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SIXTY-FIRST  
ANNIVERSARY  
DINNER

OF THE

ST. NICHOLAS SOCIETY  
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



DECEMBER  
SEVENTH  
1896

Saint Nicholas Society  
of the City of New York

Record of the  
Sixty-first Anniversary Dinner



DECEMBER SEVENTH, 1896  
DELMONICO'S, NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD  
OF STEWARDS.

SIXTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY DINNER.

Saint Nicholas Day was celebrated by a dinner at Delmonico's, on Monday, December 7, 1896, at seven o'clock.

Mr. EDWARD KING, President of the Society,  
in the Chair.

The Very Rev. DEAN HOFFMAN said grace.

GUESTS PRESENT.

President of St. David's Society, Mr. JULIEN  
T. DAVIES.

President of St. Andrew's Society, Mr. J.  
KENNEDY TOD.

President of St. George's Society, Mr. FRANCIS  
W. J. HUEST.

Secretary of the Society of the Cincinnati,  
Mr. NICHOLAS FISH.

Representative of the New England Society,  
Mr. JOHN K. CELLEY.

Representative of the Society of Colonial  
Wars, Mr. FREDERIC J. DE PEYSTER.

Major-General T. H. RUGER, U. S. A.

Commodore MONTGOMERY SICARD, U. S. N.

Consul-General JOHN R. PLANTEN.

Hon. WILLIAM L. STRONG, Mayor of the City  
of New York.

Hon. THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Mr. ELIHU ROOT.

Rev. Dr. J. LEWIS PARKS.

Dr. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW.

Dr. D. B. ST. J. ROOSA.

## RESPONSE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

It is very right that we who meet here as members or guests of the St. Nicholas Society should know how to be merry, and I know you will pardon me if I ask you also to be serious. While I will not do as one of my brother Dutchmen feared another brother Dutchman would do, make either a good or an old speech, still you must pardon me if what I say shall have a certain likeness to what I have before said to men of this Society, because when I speak here I feel that I have a peculiar right to speak just that which is nearest my heart; and so I am going to speak upon what after all is a modification of the one subject that is nearer the hearts of every Knickerbocker ever pertaining to the land of the nativity of our ancestors, dearer than anything else,—and that is Americanism. (Applause.)

Our President has well said that there have been dangers which we have confronted abroad. I do not intend to speak of the dangers which we have confronted in international affairs. I am probably more of what some of you may call a jingo than most of you, though I am not in the least more of a patriot than any of you when foreign foes are concerned, and I know that in the future as in the past every man here will give all that is best in him for the service of the Country.

(Applause.) But we have less to fear in the United States from foreign levy than from malice domestic, and it befits us as a people to face the dangers that lie at our own threshold. It is worse than foolish to blind ourselves in a spirit of mere genial optimism—a spirit more noxious than mere pessimism. We want to face the dangers and difficulties so that we may overcome them. (Applause.) We need to realize that if we are going to save this nation we must feel that no part of this land is the enemy's land. We must not be ashamed to think that even Nebraska is not in the enemy's country. (Laughter.) We have got lots of missionary work to do around New York City before we can afford to pity too ostentatiously the other parts of the country.

There are two or three points upon which I wish to lay special stress, and I shall ask no pardon for trenching a little upon my personal experience of the past eighteen months, for each man can speak best that which he has been forced to learn by heart, and one of those lessons is what our presence here to-night means—that if we wish to win in that part of the world's conflict for progress which is symbolized by the name American Civilization we must fight along no narrow lines of creed or of race origin. For the last eighteen months, outside of my own im-

mediate associates, I have received the most stalwart assistance from a man whom I almost tempted to call the most useful citizen of New York, and I don't know that more than a small number of you know him—a man not born in America, a full-blooded Dane, who came over here when he was 18 or 19 years of age, and who has devoted himself to making more bearable the conditions of life in this city to those to whom their present conditions of life are now most unbearable—I refer to Mr. Jacob Riis. (A voice : “ Don't know him ! ”) Don't know him ! Read his book “ How the Other Half Live,” and it will teach you how the other half—aye, how nine-tenths of the people of this city live. He will show you what real charity is,—helping a man by helping him to walk, not by carrying him. (Applause.) I wouldn't mention names if it could be avoided, but I must in order to make my point. The other day I was struck by the immense amount of injustice necessarily perpetrated on the poorest classes of immigrants, and I wondered why somebody had not started that as a charity, and I found it had been done, although I did not know it. There is a charity called the Legal Aid Society, that was started by another most useful New Yorker,—again a man born on the other side,—Arthur von Briesen. (Applause.) And now I have to mention

