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GLOVES! GLOVES!

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CHRISTMAS WITH BRUIN.

BY ROBERT G. LARSON.

"Well, sir, I nearly lost my old friend for good, today," exclaimed Roy Hartley, after gazing into the fire for some minutes, his elbows resting on his knees and his face in his hands.

His companions looked up at the man who had broken the silence, which had been getting rather monotonous, although the boys were tired from tramping through the woods all day. Jack Forbes and Tom Allen were stretched out on blankets trying to read, but from the restless way in which they shifted about every little while, it was evident that they could not fix their minds on what they were reading. The other occupant of the camp, Fred Wilkes, sat opposite the speaker, and poked the fire now and again with a piece of wood.

"Yes, it was a wonder it didn't go to bottom," said Wilkes, without raising his head; then looking up, "but it was mighty lucky that bush was there."

"What's that?" asked Forbes, raising himself on his elbow and throwing the book to one side.

"Roy's gun," said Wilkes. "He dropped it over the ledge today, and it fell on a bush fifty feet below, where we found it as good as ever, not even scratched. If it hadn't caught on the bush, it would have gone to the bottom of the lake, and that would have been the last of it."

"And I was more than glad to get it all right, too," added Hartley, "for I wouldn't like to lose that rifle, I assure you."

"Where did you ever get it?" said Allen, as though he had been trying to answer the question himself, and had given it up. "You've had that rifle as long as I remember."

"Christmas present," said Roy, and a smile spread over his face. "From my Uncle Joe—a habit of his—presented everybody with a gun—thought because he was fond of shooting everybody else must be, too—wasn't far out, neither, in regard to our family."

"Was he much of a shot himself?" asked Allen, curiously.

"He was a crack shot—the best I ever saw. He's out in Winnipeg now. By the way, do you want to hear a story?"

"Of course," exclaimed all three at once. "Let's have it."

"Well it is about the Christmas eve on which that gun was bought," said Roy, sitting upright as he spoke. Then, clasping his hands and resting the wrists on his legs, he again gazed thoughtfully into the fire, as though transported to another place and once more viewing the incidents he was about to relate, he continued: "My uncle was staying with us at that time and on Christmas eve he, with my father, drove into town to do the annual Santa Claus performance for the youngsters. I will never forget the night. It was simply

beautiful. Clear, cold, the stars shining like diamonds, fairly bursting it seemed to me; the moon, round and full, made it light as day, spreading its rays over the snow covered country. I had been out in the woods looking after snares I had set, and walking slowly along the road gazing at the snow covered hills and clearings, and the trees here and there decked with the frozen snow, I thought the scene almost too grand to leave. While thus musing a horse and sleigh drove up, the occupants proving to be my father and uncle, who were returning from the city with presents for everybody. I got into the sleigh, and as we drove along made a general inspection of those of the purchases which were not done up in paper or at the bottom of the heap, so to speak. Among them was that rifle." The speaker turned his eyes from the fire to where the weapon stood and his companions did the same, exhibiting a curiosity that one will sometimes take in the most common place things—things that we are almost tired of looking at. Continuing, he said:

"I felt pleased when they told me the rifle was to be mine, and picked it up to have a look at it. It tickled my uncle all to pieces to see me interested in it, and seeming to forget all about the cold night air, and the long drive they had had, he began showing me how to put the cartridges in and take them out, for it was the first rifle I ever saw, my former experience being limited to a shot gun."

"About two miles from the farm was a log cabin, sitting back off the road, and

that my uncle would take such a risk as to nre at a bear when he had a human being in his paws. But it takes longer to talk than to do.

"Crack! He had fired. My father's face was white as marble, as we ran up the slight incline. Bruin was on the ground with a bullet in his shoulder, and when we reached the spot, Mrs. Sim was using the axe on his bearship's head. The old man himself was unable to move. He didn't seem to have a bit of breath in his body when we carried him to the cabin. But he soon came round again, and then we went out to haul in the bear, which was given to old Sim. We told him to claim a bounty from the government, and then had to spend half an hour explaining what a bounty was."

