CHRISTMAS IN THE PINES

It was Christmas in the woods—in the great, boundless pine woods of Northern Minnesota!

To those who have never spent a Christmas among the primeval pines, with the lusty, rugged, good-natured "lumberjacks" no idea of the joy that is to be found there and there alone can obtain.

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods" that is not felt elsewhere. There one learns what Gray meant when he used the expression "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn!" The exquisite aroma of the murmuring pines mingling with the exhalations of the generous balm of the balsam gives to the sickly one assurance that had Ponce de Leon but wandered through a Minnesota forest he would not have thought his search for the Fount of Eternal Youth altogether in vain.

Yes, it was Christmas week; and for two or three days Louis Prenault, the foreman, had been in the full throes of planning and preparation—co-operating with the cook as to the best way of celebrating the day. There is no one who takes a more childish, disinterested delight in Christmas preparations than the true Canadian French habitant. His likes and dislikes, his friendships and antipathies are the same—either may be founded on the most trivial affair or incident. And once formed they are for all time.

There was a momentous question to be decided. It was a question of how to get to the town—forty miles away—to get the things deemed by one and all to be necessary for a Christmas dinner. This was to be the grandest affair that was ever pulled off on the banks of the Little Cloquet. Each man was "dibbing in a dollar," as Pat Malone phrased it, and everything was to be in sumptuous style. But how could they get the necessary turkeys in from the town. No horses were available.

Louis had told them of the situation.

"Fi' team lay up, by gar!" turning to the blacksmith, who lay on the floor by the huge range, "zey are——'ow you call zat?—ya! seeck—zat ees eet, zey are seeck lak one dog, mon gar!"

"And you can't spare one for two days?" asked the blacksmith.

"N—no —— sacre, no, zee work she is back—much back."

"What's the matter with a party going out on snowshoes?" asked the smith.

"Huh! Zee H'American lumberjack, he cannot walk zee snowshoe—zee Frenchman I want. We are—oh hell! 'ow you say zat?—we are—stuck! Sure!" and he rolled the difficult syllables around his tongue as though he had never attempted them before. The Frenchman does not take kindly to the English language.

* * *

But the blacksmith did some hard thinking through the night. He was a Canadian, though not a Frenchman, and in his youth he had been an expert snowshoer; and the next day he asked Louis to let him have six men whom he could choose from the ranks. Louis gave his consent, and then, as he expressed it, "zee fo-on—she commence."

Round and round the cook shanty the blacksmith drilled his men, initiating them into the arts and mysteries of manipulating the shoes. Many and ludicrous were the incidents that occurred during their period of noviceship, and Louis and his countrymen laughed till their sides ached.

At last their instructor pronounced them sufficiently versed in "snowshoeology" to start upon their journey of forty miles and back. Louis attempted to give them instructions as to what to get, but he got everything so mixed that all had to be gone over again, and that time they were muddled worse than ever.

"Fi' gal' of zee tea, and sev' poun' of zee whisk' and ten poun' of zee molass'—comprende vous?"

"Aw, what'er you talkin' about?" indignantly asked Red Hennessy, the lustiest man on the Little Cloquet, "we're goin' after supplies—not to unravel some Chinese-French riddle." And with a majestic shrug of his shoulders the foreman turned and walked into the cook shanty, leaving the instructions with Napoleon, the cook.

* * *

It was five days later, in the evening, that the party returned, each one shouting, stamping, puffing and brushing the snow off himself and all telling funny stories of incidents that had happened along the way, and of how this one or that had met with a mishap while crossing a stream or a fence.

The things were lovingly unpacked by Napoleon and the "cookee" and each article placed with tender care where they would keep best.

"Zee turk'—mon gar, she is one bird! Hah?"

"Ay tank it yust bane about de fines' dat was. What yo' tank, Yohn?"

"Ay bane tank so—was yust so fine. Ja, ja!"

"Zee teeth she wataire lak someting I nevaire see."

"Howly saints! but what a divvle of a toime we'll hev."

And all stood around and commended each in his own earnest way the work of those who had walked the weary miles and chosen the things.

Two days must pass before Christmas would be with us—and oh, the amount of labor that was performed in that time by Napoleon and his cookee; and the amount of cursing that the excitable Frenchman did in that period was enough to do any ordinary man for the rest of his life. But Napoleon did not weary in well doing—at the expiration of the two days he was as fresh for another run as when he first began.

