

CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT.

Say what is well, and do what is better.

A CHRISTMAS TREE.

The oak is a strong and stalwart tree,
And in its branches up,
And in its boughs the leaves gallantly
In many a sturdy cup,
And the wood is brighter, and better made,
Because of a woodman's stroke,
In the sunny form of the oak;
The stronger, I ween, in aspect of green,
And its trappings so far to see,
With its precious freight, for small and great,
Is the beautiful Christmas tree.

The elm is a kind and gentle tree,
With its branches bending low,
And we look to the river's flow,
As if the heart is glad, and the pulses bound,
And joy illumines the face,
Whenever a goodly elm is found,
Because of its beauty and grace,
But kinder, I ween, more goodly in main,
With its branches more drooping and free,
The limbs of whose leaves finely weave,
Is the beautiful Christmas tree.

The maple is supple, and little, and strong,
And claimeth our love anew,
When the days are listless, and quiet and long,
And the world is far to view,
And later—so beauteous and grace unfold—
A monarch richly regally dressed,
With streamers afloat and pennons of gold,
Is seeneth of all the best;
More luscious, I ween, the brightness and sheen,
And the coloring, sunny and free,
And the banners soft, that are held aloft,
By the beautiful Christmas tree.

THE THIEVES WHO COULDN'T HELP SNEEZING.

Many years ago, when oak-trees now past their prime were about as large as elderly gentlemen's walking-sticks, there lived in Wessex a yeoman's son whose name was Hubert. He was about fourteen years of age, and was remarkable for his candor and lightness of heart as for his physical courage, of which, indeed, he was a little vain.

One cold Christmas Eve, his father, having no other help at hand, sent him on an important errand to a small town several miles from home. He traveled on horseback and was detained by the business till a late hour of the evening.

At last, however, it was completed; he returned to the inn, the horse was saddled, and he started on his way. His journey homeward lay through the Valley of Blackmore, a fertile but somewhat lonely district with heavy clay roads and crooked lanes. In those days, too, a great part of it was thickly wooded.

It must have been about nine o'clock when riding along amid the overhanging trees upon his stout-legged cob Jerry, and singing a Christmas carol, to be in harmony with the season, Hubert fancied he heard a noise among the boughs.

This recalled to his mind that the spot he was traversing bore an evil name. Men had been waylaid there. He looked at Jerry, and wished he had been of any other color than light-grey; for on this account the docile animal's form was visible even here in the dense shade.

"What do I care?" he said aloud, after a few minutes of reflection. "Jerry's legs are too nimble to allow any highwayman to come near me."

"That had indeed," was said in a deep voice; and the next moment a man darted from the thicket on his left hand, and another from a tree-trunk a few yards ahead. Hubert's horse was seized, and he was pulled from his horse, and although he struck out with all his might, as a brave boy naturally would do, he was overpowered. His arms were tied behind him, his legs were bound tightly together, and he was thrown into the ditch. The robbers whose faces he could now dimly perceive to be artificially blackened, at once departed, leading off the horse.

As soon as Hubert had a little recovered himself, he found that by great exertion he was able to extricate his legs from the cord; but, in spite of every endeavor, his arms remained bound as fast as before. All, therefore, that he could do was to rise to his feet and proceed on his way with his arms behind him, and trust to chance for getting them unfastened.

He knew that it would be impossible to reach home on foot that night, and in such condition; but he walked on.

Owing to the confusion which this attack caused in his brain, he lost his way and would have been inclined to lie down and rest until morning among the dead leaves, had he not known the danger of sleeping without wrappers in a frost so severe.

He was not a little glad when he discerned through the trees a distant light. Towards this he made his way, and presently found himself in front of a large mansion with flanking wings, and towers, and battlements, and chimneys showing their shapes against the stars.

All was silent, but the door stood wide open, it being from this door that the light shone which had attracted him. On entering he found himself in a vast apartment arranged as a dining-hall, and brilliantly illuminated. The walls were covered with a great deal of wainscoting, formed into walded panels, screens, closed-hoors, and the usual trimmings of a house of that kind. But what attracted his attention most was the large table in the midst of the hall, upon which was spread a sumptuous supper, as yet untouched. Chairs were placed around and it appeared as if something had occurred to interrupt the guests at the time when all were to be seated.

Hubert had been so inclined, he had not been eaten in his helpless state,

unless by dipping his mouth into the dishes, like a pig or cow. He wished first to obtain assistance; and was about to penetrate further into the house for that purpose when he heard hasty footsteps in the porch and the words, "Be quick!" uttered in the deep voice which had reached him when he was dragged from the horse.

