

Plenty of Proof

By O. F. WOODRUFF

EDDY sat upon the top step of the stairs that led to the street and rested his chin in the palm of his hand. Some of the fellows came along and hulloed to him, but Teddy didn't answer. He didn't want to play with the fellows just now, for he was battling with a great sorrow.

Tom had said it, so it must be true, for Tom was eight years old and didn't have to go to bed until 8 o'clock. Teddy's hour for retiring was half past 7, and he realized that the extra half hour made a man of the world out of Tom, while it left the unfortunate Teddy still a baby.

Tom had stuck his hands into his pockets—Tom's trousers were lovely and rough, just like his father's—and had swaggered around telling all the fellows that there wasn't any Santa Claus! When questioned further, he had said that there used to be, but that this year there wasn't going to be, and there never would be again.

No Santa Claus! If Teddy hadn't been six years old, he might have cried, but of course one as old as he never cried.

Teddy wondered if he'd better tell his mother. He decided he wouldn't. Why should his mother, whom he loved so dearly, be made to suffer any longer than was necessary?

It was hard, though, during the next two weeks, which seemed like years, not to tell, and when Christmas eve came and his mother gayly brought out his biggest pair of stockings and



hung them up at the end of the mantle he could hardly keep back the tears. How disappointed he and his mother would be when they got up in the morning and found the stockings empty! She leaned over and kissed him tenderly. "Are you tired, dear?" she asked. "You don't seem as happy as usual!"

Teddy assured her, as well as he was able for the lump in his throat, that he was perfectly well. His mother, like the wise one that she was, didn't press the question. She merely drew up her low rocking chair and sat beside the bed until she thought Teddy was asleep and then she crept quietly down stairs.

Teddy lay for a long time after she went, watching the firelight flicker on the walls. He couldn't go to sleep and besides what was the use, when there wasn't anything to wake up for? A good many tears rolled out of the corners of his eyes, but he didn't care now.

He must have lain there for about four or ten hours, he thought, and had just shut his eyes to rest them from the light, when he heard a sound, a very little bit of a sound. He sat up quickly in bed and listened eagerly, because it sounded, it really did sound, as if it might be sleighbells. In a minute, he didn't know just how, he was leaning out of the window.

He didn't feel as if he had walked there at all, but more as if he had just skimmed along without any effort on his part, as if he had been some sort of delightful fire bird. He leaned away out of the window, not feeling a bit afraid of falling, and looked down upon the street.

Yes, down there on the street, as plain as day, he could see the reindeer shaking their long horns and prancing until the bells that seemed almost to cover them filled the air with their musical jingle. And then there was a gleam of red. Somebody was climbing into the sleigh! There was the echo



of a joyful voice calling, the horns of the reindeer quivered joyfully, their little feet pawed the ground, then the whole turnout seemed to leap into the air, and like a flash was gone!

Teddy rubbed his eyes. It was funny! He thought he was at the window, but here he was in bed.

He sat up and looked around the room. The fire in the grate had gone out, but the gray light of the morning was beginning to steal through the curtains. Teddy slid out of bed and crept softly to the fireplace.

The stockings were bulging in all places, and he had been their exhilarating work in other years. He put out his hand and touched one of them gently. It was no dream! The stocking was full to overflowing!

With a little sighing, whispering his words of joy and relief Teddy clasped his hands and knuckles showed as white as the snow outside. Then with a cry of absolute delight he dashed into his mother's room.

She opened a pair of sleepy eyes at the sound of the pattering little feet. Teddy threw himself upon her, laughing and sobbing.

"Oh, mother, mother, mother!" he cried. "He come after all! Santa Claus did come! Santa Claus did come! He did, he did, he did!"—Chicago Daily News.

THE TRUE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



The Goblins

A Christmas Story

IN an old abbey town a long, long while ago there officiated as sexton and gravedigger in the churchyard one Gabriel Grubb. He was an ill conditioned, cross grained, surly fellow, who consorted with nobody but himself and an old wicker bottle, which fitted into his large, deep waistcoat pocket.

A little before twilight one Christmas eve Gabriel shouldered his spade, lighted his lantern and betook himself toward the old churchyard, for he had a grave to finish by next morning.

He strode along until he turned into the dark lane which led to the churchyard—a nice, gloomy, mournful place, into which the townspeople did not care to go except in broad daylight; consequently he was not a little indignant to hear a young urchin roaring out some jolly song about a merry Christmas. Gabriel waited until the boy came up, then rapped him over the head with his lantern five or six times to teach him to modulate his voice. And as the boy hurried away, with his



hand to his head, Gabriel Grubb chuckled to himself and entered the churchyard, locking the gate behind him.