one more man that is here. I might explain to you, what will doubtless be news to you, that during the past year I have occasionally been unfavorably criticised (laughter), and then there are certain newspapers that have spoken of me in what may be called an unfriendly spirit (renewed laughter), and the only comfort I have had is that I have enjoyed it more than they have. But when we need to have people who would not be carried away by any storm of unfair criticism we have appreciated it, and one man who has especially backed me up has been Mr. John Kennedy Tod. (Applause.) In managing the Police Department I speedily found what every man must find that we could draw help from every source, from every church, and could expect to find foes in every nationality and in every church, and that we were bound no more to flinch from any set of foes because they represented a given race or religion than we were bound to uphold any man who did his duty without regard to the religion which he professed or to the land from which his ancestors came. I would decline to show one least bit of favor more to the man of my creed or of my origin than I would to the last emigrant from Ireland or from Russia. All I demand of him is that he shall not act as either Protestant, or Jew, as Irishman, German or Russian, but that he

shall be a plain American and nothing else. If he is that I will treat him precisely as if his ancestors had come over in the *Mayflower* or the *Half-Moon*. (Applause.)

Our people must know that as we spurn as utterly base the demand of any demagogue that the country shall find out what New York wants and then act the other way—and more base advice never was given in any section—that exactly as we demand that, so in return the country has a right to demand that we shall prove that we are good New Yorkers by first being good Americans and New Yorkers next. (Applause.)

And, finally, not only must we disregard conditions of race if we want to make America what it shall be and what it has been and disregard conditions of section, but we must disregard any consideration of classes; and not merely the demagogue, but the sentimental philanthropist, the would-be humanitarian, who, in trying to make things better, manages to make them a little worse; that we shall not only listen to those who preach to men, such as are here before me to-night, the doctrine of mutual health, the doctrine that we must take an interest in more than our own selfish concerns—that we must take an interest in the welfare of our fellow-men; we need to have that preached to those who have more than their share of the

world's goods, and we need to have another doctrine preached, too, and that is the doctrine of the baseness of mere envy; of the baseness of teaching people that somehow the inequalities that come because some men are better gifted with thrift, intelligence, courage and ability than others, that therefore there is something unjust in the society in which they live. (Applause.) And right here I wish to reproach not merely the demagogues, but the foolish friend of man even if he be priest or clergyman who, during the intervals between campaigns, preaches a discontent so vague that he himself can give no idea of a remedy for it, and at election time nearly falls into hysterics because he finds that the voters are going to practice what he has been preaching. (Applause.)

There are evils in life. Sickness is an evil. You cannot destroy it by legislation. You can do something with the right doctor. You cannot do anything with a quack doctor who says he can cure all your diseases; and you cannot do it any more in the body politic. Teach the workingman to fear above all others that man, be he demagogue or be he would-be philanthropist, who tries to tell him that by some deft manipulation of the laws you can make the pyramid stand on its apex. Teach the workingman that he cannot afford to rely upon any one else

to carry him, let that any one else be an individual or the State. Teach the workingman the old American doctrine of self-help. There will always be inequality. In justice—who of us does not know where there has been what seems to him injustice in the distribution of happiness, a distribution not due to mankind, but to the iron laws of nature? Teach him to war steadfastly for the right. Teach him to try to be thrifty, to try to be honest, to try to be intelligent; to know that his salvation lies only in his own hands; that he may not be able to work it out himself, but that most assuredly no one else can work it out for him. Teach him to beware of the man who preaches a vague discontent, who prattles about the wrongs inflicted upon the workingman by hoarded wealth and cannot specify one workingman who has been wronged by that wealth. Teach him to think. You will hear men say that the wealthy men, the monopolists, the men who are in the trusts, are responsible for the discontent. Where were the votes cast at the last election most largely because of that discontent? In the States where there were least wealth, fewest monopolists. The money-lender they were able to look out for. I can tell you the State where the money-lender is down. Some of you know it. The creditor class is underneath in Kansas. The only Blue

Blood Leedy has been elected on the issue that there ought not to be a creditor in the Governor's mansion while the toiling man in the fields cannot pay. They have got the gold bug, the Wall Street shark, down in Kansas, but they do not seem to be really enjoying themselves.

Remember, that the worst harm you can do the man whose life is already sufficiently hard is to teach him that it may be made easy by grumbling against fate, by whining when he is down instead of meeting the issue when it comes. Teach him that it is foolish to speak if he cannot give some kind of diagnosis, like the witch doctors of the Middle Ages who, because a man suffered, would burn somebody else on the plea that he might have done him some harm. Teach him that the doctrine commonly taught him is utterly un-American and is worthy of the cracked brain of some European anarchist. Teach him finally that here in this country we expect men to stand stalwartly, shoulder to shoulder, for what they deem to be right; that we expect no one man to ask favors of another; that we expect the man whose work is sought to take pride in doing his best and not waste his time in envying others who have done better, and if we are ever to work out the destiny of this Republic so that it may become what it should become, we must work it out by standing shoulder

to shoulder, Easterner and Westerner, Northerner and Southerner, employer and employee, merchant and clerk, jealous of the honor of our country and indignant at those who, under any pretense whatsoever, would trail that honor in the dust. (Great applause.)