There was only just time for him to dart under the table before three men entered the dining-hall. Peeping from beneath the hanging-edges of the tablecloth, he perceived that their faces, too, were blackened, which at once removed any remaining doubts he might have left that these were the same thieves.

"Now then," said the first—the man with the deep voice—"let us hide ourselves. They will all be back again in a minute. That was a good trick to get them out of the house, eh?"

"Yes, you well imitate the cries of a man in distress," said the second.

"Excellent," said the third. "But they will soon find out that it was a false alarm. Come, where shall we hide? It must be some place we can stay in two or three hours, till all are in bed and asleep. Ah! I have it. Come this way! I have found that the further closet is not opened once in a twelvemonth; it will serve our purpose exactly."

The speaker advanced into a corridor which led from the hall. Creeping a little further forward, Hubert could discern that the closet stood at the end, facing the dining-hall. The thieves entered it, and closed the door.

Scarcely breathing, Hubert glided forward to learn a little more of their intention if possible; and coming close, he could hear the robbers whispering about the different rooms where the jewels, plate, and other valuables of the house were kept, which they plainly meant to steal.

They had not been long in hiding when a gay chattering of ladies and gentlemen was audible on the terrace without.

Hubert felt that it would not do to be caught prowling about the house, unless he wished to be taken for a robber himself; and he slipped softly back to the hall, out at the door, and stood in a dark corner of the porch, where he could see every thing without being himself seen. In a moment or two a whole troop of personages came gliding past him into the house.

There were an elderly gentleman and lady, eight or nine young ladies, as many young men, besides half a dozen men-servants and maids. The mansion had apparently been quite emptied of its occupants.

"Now, children and young people, we will resume our meal," said the old gentleman. "What the noise could have been I cannot understand. I never felt so certain in my life that there was a person being murdered outside my door."

Then the ladies began saying how frightened they had been, and how they had ended in nothing after all.

"Wait a while," said Hubert to himself. "You'll have adventure enough by-and-by, ladies."

It appeared that the young men and women were married sons and daughters of the old couple, who had come that day to spend Christmas with their parents.

The door was then closed, Hubert being left outside in the porch. He thought this the proper moment for asking their assistance; and, since he was unable to knock with his hands, began boldly to kick the door.

"Hullo! What disturbance are you making here?" said a footman who opened it; and seizing Hubert by the shoulder, he pulled him into the dining-hall. "Here's a strange boy I have found making a noise in the porch, Sir Simon."

Everybody turned. "Bring him forward," said Sir Simon, the old gentleman before mentioned. "What were you doing there my boy?"

"Why his arms are tied," said one of the ladies.

"Poor fellow!" said another. Hubert began at once to explain that he had been waylaid on his journey home, robbed of his horse, and mercifully left in this condition by the thieves.

"Only to think of it!" exclaimed Sir Simon.

"That's a likely story," said one of the gentleman-guests, incredulously.

"Doubtful, eh?" asked Sir Simon.

"Perhaps he's a robber himself," suggested a lady.

"There is a curiously wild wicked look about him, certainly, now that I examine him closely," said the old mother.

Hubert blushed with shame; and instead of continuing his story, and relating that robbers were concealed in the house, he doggedly held his tongue, and half resolved to let them find out their danger for themselves.

"Well, uncle him," said Sir Simon. "Come, since it is Christmas Eve, we'll treat him well. Here, my lad, sit down in that empty seat at the bottom of the table, and make as good a meal as you can. When you have had your fill, we will listen to more particulars of your story."

The feast then proceeded, and Hubert, now at liberty, was not at all sorry to join in.

The more they eat and drank, the merrier did the company become; the wine flowed freely, the log-flared up the chimney, the ladies laughed at the gentlemen's stories—in short, all went as



The merry Christmas tides.



The beautiful snow.

noisily and as happily as a Christmas gathering in old times possibly could do.

Hubert, in spite of his hurt feelings at their doubts of his honesty, could not help being warmed both in mind and body by the good cheer, the scene; and the example of hilarity set by his neighbors.

At last he laughed as heartily as their stories and repartees as the old baronet, Sir Simon himself.

When the meal was almost over one of the sons, who had drunk a little too much wine, after the manner of men in that century, said to Hubert:

"Well, my boy, how are you? Can you take a pinch of snuff?"

He held out one of the snuff-boxes which were then becoming common among young and old throughout the country.