He took off his coat, put down his lantern and, getting into an unfinished grave, worked at it for an hour or so with right good will. But the earth was hardened with the frost, and it was no easy matter to break it up and shovel it out. When he had finished work for the night and looked down into the grave with grim satisfaction he murmured:

"Brave lodgings for one, brave lodgings for one. A few feet of cold earth when life is done."

"Ho, ho!" he laughed as he sat himself down on a flat tombstone, which was a favorite resting place of his, and drew forth a wicker bottle.

"Ho, ho, ho!" repeated a voice close beside him.

"It was the echoes," said he, raising the bottle to his lips again.

"It was not," said a deep voice. Gabriel started up and stood rooted to the spot with terror.

Seated on an upright tombstone close to him was a strange unearthly figure. He was sitting perfectly still, cringing at Gabriel Grubb with such a grin as only a goblin could call up.

"What do you here on Christmas eve?" said the goblin sternly. "I came to dig a grave, sir," stammered Gabriel.

"What man wanders among graves

on such a night as this?" cried the goblin.

"Gabriel Grubb, Gabriel Grubb!" screamed a wild chorus of voices that seemed to fill the churchyard.

"What have you got in that bottle?" said the goblin.

"Hollands, sir," replied the sexton, trembling more than ever, for he had bought it of the smugglers, and he thought his questioner might be in the excise department of the goblins.

"Who drinks Hollands alone and in a churchyard on such a night as this?" "Gabriel Grubb, Gabriel Grubb!" exclaimed the wild voices again.

"And who, then, is our lawful prize?" exclaimed the goblin.

"The invisible chorus replied, 'Gabriel Grubb, Gabriel Grubb!'"

"The sexton gasped for breath. 'What do you think of this, Gabriel?' said the goblin.

"It's—it's very curious, sir; very curious, sir, and very pretty," replied the sexton, half dead with fright. "But I think I'll go back and finish my work, sir, if you please."

"Work!" said the goblin. "What work?"

"The grave, sir."

"Oh, the grave, eh? Who makes graves at a time when other men are merry and take a pleasure in it?"

Again the voices replied, "Gabriel Grubb, Gabriel Grubb!"

"I'm afraid my friends want you, Gabriel," said the goblin.

"Under favor, sir," replied the horror stricken sexton. "I don't think they can. They don't know me, sir, I don't think the gentlemen have ever seen me."

"Oh, yes, they have! We know the man who struck the boy in the envious malice of his heart because the boy could be merry and he could not."

Here the goblin gave a loud, shrill laugh which the echoes returned twentyfold.

"I—I am afraid I must leave you, sir," said the sexton, making an effort to move.

"Leave us!" said the goblin. "Ho, ho, ho!"

As the goblin laughed he suddenly darted toward Gabriel, laid his hand on his collar and sank with him through the earth. And when he had had time to fetch his breath he found himself in what appeared to be a large cavern, surrounded on all sides by goblins ugly and grim.

"And now," said the king of the goblins, seated in the center of the room on an elevated seat—his friend of the churchyard—"show the man of misery and gloom a few of the pictures from our great storehouses."

As the goblin said this a cloud rolled gradually away and disclosed a small and scantily furnished but neat apartment. Little children were gathered round a bright fire, clinging to their mother's gown or gamboling round her chair. A frugal meal was spread upon the table, and an elbow chair was placed near the fire. Soon the father entered, and the children ran to meet him. As he sat down to his meal the mother sat by his side, and all seemed happiness and comfort.

"What do you think of that?" said the goblin.

Gabriel murmured something about its being very pretty.

"Show him some more," said the goblin.

Many a time the cloud went and came, and many a lesson it taught to Gabriel Grubb. He saw that men who worked hard and earned their scanty bread were cheerful and happy. And he came to the conclusion it was a very respectable sort of world after all. One by one the goblins faded from his sight, and as the last one disappeared he sank to sleep.

The day had broken when he awoke and found himself lying on the flat gravestone, with the wicker bottle empty by his side. He got on his feet as well as he could and, brushing the frost off his coat, turned his face toward the town.

But he was an altered man. He had learned lessons of contentment and good nature by his strange adventures in the goblin's cavern—Charles Dickens.

No Chance of That. The beggar accepted gratefully a nickel from the professional humorist. "Thank you, sir," he said, his voice vibrant with deep feeling. "Oh, thank you, sir, and may you live to be as old as your jokes."—Washington Post.

Life of the Red Deer. According to an old Gaelic legend a red deer might live for 210 years, an eagle for 630 and an oak tree for nearly nineteen centuries. Nowadays, however, hundred-year-old deer would be difficult to find. From twenty-five to thirty-five years apparently may be about the range of their existence.—London Express.

Her Bridge. "What's her bridge like?" "The Bridge of Sighs—makes every one gasp."—Life.

The Open Window. The best part of a modern house is its windows. To keep these open day and night and to make the air inside approach as nearly as possible the air outside should be the first business of the housekeeper.

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