

was only little Tommy Evans who extended to him a small, brown envelope. "It's our nickel Sunday next week, and I thought you'd want an envelope," said Tommy.

"Yes; of course, never forget me, Tommy; all right, my boy."

After Tommy had gone Grube examined the envelope carefully. Then it suddenly occurred to him that he was being imposed upon. It had only been a few weeks ago that he had received his envelope for nickel Sunday and he remembered plainly that he had put in a dime instead of the usual nickel. Now, here it was again. Was the little rogue imposing upon his generosity? That was the usual way; people are never satisfied.

Now Tommy was just passing down the street again and Grube hailed him. The boy came, perhaps wondering how prompt Grube was this time.

"What does this mean, Tommy? Didn't I get an envelope some time ago?"

"O, I forgot to explain," answered the boy. "You see this is our own nickel Sunday. All the money goes to our school. It is to help pay for the expenses of the holiday doings. Read what is printed on it."

So Grube read: "Contribution of blank to Fourth ward Sunday school, Nickel Sunday, Dec. 12, 1897. Amount, blank. Hand to teacher next Sunday."

Ah, he understood now. Another method to extort money. To pay expenses for Christmas doings, indeed! Why should there be more expenses during Christmas than during any other time. It was a precedent to be checked. One Nickel Sunday was enough. Grube handed the envelope back to Tommy, who felt of it in vain as he went down the street, to see what had been put inside. The envelope was empty.

And now Grube lighted the lamp, drew the blind closer to the sill, stirred the fire, and took up his paper. The kettle steamed and Grube proceeded to make some wonderful mixture with water, sugar and the contents of the bottle. In justice to Grube it must be said that he was not often in the habit of compounding such potions. It was only on occasions when he felt downhearted.

But this evening Grube was more than ever sad, so the mixture went on in proportion. He had settled down to a good doze when there came another knock on the door, and not waiting for invitation, two ladies came in, stamping the snow from their feet and shaking it from their shawls. They set down two large baskets near the door. The storm seemed to follow them in and the man shivered.

"Good evening, Brother Grube," said a cheery voice which he knew belonged to Ellen Hansen. "We want your help this evening. We have a long evening's work before us and we would like your assistance."

Grube could never refuse Ellen Hansen. If there ever came a time when he would feel the need of a wife, Ellen was the woman he would ask. At least that is what he had thought to himself; and now he instantly put on his coat and prepared to follow wherever she might lead. He wondered at himself for being so alert—Ellen also, no doubt, wondered.

"You see," said Ellen, "we are a committee appointed by Santa Claus to visit some people whom he will hardly have time to reach. Our goods are in the baskets and they are heavy. We want a strong man to help us."

As they went out Grube even forgot to lock the door. He felt a strong inclination to run away, but the baskets were heavy, really too heavy for two weak women; but he did not like the prospects of playing the role they had marked out for him. Ellen ought to have more sense. He did think that she was a practical person not inclined to

play such pranks. A doubt came into Grube's mind whether or not Ellen would make a good wife.

The wind now began to raise and the snow blew into their faces as the three walked along down the street. It was a blessing that so few people were out, thought he. What would they think should they see him trudging between two women, a big heavy basket in each hand!

After a ten minutes' walk they stopped before a low adobe house.

"We'll go in here, first," said Ellen. They set one basket down outside the door and walked in without knocking.

A man with his wife sat by a small cook stove, in which was a very little fire, as the room was quite cold. They seemed not surprised when Ellen brought out a number of parcels and went quietly to three stockings hanging over the backs of chairs by the stove and placed something in each.

Outside Ellen explained that she had to tell them of their contemplated visit that the children might be gotten off to bed.

"It seems to me that they were not very thankful," growled Grube.

"I believe they were too cold to move," answered Ellen. "They ought to have some coal."

On entering the next house they were greeted with a strong odor of sage-brush. It was an extremely poor place, the shabbiest of furniture, bare floor, and smoky walls. The smell of the sage-brush came with peculiar force to Grube as it brought him back to his own childhood when their only firewood was this odorous brush. Evidently, here their visit was a surprise. The mother was busy with a pile of clothes, a girl was darning stockings and a big boy was reading a book by the lamp.