"Thank you," said Hubert, accepting a pinch.

"Toll the ladies who you are, what you are made of, and what you can do" the young man continued, slapping Hubert upon the shoulder.

"Certainly," said our hero, drawing himself up, and thinking it best to put a bold face on the matter. "I am a traveling magician."

"Indeed!"

"What shall we hear next?"

"Can you call up spirits from the vasty deep, young wizard?"

"I can conjure up a tempest in a cup-board," Hubert replied.

"Ha, ha!" said the old baronet, pleasantly, rubbing his hands. "We must see this performance. Girls, don't go away; here's something to be seen."

"Not dangerous, I hope," said the old lady.

Hubert rose from the table.

"Hand me your snuff-box, please," he said to the young man who had made free with him. "And now," he continued, "without the least noise, follow me. If any of you speak it will break the spell."

They promised obedience. He entered the corridor, and taking off his shoes, went on tiptoe to the closet-door, the guests advancing in a silent group at a little distance behind him.

Hubert next placed a stool in front of the door, and, by standing upon it, was tall enough to reach to the top. He then, just as noiselessly, poured all the snuff from the box along the edge of the door, and with a few short puffs of breath, blew the snuff through the chink into the interior of the closet. He held up his finger to the assembly, that they might be silent.

"Dear me, what's that?" said the old lady, after a minute or two had elapsed.

A suppressed sneeze had come from inside the closet.

"Hubert held up his finger again.

"How very singular," whispered Sir Simon. "This is most interesting."

Hubert took advantage of the moment to gently slide the bolt of the closet-door into its place.

"More snuff," he said calmly.

"More snuff," said Sir Simon.

Two or three gentlemen passed their noses, and the contents were blown in at the top of the closet. Another sneeze, not quite so well suppressed as the first, was heard; then another, which seemed to say that it would not be suppressed under any circumstances whatever. At length there arose a perfect storm of sneezes.

"Excellent! excellent for one so young!" said Sir Simon. "I am much interested in the trick of throwing the voice—called I believe ventriloquism."

"More snuff," said Hubert.

"More snuff," said Sir Simon.

Sir Simon's men brought a large jar of the best scented Scotch.

Hubert once more charged the upper chink of the closet, and blew the snuff into the interior, as before. Again he charged and again emptying the whole contents of the jar. The tumult of sneezes became really extraordinary to listen to—there was no cessation. It was like wind-rain, and sea-battleing in a hurricane.

"I believe there are men inside, and that it is no trick at all!" exclaimed Sir Simon, the truth flashing on him.

"There are," said Hubert. "They are come to rob the house; and they are the same who stole my horse."

The sneezes changed to spasmodic groans. One of the thieves, hearing Hubert's voice, cried:

"Oh, mercy, mercy! let us out of this!"

"Where is my horse?" said Hubert.

"Tied to the tree in the hollow behind Short's Ghost. Mercy! mercy! let us out, or we shall die of suffocation!"

All the Christmas guests now perceived that this was no longer sport, but serious earnest.

Guns and candles were procured; all the men-servants were called in, and arranged in position outside the closet.

At a signal Hubert withdrew the bolt, and stood on the defensive. But the three robbers, far from attacking them, were found crouching in the corner, gasping for breath.

They made no resistance; and, being pinioned, were placed in an out-house till the morning.

Hubert now gave the remainder of his story to the assembled company, and was profusely thanked for the service he had rendered.

Sir Simon pressed him to stay over night and accept the use of the best bedroom the house afforded, which had been occupied by Queen Elizabeth and King Charles successively when on their visit to this part of the country.

But Hubert declined, being anxious to find his horse Jerry, and to test the truth

of the robbers' statements concerning him.

Several of the guests accompanied Hubert to the spot behind the ghost, alighted to be by the thieves as where Jerry was hidden.

When they reached the knoll and looked over, behold! there the horse stood, uninjured and quite unconcerned.

At sight of Hubert he neighed joyfully, and nothing could exceed Hubert's gladness at finding him.

He mounted, wished his friends good-night and cantered off in the direction they pointed out as his nearest way, reaching home safely about four o'clock in the morning.

His Last Exploit.

"What's the matter with that baby?" growled Spoopendyke, as he sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. "Can't you stop this fuss?"

"Hush—h—h—h!" cooed Mrs. Spoopendyke, cradling the infant. "Don't e ky. Dada wants to sleep. Baby s'al be dood."

Mr. Spoopendyke eyed the proceeding cynically for a moment and then the baby burst out again.

