

HER CHRISTMAS GIFT.

How Frau Cordes Preserved Her Record.

Sitting in his shabby studio in Tenth-st., surrounded by his mates, a poor young artist told this story:

"A lot of stuff has been written about the strange people in our quarter," he began, "and a lot of lies have been spoken. We're no different from anybody else, save that perhaps we are poorer, more sympathetic and look out for one another more than they do uptown.

"Take Frau Cordes, for instance, who keeps a little basement bakery and coffee house two doors up the street. Born in Hanover, where everyone is absolutely honest, schooled in Holstein, graduating to become a sort of companion to wealthy English travelling folk, she finally came here to make us omelets—the finest omelets in the world. Because they cost only 15 cents we fellows have all turned egg-arians."

"We go down to Frau's to get omelets—that's true—but we go there for other reasons. She treats us as if we were her own children, and that sort of thing goes a long way in a town like this, when a chap's people live two thousand miles west, and he never has the money to take him there to see if his own mother is any different from the Frau.

"We go in there feeling all down and disgusted, and we come out whistling. It's always that way. She's always singing, laughing, showing us jokes in the papers; always asking about our work, whether we've sold anything and inquiring when we are going to bring around our stockings to be mended, and little things like that.

"I've seen her take tough looking tramps from Sullivan-st. into her kitchen and dose them up on hot soup till they perspired, and then turn them out in the cold with extra rolls in their pockets. That's charity! Burning coal in winter for a down and out loafer to warm up by, and she not clearing a dollar and a half a day from her business—isn't that a heart for you?"

"Well, one day a mighty smooth looking chap came in with his wife and asked the Frau for some milk for a kitten they'd just got. They looked like 'honeymooners'—were dressed 'way up, and apparently neither had to worry about work or the emoluments which flow therefrom. Their whole present and future seemed to be wrapped up in getting the little white cat some milk. We liked the picture because everything looked straight, and the Frau, recognizing the trap as a once-upon-a-time omelet eater, got out so much milk that the thickheaded kitten fell into the pan and was nearly drowned.

"I happened to be in the next time the chap came. He wanted an omelet, a four-egg one, which was an unheard of luxury. He took a long while to get it down, because he wanted to talk all the time about his wife, whom he'd just married, as I had supposed; what a winner she was, how wealthy her people were, and other pleasant things which never make rich artists like myself at all envious. When he paid his 20 cents to the Frau he went away smoking one of her 10-cent cigars—the only one so high priced she had, and she only had it for exhibition purposes. In a few minutes he came swaggering in and took the Frau all at a loss by telling her he had owed her a quarter for two years for an omelet he'd bought before he got prosperous, and that he wanted to pay her.

"Because the Frau seemed so surprised and swore she didn't remember it, I got suspicious right away. I don't know why, but from that day on I believed in my bones that he was a bluffer. I didn't say anything, though.

"Last month, one morning when three of us were in there with the lame sculptor who lives over in Tenth-st., who should blow in with the draught but the chivalrous, knightly kitten owner, this time dressed in a fur collared coat. We stopped talking a bit when we heard him ask the Frau if she wouldn't please cash a check for him. He was so awfully polite, and he told such a good yarn about his bank being so far uptown and that his wife was waiting for him to bring her some money for her morning shopping, that the Frau dug down in her stocking and gave him a handful of small bills.

"We planned then and there to watch the chap, because we were cocksure the check would be protested. But, hearing nothing from the Frau, we forgot all about the incident.

"Not long ago we dropped in again for dinner, and found the poor Frau, her face down on a corner table, crying her heart out. The check had come back protested, and her landlord, to whom she had given it in payment for rent, had just left her, leaving behind him the note and a demand for protest fees. What do you think of that? She clearing \$150 a day, and crying the ink off an n. g. check for \$20 that that fellow passed off on her.

"We felt mighty sore over it, but all we could do was to go over and sit still and listen to her till she stopped, because every time any of us tried to say anything it made her feel worse. And you ought to have seen those omelets that night! I think she made them out of fried wood.

"The man who'd done such a trick to a woman like the Frau was no friend of ours, so we started on a still hunt for him. All four of us were out till late every night last week, when it was so blooming cold, you remember, but we couldn't find his last address. Every address seemed to be his last, but it wasn't; there was

Continued on third page.



A MICHIGAN SKEE JUMPER.

Reproduced from the Christmas annual of "Country Life in America," by courtesy of the publishers.

WINTER SPORT WITH SKEES ON THE SNOW.