The huge turkeys had been hung in the loft of the barn so that they would be kept frozen, and on the afternoon of the 24th Napoleon went to the barn to get the birds.

The loiterers about the camp heard him about two minutes later:

"Sacre! Diable! ——! ——!" he fairly screamed.

"What's the matter, Napoleon?" they asked him.

"Mattaire? Mattaire! Mattaire! Ze—ed fox she haf eat ze turk! Mon dieu, le pauvre turk'." And he almost cried in his rage.

Upon search, however, it divulged that Napoleon was mistaken as to the identity of the vandal. He had, in his Gaelic haste, overlooked the fact that there were marks which indubitably proved that a bear—and an enormous one, had committed the theft.

"Boy garrys," said Pat Malone, as he crawled up on the hay, and surveyed the scene of desolation by the misty light that filtered through the cracks, "sure 'twas a cyclone that struck the place unbeknownst till us. Sure how did the baste get in at all at all?"

They soon found the place, but wasted no time in vain regrets. Each one who was able to do so got his gun and the party was soon on the easily found trail of the daring specimen of the genus ursus. About sunset they caught up with him—just as he was finishing the remains of his feast. He was speedily dispatched and the carcass carried to the camp.

"Holy baldheaded Moses," said Pat fervently, "we've got the torkeys annyhow—hey, Oscar?" to the big Swede who walked beside him with a haunch of bear on his back.

"Ja, ay tank so."

* * *

Yes, it was Christmas night—my first, but by no means my last in the woods!

The tables were spread—the feast of "ros' bear" is in full swing. About the table is a motley crowd. Americans, Irish (where will one not find them?) French, Swedes, Finns and the ever-present Glengarry Scotchman. All enjoying the one day of the long, tedious winter that is given to the woodsman to celebrate as suits his humor while in the woods.

"Ros' bear and p'sup—she batter dan ros' bif 'lone Hah?"

"You bate—she's purty good chewin'!" assented a hearty Celtic voice; "Napoleon savvies about puttin' on all th' trimmins, he does."

"Pass down them prunes there—yer so busy atin' ye think no one else wud like a little snack himself," bawled a Glengarry.

The feast is over and all are in the humor for telling of the days long ago—the Scotchmen tell of the "wonderfu' hauls in the' Nipissing and Muskoka wo-ods;" the Frenchmen tell in awed, reminiscent whispers of the startling incidents they encountered in the drives on "ze ole Restigouche or ze Miramachi in eighty-fi'—by gar she was dandee!" and the Scandinavians sit smoking their pipes and seem content to let the others do the talking; occasionally they nod their heads as if by way of encouragement.

Soon Louis, upon whom the others have been waiting to give the word, says "Sing habitat song, Jules, ole fashion song—she ees good." And in a loud but sweet voice Jules very accommodatingly sings:

"Une Grande Piqnique! Une Grande Piqnique!
Lak' yonder ze ocean ro'r!
Blow lak' not'ing I never see.
Blow lak' ze Diable makin' grande tour!
Hear ze win' on ze be-eg pine tr-ree!"

A salvo of "se bon," "great," "yust fine" and "floine" greeted this effort, stirring the others to try their luck with voices hoarse from swearing at horses and "halloing" through the density of the forest; and in a moment the rude but stirring notes of a hearty "Come-all-ye" is making the dust fall from the rafters as eighty lusty throats swell the chorus.

* * *

It is a fine thing to be a good singer, but the pride of the woodsman is to be a good dancer. So it is not long till they all adjourn to the big shanty and the benches are cleared away, and nothing is left on the floor but the great stove and the pile of green maple wood that surrounds it on all sides.

Louis tells us that Napoleon "he play on ze fid' lak' ze dev'," and after Napoleon comes with the instrument we are constrained to believe him. Surely it must have taken years and years of unremitting practice to be able to extract from the violin the series of shrieks and wails that the Frenchman found within its bright, brown body. He has tuned it up and announces that he is ready.

"Play ole fashion reel," said Louis, "she ver' good."

They choose their "ladies" and then the ball is opened. He plays the low, mellow notes of the "Elfin Waltz," a favorite with the lumberjack, in a quavering way that makes the chills run up and down one's spine; and with a celerity that is wonderful they glide about the floor to its seductive strains.

