

CHICK'S REVENGE.

O H bother it!" and with the exclamation Chick shot up into the air. When he had regained his footing on *terra firma*, a look of pain and passion was on his face.

"Hullo, what's up?" asked one of his fellow-messengers, in a happy-go-lucky sort of tone.

"I was up just now, but if I get the fellow who put that tack on that form I'll send him up," said Chick, as he cast his eyes towards a group of his amused comrades gathered in a corner of the office. He stared for an instant, his wild eyes fixed on their smiling faces, as if to detect, if possible, a trace of the culprit. But no; all of them, if not as sober as judges, because of their exuberant mirth, were at least as free as judges from all trace of circumstantial evidence against them.

"That was you, Dickey Bruce," said Chick, in the heat of his passion, laying the blame on the likeliest one of the company. "Just you wait now; see if I don't pay you back for that:" and, with a significant shake of the head, he turned away, vowing within himself to have revenge. And so he could; but something happened, and second thoughts changed his mind.

The office work had been dull that morning; and to wear away the tedium of waiting, the restless boyish spirit found vent in a practical joke, with the result described.

Although it was by the merest chance Chick had fastened his accusation on Dickey, it happened to be placed upon the right shoulders. Perhaps an everyday acquaintance with Dickey had helped Chick with a clue to the culprit. Dickey was the ringleader of not a few of the messengers who were simple enough to be led into his tricks, and was known as an "old hand" at the tack trick.

Genuine enough as Chick's threat had been, it had but little effect on such a daring spirit as Dickey; in fact, it troubled no one more than it did Chick himself. For no sooner had it passed his lips, and he had turned away, than Chick felt within himself that something was wrong in it. He did not always feel that way, but since that day on which a something happened in his life that made his conscience tender and his nature new, it had never been easy for Chick to harbour long such threats within his heart. So it came about that no sooner had his passion subsided, and he had come to himself, than he was trying to devise a means of putting it away.

Three days after the tack incident, news was brought to the office that Dickey Bruce was unable to come on duty. He had caught a chill and was dangerously ill in bed.

Not a few of his fellow-messengers were awed by the news, for Dickey had always seemed of a healthy build, and had what the

boys called "go" in him. But the strongest must submit at times. It was Dickey's turn now.

To Chick the news of Dickey's illness only served to intensify the horrors of that threat. With a keen sense of what is meant to return "good for evil," his mind was more than ever exercised about how to wipe it out. Should he write a letter to Dickey and tell him he would forgive him? Should he ask to see him, and tell him it was all right? What if he should never see him again? Such thoughts were continually rising in Chick's mind and would not be dispelled. How he got peace of mind and made it right with Dickey, we shall see.

It was Christmas Day. Chick had seen no less than sixteen Christmas Days in his existence, but this particular one surpassed them all as being a genuine "Christmassy Christmas." The snow fell all day in heavy showers, and lay deep upon the ground. Every article of Chick's equipment was in full use—leggings, overcoat and cape; and even these seemed insufficient for the stress of the storm. To trudge through the elements, however, was preferable to sitting cold and damp, as it kept the limbs in action and natural heat.

It was with a grim sort of satisfaction Chick heard the delivery clerk call "Number 24D."

Buckling his cape tightly about his neck and pulling his hat as far down on his ears as possible, he set himself to face the storm. Scarcely had he gone a hundred yards from the office door, when, pressing forward with his head bent, doing battle with the storm, he was struck by something like a bandbox, being carried along on the wings of the wind. Chick staggered for an instant. On recovering himself he found the object of assault, at his feet, was nothing more than a gent's tile hat. Its owner, exhausted with the excitement of the chase, was at his side in an instant.

"Hullo, my lad, did it hurt you?" he asked, in a kindly voice. "Thanks; I hope the knock wasn't severe," he added, as Chick handed him his headgear.

"No, sir; only a new style of Christmas box," said Chick, who had not yet abandoned his old habit of punning.

"Ah, well, we'll make amends in the 'old style,'" said the gent, as he drew from his pocket a shilling and placed it in Chick's hand.

"Thank you, sir," said Chick; and each passed on his way.

Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that shilling had been hoped for—yes, and prayed for, too—by Chick, that very morning. How it was to come he didn't quite know, and little thought of it that moment when its forerunner almost knocked him off his feet. Chick never did seem like a