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Caleb's Conversion

By HAZEL OSWALD

It was Christmas eve, and Caleb Churton, the money-lender, sat in his [illegible] dining room, surrounded by all [illegible] makes for luxurious living.

"So Jack preferred his artist's work to this," he mused, chuckling contemptuously while he half spoke the words.

Ten years before, his elder brother had told their father that he was not cut out for a Shylock, that he preferred to get a living by pleasanter means than his fellow-beings' flesh and blood, and had gone out into the world cursed by the father and laughed at by his brother.

It was three years later—and 12 months after he had announced his marriage to a fellow-artist's daughter—that old Churton died, leaving all the business to Caleb, and not mentioning Jack Churton by as much as a single word in his will.

To do him justice, Caleb had rebelled against this as much as he could, but he had found out that his brother was able to keep his head above water, and, after offering him a share—only to be indignantly refused—Caleb applied himself to the task of doubling his father's wealth.

All these things went through his brain as he sat by his fire. Of a sudden a thought struck him.

"I will go and parade my wealth before them—will make the wife bitterly envious and Jack sorry that he ever refused me!"

With this amiable intention he rose, ordered his automobile to be brought out, and was soon whirling toward Jack's home.

Suddenly the auto stopped, and he got out, telling the chauffeur to return in an hour, not longer.

"If I am finished before, I can spend the time somehow," he thought.

Up the steps of the great apartment he went until he came to a door labelled 42. Then he knocked, and getting no answer, entered very quietly, finding the door not locked.

He looked round the tiny hall, and then stepped into the first room.

"Are you Santa Claus?"

The timid little query stopped him in his wanderings, and he looked down to his feet to see a sunny-haired, blue-eyed little mite gravely regarding him.

"But no, you can't be Santa Claus, for he's ever so old, and has got a white beard and a long coat, and a big bag full of toys, and comes down the chimney, and doesn't come till after I've gone to bed, and—and—"

She paused in her list of details for want of breath, and, the first time for many years, Churton laughed heartily.

"You queer little mite," he said, "I'm not Santy. Who are you?"

"I'm Gladys Churton, and I'm not queer. I'm very well, thank you."

"So you are Gladys," he said. "Where are your father and mother."

"They've gone out to buy some things for me, and they told me to be ever so good. They will be back soon."

Churton looked around him. It was so pleasant, so happy, evidently, and the home he had left seemed to lack a great deal. He sighed.

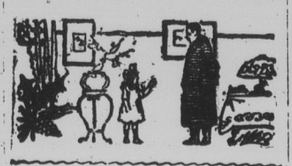
"What's the matter, strange man?"

"Nothing, dear."

"But there must be something. I always go like that when I want a doll, and mamma won't buy it for me. Is your little girl naughty?"

"I haven't got a little girl.

"Poor strange man!" with a clouding of her sunny face. Then, suddenly,



"look out, here come mamma and dad! Let's hide."

"All right, dear; tell me where."

Hastily she drew him behind a curtain, and followed.

"Where's my girlie?" in a clear, happy voice.

The mite ran out and struggled in her mother's arms.

"You don't know who else is here," she said importantly. "There's a strange man, and—poor dear!—he hasn't got a little girl, and he isn't happy."

She ran back to the curtain and dragged out a somewhat dusty, shamefaced individual.

"I came to see you—felt a bit lonely—. Hang it all! Jack, I want a taste of home life, and escape from the eternal accounts. No," as the clear, blue eyes of the baby were fixed on him, "that's a lie. I came here to show off my wealth, and to make you envious; but your little ray of sunshine here took the conceit out of me. Hang it, man, take me in, for pity's sake, and let me be human this Christmas-tide. The money can go. I must stay here."

When Churton's man came back, he was told that the master would not be home for some days.

Good Slogan

"I wish we could hold the elections along about Christmas time," said the astute politician.

"Oh, that's a poor time for a campaign," objected the unthinking person.

"Poor time?" responded the astute politician. "Why, just think of the vote that would be raked in for the party that set up a cry for the 'Full Christmas stocking!'"

The Christmas Robin

In many parts of England the robin is associated with Christmas-tide. There is a belief that on Christmas eve these birds will sing near a house where a person is dying, to cheer him.

Depends on the Man

A woman under the mistletoe can look mighty unconscious if the right man is in sight.

Plenty of Proof

By O. F. WOODRUFF

Teddy 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 hullooed 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 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 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 fish 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 jangle. And then there was a gleam of red. Somebody was climbing into the sleigh! Then was the echo of a jovial voice calling

the horns of the reindeer quivered joyfully, 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 to directions, as had been their exhilarating wont 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, whistling wheeze of joy and relief Teddy clasped his hands until the knuckles showed as white as the snow outside. Then with a cry of absolute delight he dashed into his mother's bedroom.

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

"Oh, mother, mother, mother!" he cried. "He came after all! Santa Claus did come! Santa Claus did come! He did, he did, he did!"

Among Roumanians

Roumanian girls can learn, during the Christmas season, whether or not they are going to be married within the coming year. At midnight they enter the stable and strike the foot of the first ox they come across, saying: "This year; next year." If the ox gets up at the first stroke the girl will marry within the year; if it gets up at the second stroke the marriage will take place the year following; if it does not get up at all the gods have not yet decided on her wedding date.

Christmas Spirit

Too many of us take mean things on faith and demand proof of good things.

Oxen kneel in the stall at midnight on Christmas, says English tradition. They kneel as if in adoration of the Nativity.

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DRY WARM SOCKS ARE APPRECIATED

Montreal Officer, Recently Killed, Writes About Receipt of Socks from Home

The value of warm, clean wool socks to men in the trenches is apparent from the following letter from the late Major John S. Lewis, writing on November 12, a few days before his death to Mrs. W. I. Gear, president of the ladies committee of the Canadian Grenadier Guards. The letter reads:

"Dear Mrs. Gear:—In behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of D Company of the 87th Battalion, permit me to thank the ladies' committee of the Grenadier Guards for their gift of an abundance of soft warm socks, which reached us yesterday, just as we were leaving our billets for another tour of the front line trenches. We could have had no more acceptable or timely gift, nor one which would add more to the cheeriness of the men as well as to their bodily comfort. We distributed the socks as the men marched out, each man putting his pair in his pocket when they will be available just as soon as the opportunity for putting on a dry pair presents itself.

"I wish I could tell you how much this means—how it puts new life in a man and especially how it warms him in his spirits to feel that there are ladies at home who are thinking of his comfort and working for him. Will you convey to the ladies who are on the committee the assurance of our very grateful appreciation of what they are doing to lessen the discomfort of life over here and assure them that their efforts are making the battalion more efficient as well as much more comfortable.

"Sincerely yours.
"(Signed) John Lewis.
"Major, O. C. D Company."

The ladies who are doing this work are assured that it is very necessary.

Anyone who can knit socks will be provided with yarn by either the Red Cross Committee of the Women's Institute or by the Soldiers Comfort Association.

TO ADVERTISERS.

Many of our advertisers are failing to observe the rule which requires copy for change of advs. to be in our office Tuesday evening. In the past we have been able to handle changes coming in late, but as we are now very short of help, we warn our patrons that it may not be possible to make change if copy arrives after the hour named. tf.

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