How Travelling Is Made Easy and Rapid—Advantages of Skees Over Snowshoes—Wearer Can Take Long Jumps.

To be shot through the air for a distance of one hundred feet is an experience which at first thought the ordinary citizen would decline. "All right for a circus performer," he would doubtless say to himself, and then he would smile to think that he was not quite as much a fool as others.

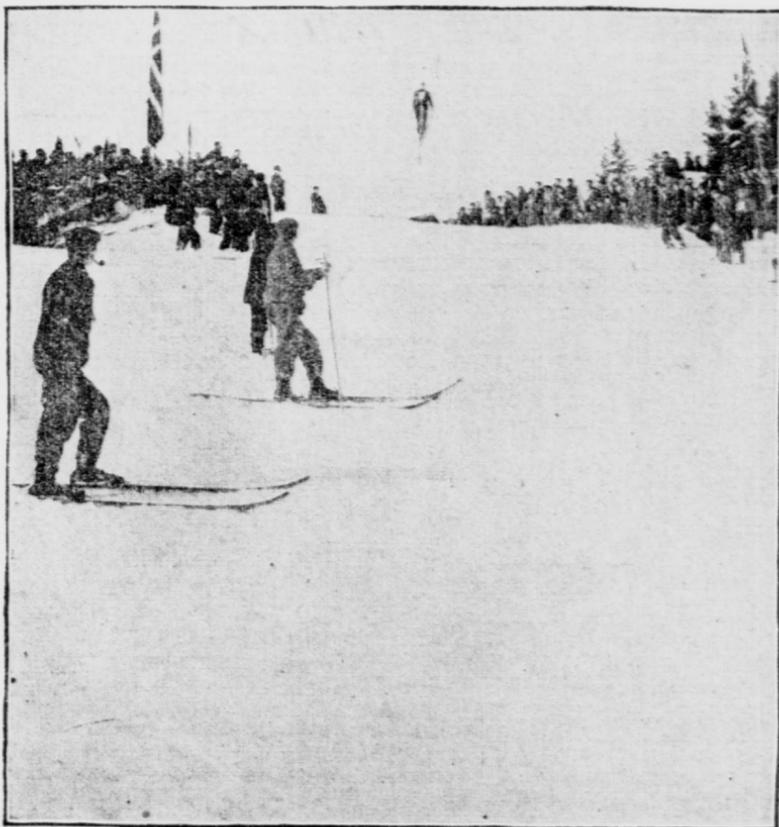
Such a man, however, has never learned how to skee. He has never slipped his feet into goat's hair socks and strapped them fast to a couple of long, narrow, smooth wooden runners. He has never stood on the brow of the hill with a long descending stretch of snow below him and let his skees go. And as his speed increases till the landscape grows hazy and the wind sucks his breath out of his lungs, he has never felt himself rise into the air bodily, and for a time sail through space as if on wings. In a word, he has never taken a "jump with skees."

The sport of skeeing has returned to the Adirondacks this winter after several years in which this form of recreation seemed to be dying out. Dealers in sporting goods in this city say that they are receiving unusually large orders for skees from up State, where the snow lies deep, and where the wooden foot runner is best able to quicken the traveller's speed. At the same time the demand for the more cumbersome Indian snowshoe has decreased. Lumbermen in the big logging camps are buying skees not only for their convenience in crossing path-

less tracts of snow, but also for holding skee carnivals at which the crack jumpers from various camps meet to demonstrate the championship. Winter visitors to the woods are buying them for the fun of it.

Along with the large immigration of Scandinavians to the Northwestern States came the skee from its native land of Norway and Sweden. The brawny descendants of the Norsemen mingled with the Canadians who came over the line on their snowshoes, and they filled them with envy at the way they glided all around them on their long, thin skees. The Scandinavians who also settled across the Canadian border took their skees with them, and when the winter came these Northmen held their skee tournaments, just as they were wont to do in their own frozen peninsula. Gradually the skee travelled eastward, and now it is to be seen by hundreds gliding noiselessly through the wilderness of the North Woods.

The advantage of the Norwegian skee over the snowshoe of the Indian is that it moves faster. When the average man stands solidly on both feet his weight rests on about sixty square inches. When he stands on skees his weight is distributed over ten times the area. He may venture on the fluffy surface of new fallen snow and yet not sink more than a couple of inches. With snowshoes he would not sink so far, yet, nevertheless, he would find his progress more



SKEE JUMPER HIGH IN AIR.

