but in all human relationships. This sense of responsibility toward others involves a right amount of self-sacrifice and of the understanding of the oneness of all creation.

Humane education, rightly understood, means kindness, love, mercy and justice; these principles implanted in the heart and mind of the child will never be forgotten. They will firmly become a part of his nature.

Youth has never needed a guide more than today, when the aftermath of war, the luxuries and conveniences of our modern life, the very achievements of science place a thousand-fold more pitfalls for its feet than ever before. Hu-

mane education is undoubtedly one of the lights to guide these footsteps safely along life's way.

I should like to illustrate just what it means by an incident that has happened in one of our schools.

Our lecturer was told that a certain child would be quite impossible to do anything with, that he had just come to the school, but that they were finding him very much like "a rotten apple in a box," he was rapidly inciting the other children to disobedience and rebellion.

Our lecturer watched the boy; he was about 10 years of age; he seemed very surly and sneered openly at her work, trying to distract the attention of the pupils near him. This continued for several visits and she felt her grip upon the pupils slipping, due to this one influence. One morning when she arrived a little girl brought into the classroom a sparrow that had injured a wing so that it could not fly, but could hop and walk perfectly.

For some reason it was quite fearless and while she was talking hopped down the aisle straight to this boy's desk, it stood looking saucily up at him and chirping. The other children held their breath fearing that he would hurt the bird, but he sat quietly.

Suddenly our lecturer had an inspiration. She said, "He likes you; I really think that he will have to be your bird; will you take good care of him?"

This was the key that unlocked the heart of the boy. The bird chose him; she trusted him to take care of it; responsibility, love and kindness were developed. Today this boy is one of the most trusted and liked pupils in the school and the president of the Kind Deeds Club of his class. His character was gradually changed by the understanding and responsibility developed by humane education.

One lad in another of our county schools surely has the club spirit at heart. His neighbors are an elderly couple and the old gentleman is seriously crippled by rheumatism. This boy has been tending their garden and is planting vegetables, refusing to take any money in payment for this kind service.

So in time will this future generation becoming the citizens of tomorrow banish the cruelties that man in his ignorance inflicts upon man and in such large measure upon the animal.

Universal kinship must be born and fostered in the heart of man, then and only then will the world know lasting peace.

ROSA'S CHRISTMAS EVE

(Continued from Page 3)

little farm home, for she had father, mother and brother. A warm glow stole into her heart and an intense pity for those who were lonely on Christmas Eve. But Madame Lehmann didn't forget; she went quietly away, not to disturb her guests, to bring cheer to her sick old neighbor.

Elsa, seeing the child's absorbed expression, went on. "Ah, Madame Lilli and Madame Marie are so good; they forget no one. This morning early the big baskets filled with good things for Christmas dinners went to all the poor people in the village and they send money to children and the poor in homes and hospitals in many cities. They are such kind ladies; they know what Christmas really means."

Rosa sat quietly holding her pretty gifts and watching the brilliant scene before her, Elsa's words ringing in her ears. "The real meaning of Christmas." Yes, that was it—"making others happy." That was the secret of it all. Why everyone loved the Lehmann sisters. They thought of others first; their loved ones, friends, servants, animals, birds, every living creature that God had made. Ever onward spread their loving thought and care to the poor, the old, the ill, lonely and feeble.

The real meaning of Christmas! Rosa's head began to nod. It had been a long and wonderful day filled with marvelous new scenes and many new thoughts. Overcome with it all, Rosa grew sleepy.

Suddenly a sweet voice said, "Come, dear." It was Lilli

Lehmann, with her arm about the little girl, they went upstairs together and a happy, drowsy Rosa hardly knew how she undressed or slipped into the warm, big bed.

The lovely singer's own hands tucked in the covers and her gentle kiss and whispered "Gute nacht, klines kind, schlofe woll." "Good night, little child, sleep well," like a lullaby, wafted her into dreamland.

The next morning Rosa went home so that she might spend the rest of Christmas with her family. She parted with her splendid friends with tears, but knew that she would return and that they would remain loyal and true friends forever.

Do you wonder why a famous artist like Madame Lilli Lehmann invited a simple little country girl like Rosa to her home, showered her with beautiful gifts and became her life-long friend? Because through her correspondence with Rosa she found a rare and fine spirit of kindness and love in her character. She was a real Kind Deeds Club member, although we were not known in Austria so many years ago.

Now, far away across the ocean in a foreign land, a sweet faced old lady remembers the trip to Germany; the sparkling sunshine upon the snow of that winter's day. She closes her eyes. Smiling, with outstretched hands of welcome, her loved dogs beside her; the happy birds singing in the trees above her, comes a beautiful woman—Lilli Lehmann—great singer, great heart and great woman!

On the sides of the big picture of Rosa's home you will see little pictures of tiles. How many can you match to the tiles on the stove?

The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Humane Education
Latham Square Building, Oakland, California