"Where are the children?" asked Ellen.

"O, they're to bed long ago," said the mother.

"Where are their stockings?"

"Stockings? O, yes, Jane is darning them."

"Well, let's hang them up. They'll hold a package, won't they? We haven't time to wait."

"They don't expect anything," explained the mother. "It's been five years since Santa Claus visited our house and—"

"Well, never mind, good night."

"Good night, and God bless you."

Grube began to feel better. The cold did not feel so intense, and he felt it was less of a shame to play such an innocent game. Ellen certainly was a good girl, whatever she might lack in business ability.

Grube began to be interested too. Perhaps it was the smell of the sage brush; he had always known it to be a good, healthful smell.

The first basket was not yet empty when they entered a house where everything was dark; but Ellen turned the door knob without knocking and they all stole quietly in. There was glow enough from the fire to see a row of small stockings hanging by a string from chair to chair. In a bed in one corner three little heads could be seen. Some of the stockings were bulging and Grube remarked that Santa had been ahead of them. Ellen took up one and emptied its contents into his hand. All it contained were some pieces of wood and coal.

"Rube has played a trick on the little ones," said Ellen.

The sage-brush smell was still with Grube, and in close association with it was an incident in his childhood. Just such a trick had been played on him, and he remembered how broken hearted he had been when that Christmas morning so long ago he had gotten up and found his stocking full of sticks and stones. The decline of stock, the losing of a thousand dollars surely was

no harder than the disappointed pain of a child.

"Put in two packages," whispered Grube. Ellen looked at him curiously and then did so.

We they got nearly to the bottom of the second basket, they called at a house where lived a family of emigrants. Ellen tried to talk Danish, but it had become so Americanized that it was some time before the good people could make out that she wished to put something in the children's stockings before the stove. Then the mother comprehended its meaning and shook them all by the hand. The grateful father followed with more hand shaking and bowing of head, until Grube startled his companions by laughing heartily.

It was now getting late, and the basket empty, but Grube wanted to go to the nearest store for more supplies. He knew of a great many more who ought to be visited, he said; but Ellen shook her head. It was getting late and they would have to stop with one more call.

"Brother Evans has been out of work so long," explained Ellen. "We must give the children something." It was not until they were outside that Grube thought of Tommy; but Tommy was in bed and asleep long ago; so Grube searched in his pocket for a nickel but found nothing smaller than a quarter, which he wrapped in a paper on which he wrote something, and dropped it into the stocking.

The music floated out from the meeting house as the three passed, and Grube proposed that they all go in to the dance. Ellen again refused; it was getting late.

Yes, it was late and dark, too. When Grube was alone again the night seemed to close in upon him and the usual familiar streets became a maze to him. Why had the city discontinued the electric light? To save? Yes; and people might be murdered and no one see it. How cold it was! How the snow came down in fierce gusts of wind! Grube was surely lost; and he might perish in the storm. His brain seemed to be in a whirl, when bump! Grube's head received a terrible knock on the table by which he was sitting. He awoke with a start. His door had been blown open by the wind and a drift of snow lay far into the room. While he had been dreaming in his chair, the fire had burned out and Grube was chilled through. With a painful effort he went to bed.

Sister White, wife of Bishop White of the Second ward was visiting Sister Brown, wife of the First ward's Bishop when the latter came in.

"How is Grube today?" asked Sister Brown.

"O, Brother Grube is better; he is sitting up."

"I didn't know he was sick," said Sister White. "What is the matter?"

"A severe cold," said the Bishop. "He called me in to administer to him, and afterwards he handed me this which he had already written out."

"A check for ten dollars," exclaimed Sister Brown.

"Yes; for fast donation," said the Bishop.

"Why, Bishop White got the same thing this morning," exclaimed the visitor.

Sister White had business with Sister Green, wife of Bishop Green of the Third ward that afternoon, and she asked Sister Brown to go with her, which she did. As the talk was on preparing for Christmas, Sister Green said that they were greatly helped by the donation of "Old Man Grube," who had given ten dollars to the poor of the ward.

Right in the midst of the astonishment, Bishop Black of the Fourth