

THE LOST BASKET.

In the extreme north of Scotland there lived in a lonely cottage a poor shepherd and his family. You must not think that this man possessed a number of sheep, because his business consisted in caring for them. No, he was too poor for that, but, he attended a flock for his master, who dwelt in a large house some miles distant.

It was Christmas eve. Not much preparation was made in the cottage as regards provisions, for the shepherd had been promised a basket of good things from his master's house. On this afternoon he had dispatched his son Willie, a lad of twelve years, to bring home the promised present. The boy reached his destination, shouldered his burden, and set out for home. But the sky was suddenly covered with dark clouds. Presently a small white flake came spinning through the air, soon followed by a hundred others. A snow storm was at hand.

The lad hastened on his journey, but had not got over half the distance ere he was caught in the thick shower. He was forced to proceed slowly, being uncertain of the track. In a few minutes, the snow had completely covered the moor. The frightened boy laid down his burden, not knowing what to do. At last, he determined to abandon the basket, and run in the direction of his home.

He succeeded, after much difficulty, in reaching the cottage. There stood his father, anxiously awaiting his return. The old man was so delighted at seeing his son safe, that he forgot the basket for the moment. The loss of the provisions was a serious matter, for there was no way of obtaining a fresh supply.

Then the shepherd thought of his faithful dog, Jip. He called the animal and dispatched him out upon the moor, trusting to his sagacity to discover the missing article. The dog soon traced it, but before dragging it from its bed, proceeded to scratch up the snow all around, evidently to satisfy himself that no one lay beneath.

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The inmates of the cottage raised a shout of joy when they saw him return with the basket between his teeth.

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