



The BAD CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS
Eliel Cook Elliot

THIS is a story of last Christmas day; and I will tell you right away that it ended happily. But it begins sadly. It was Christmas day up at the North pole, and as usual on the day before Christmas, St. Nicholas had been hurried and rather grumpy. Only this time, Mother Nicholas thought to herself that he was just a bit grumpier than she had ever known him. And at suppers time she found that she was right.

He came into the kitchen, closing his workshop door with a bang, and sat down with all the little Nicholases to his porridge.

"Well, I've said it before," he growled, "but this time I mean it. The children down there in the world will get nothing from my pack this night. It's time they were taught a lesson."

All the little Nicholases asked, but Mother Nicholas only gaped calmly: "Why, what is the matter now, father? After you've been working for them the whole year, you wouldn't go and disappoint the poor dears would you?"

"Yes, I would," declared St. Nicholas, swallowing his porridge in great gulps, and pretending that he was not a saint at all. "Half of them go around saying that there isn't any St. Nicholas, poking fun at me, and laughing in their sleeves. And the other half think it makes no difference whether they are good children or not, I'll fill their stockings just the same. It's a thankless job, I tell you. And I'm too old a man for it. So!"

"Come," said Mother Nicholas, soothingly, "here is a plate of griddle cakes. When you have eaten you will see things differently."

"No, when I have eaten I shall go to bed. That's where an old fellow like me belongs, an old fellow who children don't believe in."

Mother saw that he was determined, and that there was nothing to do for it, since griddle cakes wouldn't help. So she put her finger to her lips to motion the children silent, and went on quietly about her work. And when St. Nicholas had finished his supper, he did roll away to bed, only telling the little Nicholases to be sure to hang their stockings, for they had been good children all the year and still believed in him.

The minute the door closed behind him the little Nicholases burst into excited chatter. "Oh, what a pity! Those poor children! Surely there must be some good ones! Oh dear, what fun will Christmas be to us if all the children in the world down there are unhappy!"

"What indeed!" Mother Nicholas shook her head and looked often at



"Yes, I would," Declared St. Nicholas.

the closed door, behind which St. Nicholas could already be heard snoring.

"And the reindeer!" cried the oldest boy, "what will they do without their yearly exercise? It seems as though father might have gone, if only for their sakes."

Mother Nicholas thought so, too. And at that minute they heard the reindeer's little hoofs beating on the hard snow crust at the door. Wise little beasts! St. Nicholas had never delayed the Christmas-Eve journey so long before, and so here they were to save him the trouble of going for them. The Nicholas children felt that they never could face the poor little reindeer's disappointment.

But what was Mother Nicholas doing so busily over there by the cupboard? The children looked in amazement. It was seldom that mother left the snowhouse at any time of day. And here she was, after dark, and Christmas Eve, too, putting on her hood and cape, and pulling on her gaiters!

"Are you going to drive the reindeer back to the stables?" asked the oldest boy. "Oh, please, let me. Father always lets me, you know."

Mother shook her head. "I'll not be

driving them back to the stables until this night's work is done," she said. "If you're awake when we get back, you may do it as always."

How the children stared! "Was little old mother going all alone on that long, wild drive over towns and forests and oceans and up and down chimneys, and goodness knows where, without asking St. Nicholas if she might?"

Yes, that was just what she was going to do! "For, when a good thing needs doing," she said brightly, "no permission is needed."

"Keep the fire going, be sure that the baby has the fur rug well up around his chin, and give your father a good breakfast when he wakes," she called over her shoulder and was away out of the door almost before they had realized that she was going. They heard the scampering of the reindeer hoofs, faster the dimmer they got, and then just the stillness of the North pole.

That was last Christmas Eve. And if you ask any child who lay awake to see St. Nicholas, and peeped out with one eye, all the time pretending to be fast asleep, he will tell you that it wasn't St. Nicholas he saw at all. It was just a tiny, sprightly old lady with frosty white curls and a red hood, who filled naughty Willie's stocking just as full as good Marguerite's, and

left many more bon-bons in both than was usual. That peeping child will also tell you that before she went back up the chimney, she gave baby a kiss on his pink cheek, a thing St. Nicholas (who is as afraid of babies as a burglar is, and for the same reason) has never been known to do.