Photograph made at a European carnival. Reproduced here from the Christmas annual of "Country Life in America," by courtesy of the publishers.

impeded. The snowshoe, because of its wide flanging toe, when compared with the long, narrow skee, resembles the canalboat beside the waspish torpedo boat. When his muscles grow accustomed to the wooden runner to which his foot is fastened the skee man can travel with ease one-third more rapidly than he could walk over a hard country road in summer time. He can make four miles an hour without any extra exertion, and, should necessity arise, he can increase his speed to eight miles an hour. Because of its smooth bottom the skee slips forward nearly a foot with every step, thus increasing the natural stride nearly double. These are the dimensions of a typical skee:

Length—Seven feet.

Width—Four inches.

Thickness—One inch in centre, three-quarters inch rear end, three-eighths inch front end.

In order that the runner may ride over instead of dig into the snow it is bent up at the front end like the "prow" of a toboggan. At the end of a journey the skee man always ties back the front ends, so that they may not straighten out while they dry. They are usually made of ash or oak, and a good pair costs about \$5.

Should one attempt to tie on a pair of skees to a pair of ordinary walking shoes he would be compelled to give up his attempt to walk after only a few steps. His legs would be weighted down, and the muscles of his ankles would soon ache as if he had gone through a "setting up stunt" at a military academy. But as soon as he sees how the veteran skee man equips his feet he understands his mistake.

In Norway, the expert skee men wear socks of goat's hair, which are one and a half inches thick. Nevertheless, an American amateur may rig himself out with a pair of skee shoes by means of some wool and some leather and a few grains of originality. In addition to his ordinary pair of woolen socks, he need pull on two more pair of still greater thickness. Out of a strip of flexible leather, he need make himself a sort of moccasin, without a sole. Under the heel of this bottomless shoe he must fasten a second piece of leather, which should project out on either side to fasten to the back straps of the skee. The leather had best be pigskin, well oiled, so that it may bend as easily as the woolen sock. Then the foot is bound to the skee by means of two straps, one over the toe and fastened through a hole bored horizontally through the skee, and the other made fast to the heel and tied to the skee in front of the boot by means of screws in the top of the runner. These backstraps should be made of bamboo wound around with copper wire, and then wrapped in strong leather. The amateur had better carry a long pole at first, to use as a brake should a stump suddenly loom up before him while he is coasting. The veteran Norwegian skee man disdains a staff as effeminate, although he most likely used one when he was a beginner.

After the amateur has learned how to slide along on his skees without finding his muscles sore the next day, he is ready to take lessons in jumping. Near the bottom of a hill he builds a mound of pine boughs, upon which he lays a bank of snow. He rounds off this hummock, until it looks like a natural knoll left from glacial times. Now he is ready for a "try."

By crossing his skees at right angles he climbs some few feet up the hill and braces himself against a descent with his pole. As soon as he summons up courage he drops the pole. His runners move faster and faster till they strike the hummock. At that instant he feels himself shoot into the air and land with a sudden jolt on the snow beyond. He has travelled a distance of some thirty feet, or one-half a foot further than the world's champion for the running jump with weights.

Before his second attempt from further up the hill his instructor will tell him to bend his knees more when he strikes the hummock. In such a posture he will alight with less jar. Little by little the skee jumper increases his "run" until he stands at the top of the hill, and takes a jump of ninety or more feet without winging. Yet in that swoop through the air he will never lose its strange thrill, for the oldest skee man feels it as keenly as the novice.

"A strange lightness and feebleness take possession of your limbs," says John A. Gade, in "Country Life in America," "and your spirit shares the intoxication of soaring into space. Then you are suddenly called back to earth, for half a second softly, but then hard as iron; an electric shock passes up your spine to the back of your head; you wobble helplessly from right to left, each foot seems glued to the ground, but you have kept your balance and are shooting forward, while the 10-foot measuring stakes rush kaleidoscopically by you. At last you catch your breath with a hiccup, then a longer one. You are master of the field with a jump of a hundred feet or more to your credit, and finish the victorious course in a neatly rounded curve."

DIDN'T HAVE TO STICK TO TEXT.

Thomas Nelson Page brought a good example of the negro's peculiar and particular theological bent to town with him, and retailed it the other night at the Southern Society dinner. There was an old darky preacher who would never become ordained, he said, but was content to remain just an exhorter. This seemed rather strange to some of his congregation, and one day they asked him about it.

"Well, it's dis way," said he. "When you's a preacher, you's gatter have a text, an' stick right close to it, but if you's only a exhorter, you kin branch."