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HERE once lived on
a plantation a
miser so mean and
stingy that even
his pigs were eter-
nally disgruntled,
while his geese
hissed at him as he
passed, and his
hens cackled derisively at the very
sight of him. He never paid anybody
more than half of what they were en-
titled to, and even the mosquitoes
avoided him in disgust as having a
hide like an automobile tire and with
no more sustenance beneath it. No
man, woman, child or beast was ever
fed by him without rendering services
in advance for more than the food was
worth, and his neighbors were afraid
to shake hands with him for fear that
he would steal their finger-nails. He
skimmed his milk twice, made his
decayed apples into cider, and when
his horses got so old they could not
work for him any longer he killed
them and made them into glue, and
then used the glue to stick another
mortgage on some neighbor's house.
Of course everybody hated him worse
than they did the fever and ague, but
he did not mind that much because in
one way or another he kept getting
money and that was revenge enough
for him.

Now, half a mile away from this
man's house was the little cabin of
old Ike Clay and his old wife Sally.
Ike was so poor that even the mice
could not afford to board with him,
much as they liked him, and his pov-
erty was generally due to the fact that
as soon as he got anything he
would give it away to the first one
who asked him for it, for Ike and
Sally lived in the belief that it is
more blessed to give than to receive.
Also they were very humble and re-
ligious and devoutly believed in every-
day miracles and that the Lord would
feed his children even as he did his
sparrows and fishes. And up to this
time it had always turned out that
way, but now the day before Christ-
mas had arrived and the cupboard was
as empty as Ike's pockets, and Ike's
pockets had nothing in them at all
but holes. But his wife's faith was
unwavering and she filled the pot
with water and put it on the stove
that it might be hot and ready for the
offering when it came.

"Where our Christmas offerin' is
a-goin' ter come from I shore don't
know, but the Lord works in mysterious
ways his wonders to perform, and I
don't reckon he is a-goin' to forget
we uns," she said, confidently. But
as the day slipped by and no special
Providence befell them like began to
become a trifle nervous—not that he
doubted Providence in the least, but
because he feared it might need a
gentle reminder at this season of the
year when there were so many de-



"Go Away!"

mands being made upon it. So he de-
cided to make a little special effort of
his own. He knew well enough that
it would be a waste of time to ask
the miser to give him a goose or gob-
bler, but he had a faint hope that be-
cause of the season of the year the
old skinflint might perhaps soften
enough to give him credit on his well-
known honesty. So he set forth in the
gathering dusk and sifting snow upon
his mission and in a little time was
tapping at the miser's back door.

For several minutes he tapped away
and scuffed his feet and at last the
miser came forth—not as a man
comes forth, but in the manner you
would expect to see a miser appear,
first a nose and then a foot and then
a hand and finally the rest of him, as
if he grudging even his presence, and
stood frowning at Ike through the
gloom. Ike's clothes were ragged and
flapping in the wind and his toes were
leaking from the end of his shoes, but
the smile on his face was cheerful and
would have made a friend of any one
except a miser who loved no man or
woman or child or beast, and whose
soul was shriveled and warped, and
whose conscience was as tough as the
hoof of a horse.

"What do you want?" he asked in a
voice as disagreeable as the sound of
filing a saw.

Ike took off his hat and his bare
head began to bob conciliatingly up
and down like the bobber of a fish
line when the fish nibbles at the hook
below. "I has come to see yu, Mistah
Skimpum, fo' the reason that I am
most pow'ful hungry an' because there
is no meat in we-un's cabin. And be-
cause this is the evenin' of the most
blessed day in the whole world when
the good book says there should be
peace on earth and good will to man,
I am a-goin' to ask yu' to do me a
mighty favor."

"I haven't got anything to give," in-
terrupted the miser, hastily. "And I
don't believe in Christmas giving, any-
way. It is merely an excuse for beg-
gary. I wish you would go away."

Ike's head bobbed again. "Yes, suh,
but I am not begging. I'll do yu' two
days' hard work to pay yu' for a tur-
key."

"I don't need any help. I do my
own work."

"Yes, suh, I know that. But if
you'll loan me a turkey for a couple
of days I'll work for somebody else
and pay yu' in cash."

"No, I wouldn't trust you. And, be-
sides, if the Lord wanted you to have



"Didn't I Tell Yu' So?"

a turkey he would send you one with-
out your begging for it. So go away."

Ike took a step backward with quiet
dignity. "All right, suh, I reckons yu'
is correct. Thank yu', suh," he said,
and then went plodding homeward
empty of hands and as hollow inside
as an old bee tree, the wind nipping
at his bare toes and howling after him
like a wolf, and as a matter of fact
the wolf of hunger was very close to
him indeed. But Sally did not despair
when she heard his story.

"That offerin' is shore a-comin',
Ike," she asserted, as she put another
stick on the fire to keep the water in
readiness. "I don't know jest how
we-alls is a-goin' to get it, but I feels
it a-comin' in the air. And jest yu'
mark what I tell yu'."

Then they sat down together by the
bare table and listened to the wind.
And, my, how it began to howl! Away
off in the northwest a great storm
had been brewing that day and now it
was approaching them like a giant in
a rage. And as it passed along it came
to the home of the miser and with a
growl fell upon it. It gripped the
house and shook it as a terrier does
a rat, roaring down the chimney and
whistling under the door until the
shingles flew from the roof like feath-
ers and the bones of the cowering
miser rattled together in his fear.
Then it pounced upon the fowlhouse,
and cuffing off the roof blew with all
its breath within, and in a second the
night air was filled with flying fowls
that flapped and squawked as they
went sailing into the distance like
puff balls scattered by a blast.

Over in their little cabin Ike and
Sally heard the uproar and fell upon
their knees in prayer. Frightened
though he was Ike did not forget his
hunger.

"They say it is an ill wind that
don't blow anybody good, dear Lord,"
he began. "And I prays that out of
this heah mighty gale will fall a few
grain from yu' bounteous store." And
scarcely was the prayer finished than
there came a fearful gust and the
crash of a heavy body against the
door. And the latch broke and the
door flew wide and upon the floor
there fell with a thud a ten-pound
gobbler, wind-blown and ruffled to be
sure, but fat, tender and soul-satisfy-
ing—the very bird, in fact, that the
miser had fattened for his own sharp
teeth.

Sally arose and held the big bird
high in her hands. Faith, charity and
happiness illuminated her lean face
until it shone as from a light within.
"Didn't I tell yu' so, old man," she
cried, exultingly. "Didn't I tell yu'
I felt it a-comin' in the air? Bless the
good Lord, for he shorely works in
mysterious ways his wonders to per-
form." (Copyright, 1908, by Wright A. Patterson.)



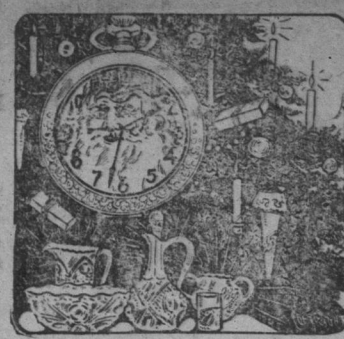
Good Cause for Gladness.

"Alas!" sighed the moody man,
"there is no gladness for me in this
joyous season."

"Tut-tut!" said the optimist. "Surely
there is a ray of sunshine for you, as
there is for all of us if we but look for
it?"

"No," replied the moody one. "I
have not a single friend, and no rela-
tives with whom I am on speaking
terms."

"Cheer up, then," advised the other,
with a shade of envy in his tone.
"Can't you be glad because you will
not have to buy any Christmas pres-
ents?"



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