And mother, will you believe me, in spite of having stopped to kiss all the babies, was back at the North pole a whole hour earlier than St. Nicholas had ever been able to make it, even in his younger days. Her work was well done, too! But in spite of the early hour, she found the children and her husband waiting for her. St. Nicholas welcomed her back more affectionately than the children.

"I woke in the middle of the night," he said, "out of such a horrid dream—all about crying children and sad mothers. Bless you, good wife, for not letting that dream come true!"

"Oh, don't mention it," said Mother Nicholas. "It was no trouble at all. Indeed, it did me good. I think, father, since you are getting so old, I will take over this job myself from now on."

St. Nicholas looked thoughtful at that. He paced up and down the floor. Then he came and stood in front of Mother Nicholas, straightening up and looking almost as young as in his early days.

"No, mother," he said firmly. "A woman's place is in the home. I'll attend to the business hereafter, thank you."

And mother, who, after all, only wanted everybody to be happy, made him some griddle cakes for his breakfast.

But that was last year, the year you got a stocking full, even though you hadn't been so very good. This year you had better watch out, for it is old St. Nicholas himself you have to deal with.

Party Supper Boxes.
Where there is seating room at the Christmas-time party refreshments are appropriately served in small boxes covered with red paper or holly patterned paper, and tied with gay ribbons in holiday color. Each box contains a sandwich, slices of cake, nuts and candies daintily wrapped in wax paper. A tissue paper napkin, in Christmas design, is folded in each box. When each person has received his or her supper box the coffee and ice cream are served and the contents of the box are eaten with it. The pretty boxes can be retained by the guests as a souvenir, or "favor," if they like such things.

Choosing the Holly.
Superstitious people assert that one should be careful about the choice of the holly for the decorations. Part should be smooth and part prickly. Then providing both kinds are carried into the house at the same time, all will be well. But should the prickly variety be taken in first, then the husband will rule the household during the coming year; if the smooth is brought in first the wife will be "top dog."

Christmas Spirit Needed.
None of us can have too much of the Christmas spirit.

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True Detective Stories
TOE-PRINTS

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"BUT I'm not taking any chances, Jen! I know that house like I know the inside of this room. What do you suppose I got that job as furnace man for? You don't think I like the work, do you? Just ten minutes—that's all I'll need. The safe's over in one corner of the bedroom, and the combination's one I could work in my sleep—one of those old-fashioned affairs where you can hear the tumblers drop clear across the room."

"Besides," continued the man known to his accomplices as "Lefty Joe," and to the police as one of the cleverest second-story men in the business, "this'll be the last job I'll tackle. I promise you that. We'll sink the stuff down at Uncle Abe's and make a get-away before the bulls know the place has been cleaned out."

"It sounds all right," admitted the girl to whom the burglar was speaking, "but I've got a hunch that there's a slip-up somewhere. You'll be careful to wear those rubber gloves?"

"Sure I will," answered the other. "For, or whatever he calls himself, ain't goin' to find any of my finger marks all over the place. No, nor any footprints either. I tell you, Jen, this is a cinch. This time next week we'll be out in the sticks—somewhere where they don't know us—landin' a decent job with no feat of bulls. Hurry up with those socks, will you? Don't bother to finish them. It ain't the first time that I've worn 'em full of holes."

Shortly after ten o'clock anyone who might have been watching the fence which marked the end of the Phipps property, would have seen a shadow balance itself for a moment, silhouetted against the dark gray sky, and then drop, noiselessly, inside the grounds.

Moving cautiously, so as to avoid the burglar-alarm wires which he had previously charted, Lefty Joe crept softly toward the house.