"Aw, sure," said one of the Irishmen, as they stopped for breath and Napoleon put some "ros' on de bow," "Oi don't loike that 'Infidel Waltz' at all at all—play something more quick and divvlish. Sure, Now, 'The Oirish Washwoman' is floine to jig to. Eh?"

The company are nothing loath, and soon the nimble-footed son of Erin is cutting capers about the floor—jumping in the air to see how many times he can crack his heels together before touching the floor, and all such antics so dear to the big heart of the unsophisticated lumbermen. He is complimented very highly, and then Louis announces that "ze whisk—she be bring—an' ze hot wattaire, ya! an' ze sugaire!"

Again the fire of the old Cloquet days is strong upon me—it flows through my veins like Chian wine and will not be stilled!

Again through the fretted aisles of fancy I follow the swaying figures as they whirl with liquor-accelerated speed through the mazes of the dance with rude jest and hearty guffaw! I see some long, lean, lanky red-shirted son of far-off Glengarry open the door of the great stove and the lurid light from the fierce fire beats upon his red hair, ruddy face and freckled, hairy hands. From across the room there comes an expectoration of huge dimensions and lands, with the accurate aim that comes of long practice, fairly upon his hand. The incident is greeted with a general laugh as he fruitlessly looks for the culprit.

"Heap on more wood, the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will;
We'll keep our Christmas merry still!"

He takes large sticks of the green maple and tosses them into the hungry maw of the stove, and as they strike the fire they hiss and steam and spit as though for very spite. Then he closes the door and the only light is that of the smoky lamps as they shed their sickly radiance in a grudging manner over the joyous Bacchanalian scene.

Wilder and faster the fun waxes and someone suggests that a kicking bout be started—Jules St. Croix is the acknoledged champion in this respect, every winter he has held his own against all-comers—they all wonder if there is no newcomer this year who will wrest from him the laurels he has worn so long.

A space is cleared and Jules takes the lead. He kicks very cautiously, as is his wont—to lead the new ones on. They are easily known. Several who take a pride in this accomplishment in this respect step forward, little aware that the man whom they are about to compete with is the champion of the famous Pierre le Bouche district in far-off beloved "Kebec." As they register their kicks Jules always lands about an inch above the last mark—so as to not discourage them. At last but one man is left—a tall and lanky son of Norway.

"Ay skol tank et goin' bane porty tight keckin'," remarked one of the friends of the Scandinavian. The competitors wisely say nothing—for the first time in his history Jules is a little mite afraid that his prowess is not equal to the occasion. The stolid expression of the Norwegian denotes nothing affirmative or negative.

Higher and higher grow the marks of each. The Norwegian with noncommittal nonchalance equals every scratch made by Jules, who with grim defiance in his face sees plainly that the efforts of the other are not nearly as labored as his own.

"Seven feet two inches!" calls the referee. "Jules, you'll have to dust to beat the Norske."

"Seven feet four and a half—come on, Ole!"

Up they went till the Norwegian made the phenomenal kick of seven feet nine and a quarter. Nothing daunted, Jules, though he knew well he would never make it, essayed to equal it and fell flat upon his back. Though cheered on by his friends, he would not try again, but walked over to the Norwegian and held out his hand without a word—the other took it as silently. He knew what it was for a strong man like Jules to acknowledge another his peer. Thus it was that for the first time in his thirty-eight years' of life that Jules yielded up the palm to another in his beloved sport. It is told of in awed whispers after the men are through work in the evenings even to this day.

To cover up Jules' mortification they plunged still farther and wilder into the sport of the evening.

Pat Malone got upon the table, which had been placed in the center of the floor, and sang:

"We speak of a merry Christmas,
And many a happy New Year;
But each in his heart is thinking
Of those that are not here."

He managed to sing the verse through and then his memory failing him he was hustled from the throne and another mounted it whose mind was more retentive.

"Plaintee tam' till morn'," said Louie, and the whiskey jug was placed upon the table, each man with a tin cup from the kitchen, and the revellings degenerated into an orgie that would tell the next morning.

Napoleon warned them to not drink too much.

"When yo' come to me fo' ze cup coff' an' ze col' towl yo' fin' hout w'at I tol' yo'. Savvy?"

MUSIC AND DOMESTIC PEACE WERE INCOMPATIBLE

Three Pretty Song Writers Who Sang of Home Lost Their Husbands.