"Dry up!" shouted Mr. Spoopendyke. "There's nothing the matter with you. Why don't you go to sleep like a Christian?"

"There, there, there!" cooed Mrs. Spoopendyke. "She's des too twest for anysing. Poor little dirl! Now, go to sleep like a little dear!"

Whereat the baby howled dismally.

"Can't you give her something?" demanded Mr. Spoopendyke. "Can't you you dose her. S'pose I'm going to lay awake all night for the fun of appreciating that I am the head of the family! Here, let me take her, I'll fix her," and Mr. Spoopendyke grabbed his offspring and began to pace the floor with her.

"Be careful of her, and I'll heat some water and try a little peppermint and sugar," said Mrs. Spoopendyke, as she promptly raked out a battered tin cup, well blacked around the bottom and sides, which she promptly converted into a boiler.

"A baby never cries unless there's a pin sticking in her," argued Mr. Spoopendyke as he held the infant across his arm and began to undo her night dress. "What's this thing you've got wrapped around her?"

"That's her 'belly band,' don't touch it," squeaked Mrs. Spoopendyke, waving the cup a foot from the gas jet in her trepidation.

"Oh! I see," retorted Mr. Spoopendyke, fishing out the pins. "What's that other thing here, the 'bricking'?" Hold on Cleopatra!" he continued, as the howling young one made a spring, "don't make the mistake of trying to fool Spoopendyke," and the fond father groped around for the cause of the disturbance. "Since you've got the rest of the harness on, p'raps you'd better drive this baby with martingales. And I'll tell you one thing, Mrs. Spoopendyke, this baby's clothes ain't mor' a half aired. No wonder she howls. Cutches, cutches, cutches; dot gash the thing! Say, what do you call this rifle barrel business? What's this breastpin doing here under her chest?"

"Good gracious, that's a safety pin! Let it alone!" said Mrs. Spoopendyke.

What's the combination of this racket anyhow?" demanded Mr. Spoopendyke, tugging at the pins. "Who soldered this thing on? What's it for? Give me the combination!" and he jerked it loose with results he had scarcely contemplated for it let the baby stifle. The startled young one shivered and was quiet for a moment.

"Told you so," said Mr. Spoopendyke, with an air of triumph. "It only needs a little common sense to take care of a baby."

But at that instant the infant turned up again with redoubled vigor.

"Let me take her," pleaded Mrs. Spoopendyke, "she'll freeze to death!"

"Let her freeze!" roared Mr. Spoopendyke. "If this mewling baby is going to have her way about howling, she's going to have it out freezing. Cutches, cutches, cutches!" Dry up, will you?" and Mr. Spoopendyke set his teeth and pranced around, all of which extracted the most frightful row from his infant.

"She wants medicine, and I've got it ready for her," said Mrs. Spoopendyke. "Come to mamma, now, what a little dear! Come to mamma and be comforted," and as she took the child the cries died away into sobs and were buried in sulk.

"I knew I could quiet her," said Mr. Spoopendyke, as he watched the baby. "You don't know anything about children, or you never would have put that tin archer in her clothes. That was what all'd her."

"It wasn't either," snapped Mrs. Spoopendyke. "She's got the colic, little dear! and you almost killed her."

"Anyway, she stopped her howling," retorted Mr. Spoopendyke, "and she howled because you wanted her to stand in the shafts all night." Another time you'll know enough to unlatch the young one before you put her in the wall." Mrs. Spoopendyke made no response, but looked in perpetuum, qualified with a little warm water and sugar. Then she carefully dressed the baby and turned in.

"Going to put out the gas?" demanded Mr. Spoopendyke from under the clothes, which he had pulled up to his eyebrows.

"No," replied Mrs. Spoopendyke shortly. "The gas can burn!" howled her husband, "if you think I'm going to roost out 'fore me!"

But ten minutes later he thought of the bill, and thinking his wife fast asleep, he got up and gave the screw a vindictive wrench and tumbled back to bed, unconscious of the hysterical giggle that followed his last exploit.

Friends may some day be lovers, but lovers who are not friends will soon cease to be both.

"Well, I was more toothless than I am now. We were pretty the day before, and carelessly left in its start, and there within forty feet of me was the highlight of a locomotive bearing which they cut his throat from ear, and literally cut off his head. After giving a few blows the neck was so

"And I'll bet you went right to a sub-

some condition; while rare herbs useful for the seasoning of soup, etc., but

"Well, my friend,