It was the work of a moment to jimmy open one of the windows on the first floor, and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, Joe was in the bedroom, spinning the combination of the wall safe, his sensitive ears listening for the click of the tumblers as they dropped into position. Less than half an hour later he was back in his room, pouring his loot into Jennie's lap.

"We'll have to lay low for a couple of days or so," he informed the girl. "If the police find out that I've skipped, they'll suspect me right away, and try to frame up something. They'll have a hard time proving it though. I had my gloves on and my shoes off, and not a soul saw me. So we're safe, girl, and I'm through—at least until I find another crib as easy as this one."

But even as Joe was speaking, Inspector Joseph A. Faurot, of the New York detective force, was on his way to the Phipps home. One of the servants, returning early, had noticed the opened window and had notified Mr. Phipps. The latter, after a hasty examination of the rifled safe, had phoned for the police, and the mere statement that some \$10,000 worth of jewels were missing, had been enough to bring Faurot, the fingerprint expert, to the scene of the crime.

"Whoever broke in here knew what he was doing," stated the inspector, after he had examined the house and the grounds. "It wasn't much of a trick to open the safe, and our friend took good care to use rubber gloves. No finger prints anywhere about the house. Anything outside?"

"Nothing at all, chief," replied one of the policemen who had accompanied the inspector. "Wires all right and no footprints in sight."

"Hmmm," mused Faurot, his eyes fixed meditatively on the hardwood floor of the bedroom. Then he moved his head suddenly to one side, as if trying to catch a clearer glimpse of the light reflected from above. An instant later he was on his knees, dusting the floor with a powder which he produced from his pocket—a combination of mercury and chalk. A few strokes of a camel's hair brush, to eliminate the surplus powder, and he photographed the smudge with a pocket camera which he invariably carried with him.

"This is an expert's job," he announced as he arose. "Round up every second-story man in town, and give orders that no one's to leave the city without my permission—anyone with a record, I mean."

One by one, as they were brought into headquarters, the suspected men were put through a strange ordeal. After removing their shoes and-socks, prints of their toes were taken, precisely as their finger prints had previously been recorded. It took the inspector less than five seconds to order the release of each man, until he examined the prints of the sixteenth prisoner.

"Bring him in!" he ordered. Then, as Lefty Joe faced him defiantly, Faurot inquired mildly, "Where's the stuff you got from the Phipps place last night, Joe? Oh, it's no use to register innocence. We've got the goods on you this time. You wore rubber gloves, but you forgot that the human toe leaves a mark just as individual and distinct as the fingers. Your right sock had a hole in it last night, so we found your visiting card on the floor of the house shortly after you left."

"Damnation!" growled the prisoner. "Why didn't I let Jennie finish her darnin'?"

BIBLES IN HOSPITALS
Representative of Gideons Solicits Donation from Churches to Purchase Bibles

A representative of the Gideons called upon the pastors of the various churches in the city recently in the cause of placing copies of the Bible in all hospitals and hotels in Willmar. The pastors of the congregations took the matter up with the members of certain organizations in the church. Donations were pledged by several congregations. Rev. E. A. Lagerstrom has the matter in charge locally.

It was found that most of the hotels in Willmar had Bibles placed in the rooms.

An invitation will also be sent to the Spanish Veterans in Litchfield. The Sophia L. Rice Auxiliary selected the following group of officers for 1923:

President, Mrs. L. H. Wetherby. Senior V. P., Mrs. Wm. O. Johnson. Junior, V. P., Mrs. Wm. Hackett. Secretary, Mrs. F. Bigham. Treasurer, Mrs. Collier. Chaplain, Mrs. P. J. Haley. Conductor, Mrs. H. Hanson. Asst. Conductor, Mrs. Victor Nelson. Guard, Mrs. John Mossberg. Asst. Guard, Mrs. C. J. Freeberg. Patriotic Instructor, Mrs. Paul Heidin. Historian, Mrs. F. Bigham. Musician, Mrs. Wm. Holmberg.