Three young woman song writers of Indianapolis, the eldest only twenty-two, have had romantic careers, more remarkable than any set forth in their songs. Before their marriage their names were Miss Elsie Lowry, Miss Marion Barrackman and Miss Maebelle Hufford.

These young women live within a stone's throw of each other, and yet they have never met.

Each eloped after a rapid courtship.

Each selected for a husband a man younger than herself.

Each separated from her husband within a few months.

In each instance the chief cause of the differences and the separation was the wife's devotion to music.

It is sad to record that the authors of such sentimental compositions as "Baby Asleep," "I Love No Other Like My Cabin Home," "She Has Found a Place in Her Heart for Me," "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," "The Old Trundle Bed," "He and I" and other sentimental and domestic ditties should have personal experiences that belied their songs.

The only consolation for those who love the romantic is found in the experiences of Mrs. Elsie Lory Phillips, who became reconciled to her husband through the same agency that caused them to separate—one of her own songs.

Her marriage to Howard Phillips was a runaway one in a double sense. Both her parents and his objected to the match, because she was but twenty and Howard was only eighteen. So the young people hired a horse and buggy and started for an obliging justice of the peace. The trap broke down and the horse ran away. For a time it seemed that a funeral was more imminent than a wedding, but the pair escaped with slight injuries and carried out their programme.

Mrs. Phillips proved a better composer than housekeeper, and the boy husband didn't like it. Moreover, he was jealous of his wife's devotion to her music, and they separated.

They really did love each other, and true to her instinct Mrs. Phillips expressed her misery and unhappiness in a song. He happened to be passing the home one night and heard her singing the plaintive ballad. He was so affected that he immediately entered and clasped her to his arms, and now everything is lovely.

Mrs. Phillips has been told that the song would make her a small fortune, but she declares that it shall never be published. She holds it sacred.

Marion Barrackman made her greatest success when she set to music James Whitcomb Riley's "The Old Trundle Bed," which has gained great popularity in the middle West. Four days before she sent the song to a publisher she eloped with Raymond Barth.

The song was far more successful than her marriage. Whether domesticity quenched the fires of musical inspiration, or her personal experience made it impossible for her to compose music, is a moot question. Certain it is that the publishers to whom she submitted her efforts declared that the music of Mrs. Barth lacked the rhythm and swing that had distinguished the compositions of Miss Barrackman. She applied for a divorce and her husband was not unwilling that it should be granted, so last June the court made her Marion Barrackman again, and the first song she wrote after she secured her decree was immediately accepted.

Miss Maebelle Hufford was a "co-ed" at Ann Arbor when she wrote the "Ann Arbor Two-Step," which has had a great success. Her romance began in a classroom and it progressed with a rapidity faster than any known musical movement.

Edward Johnson was the young man who gained her affections, but it is possible that she would not have married him had she not wanted to go to a dance. Exit from the dormitory was forbidden. The resourceful Mr. Johnson, aged 21, placed a painter's ladder against the window. Miss Hufford descended and they went to the ball. After that festivity they sought a justice of the peace and were married.

It was the same story—music and domestic peace seemed incompatible—and now Mrs. Johnson has sued for divorce.

Couldn't Stand Hustling.

In Harper's for January, Wu Ting Fang, in his article on "Chinese and Western Civilization," tells of an American who, having lived for a time in China, was unable afterwards to endure life in his own country:

"I had an American friend in China, who died only a short time ago," says Mr. Wu. "The story of his life is rather interesting. He went to China when he was a young man. He learned the language of the country, and became an accomplished Chinese scholar. He adapted himself to the ways and habits of those among whom he had cast his lot, and thus became to all intents and purposes Chinese in his mode of life. After spending the greater part of his life in China, he made up his mind that he would pass the remainder of his days in the land of his birth, among the scenes of his childhood. Accordingly, he left China with no intention of returning. But he reckoned without his host. No sooner had he found himself in New York than the noise and bustle of the metropolis of the New World drove him to distraction. He did not know which way to turn to find rest and quiet, and he took the earliest opportunity to go back to China. Thus it is possible that a man born and bred in strenuous America may prefer the quiet surroundings of China."

"Goodness, Gertrude, what have you been doing to get up such an appetite? Playing golf?"