CARD OF THANKS

The sons and daughters of the late C. J. Sjoquist desire, by this means, to express their sincere appreciation for the many acts of kindness and sympathy shown them in their recent bereavement in the death of their father.

SAFE STOLEN

Thieves entered the Brenden & Teichert barber shop at Benson on Monday night of last week and carried off the 400 pound safe which was found a few days later under a bridge seven miles south of Benson by some school children. It is believed that the work is that of local talent as the dial, wheel and a hinge could not be found with the rest of the safe and it is thought that the burglars carried off the safe and then opened it at their leisure doing away with the safe when they were through with it. The safe contained \$100 in cash, several small checks, papers and a few razors. A reward of \$25 is offered for information leading to the arrest of the culprits by the proprietors.

TOWEL SOCIAL

A towel social will be held in Dist. 45, 5 miles west of Willmar on the pavement, on Wednesday evening, December 27th. Anna Swedberg, teacher.

Join the 1923 Christmas Club NOW. Kandiyohi County Bank.

Taking Desperate Chances

It is true that many contract severe colds and recover from them without taking any precaution or treatment, and a knowledge of this fact leads others to take their chances instead of giving their colds the needed attention. It should be borne in mind that every cold weakens the lungs, lowers the vitality, makes the system less able to withstand each succeeding attack and paves the way for the more serious diseases. Can you afford to take such desperate chances when Chamberlain's Cough Remedy, famous for its cures of bad colds may be had for a trifle?—Adv. Dec

NEW OFFICERS

The Mission Society of the Synod Lutheran church held its election on Tuesday evening, Dec. 12th. The officers elected to serve during the coming year were as follows:

President, Miss Jonetta Thorpe. V. P., Mrs. J. J. Ekander. Sec'y-Treas., Mrs. Russell Ackerman.

The Society voted to contribute ten dollars for the purpose of placing bibles in a local hotel and the hospitals.

—Mr. and Mrs. G. B. Fuller left on Tuesday for St. Paul for a few days visit with friends.

GLASSES FITTED
Broken lenses replaced; frames repaired. First class optical work guaranteed.
C. H. ANDERSON
Registered Optometrist, with Anderson Bros. & Co.

OLD TIME DANCE

An old time dance will be given at the Odd Fellows Hall on Thursday evening, December 21st, by the Bolermakers and the Machinists. The dance is being given for the benefit of the strikers. Tickets are 75c a couple and 25c for an extra lady.

THAT your Christmas may be the merriest and the New Year be the happiest of all your years, is the wish of this store for its friends and patrons

CASH GROCERY
Swenson & Fransein, Props.
Willmar, Minnesota

IT'S CHRISTMAS in the Men's and Boy's Store

ONLY THREE SHOPPING DAYS LEFT UNTIL CHRISTMAS

Gift Shirts Jersey Silks Tub Silks Silk Stripes Paytone Madrases White Poplins Percales \$1.50 to \$9.00	Gift Handkerchiefs Silk Handkerchiefs Linen Handkerchiefs Initial Handkerchiefs Pongee Handkerchiefs Cambric Handkerchiefs 10c to \$1.25
Gift Hosiery Silk hose Lisle hose Silk and wool hose Clocked wool hose 25c to \$1.50	Gift Mufflers Knit Silk Mufflers Cheney Silk Mufflers Brushed Wool Mufflers Silk and Wool Mufflers \$1 to \$3.50
Gift Slippers Felt Kid Buckskin 95c to \$2.50	Gift Neckwear Silk Ties Cut Knit Grenadines 50c to \$2.00
Gift Gloves Kid Gloves Mocha Gloves Buck Gloves Wool Gloves \$1 to \$2	Gifts Belts and Buckles Initial buckle belts Plain belts Initial buckles 40c to \$1.50

Boy's Gift Pajamas **Boy's Bath Robes** **Boy's Gift Shirts** **Boy's Gift Gloves**

This Store Gives Tickets for Free Prizes

Wenm-Elkjer Co.
MEN'S AND BOY'S OUTFITTER'S