"No, mamma, I've been to two afternoon teas."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

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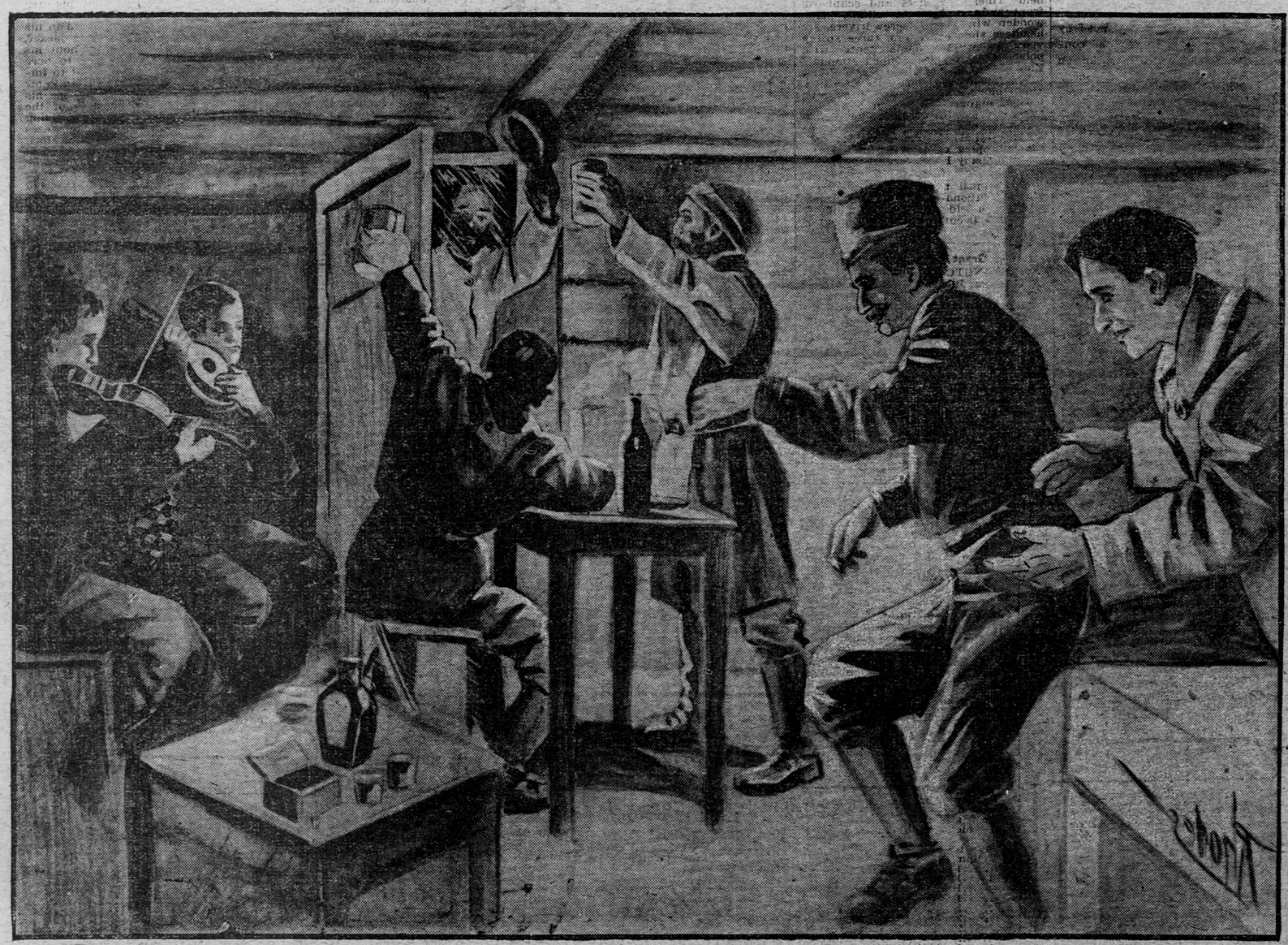

"It Is a Fine Thing to Be a Good Singer but the Pride of the Woodsman Is to Be a Good Dancer."

THIS WILL INTEREST EVERY LADY IN ST. PAUL

Who desires to be attractive and good-looking. She who does not lacks an interest in herself that she should be ashamed of. Unless one's complexion is faultless, unless it is free from disfiguring pimples, blackheads, moth patches and all other similar facial blemishes so common to women, she cannot be attractive, no matter how beautiful her features may be. Without a clear, spotless complexion, she cannot be and is not considered good looking by any one. The famous complexion specialists,

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