"'Lor, Marsa!' exclaimed the old woman, 'we'se jes' thinkin' wat we couldn' half no turkey fo' Christmas, and lor', my, ain't bar meat jes' es good. Hope de ole man ain't got all his ap'tite squeezed out, though.'

"Ole Sim could talk pretty well by this time, and it was fun listening to his account of how he heard the pigs squealing, and how the old woman said it was only the little ones kicking up their didos; and then what it felt like to be hugged by a bear. He said it wasn't half so nice as when the old woman hugged him when she said she'd be his for ever and ever. And then the old woman poked him in the ribs a couple of times. Suddenly, Mrs. Sim turned round to the squad of woolly-headed youngsters who stood gaping at us, and



THE LITTLE MISSIONARY.

behind it was a thick wood. The ground in front of the cabin was soft and muddy in summer, while to the west it was hilly and barren. At that time a colored family lived there, the woolly head of it, being generally known as Old Sim. While we were driving along the road opposite this place, my father and I were watching Joe with the greatest interest as he explained everything about the gun. Suddenly my father looked up and exclaimed:

"'Heavens! look at the bear!'"

"All three of us looked towards the hill. Half way up it was a large bear walking away on his hind legs, with one of Old Sim's pigs. Some distance behind him, Ole Sim himself was running with an axe in his hand. At the cabin I saw Mrs. Sim and some of the little Sims watching the scene with wide opened mouths and eyes."

"The plucky old ducky never lessened his pace, and with the axe raised above his head he approached the bear; but when within a few feet of him bruin dropped the pig and turning round caught hold of old Sim round the arms and hugged him. The cries of the old ducky were nothing compared with those his wife when she saw this part of the proceedings. We all thought Old Sim would be squeezed to death before we could get to him."

"My uncle viewed the whole transaction without saying a word, but when the bear caught hold of Sim, what was my surprise to see him lift the rifle to his shoulder."

"'Stop, man!' exclaimed my father. Don't shoot; you'll kill the darkey."

"Joe did not say a word. I knew the rifle had a bullet in it, but never imagined

running her eye over them, exclaimed: 'Lan' sakes, where's Siely!' Nobody knew. Mrs. Sim made a rush for the door, but it opened before she reached it. There stood Siely herself, her woolly head done up in brown paper, a grin on her coal black face, her toes almost touching each other and her heels about a foot apart, and in her arms was a little pig."

"'Where's you bin?' asked her mother."

"'Chasin' the pig,' said Siely, 'the little fool done gone run away whenever the b'ar dropped 'im, an' I'se bin chasin' him ever since.'"

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BESS MUNRO'S CHRISTMAS.

A TRUE STORY.

BY "NOEL PILGRIM."

How little is the romance of our country written. Poets have arisen among us of no mean or meagre genius. We have our painters too who have flourished into fame under a royal lady's leading and protection. But the novelist and dramatist are yet to come, and raise our national life and characteristics out of the contempt, and inattention in which they lie. It may be said we are too young for belles-lettres, our origin and beginning are not yet sufficiently within the mists and shadow of the past for us to possess a folk-lore, much less a settler romance. But if short, our story so far has not been a tame and uneventful one. Its heroes have not been weak or prosaic, nor its heroines lack-adaisical, or unlovable. The brain and hand are only wanting to collect, digest, set in order, and give to a waiting people the chronicles of the brave, grand, sweet, sad, bitter, violent days that are gone. Surely such events as the American Rebellion, the Loyalist movement, the thrilling and tragic scenes of early French settling, the national struggles and changes, the political strifes and crises,—should be full of inspiration food and variety for the imagination and the judgment.

When the wise king wished to cast the magnificent brazen vessels for the temple he chose for the casting of them a district of despised clay ground in his dominions. That which hitherto had been looked on with contempt and scorn it regarded at all, was found in time fit for useful and holy purposes. So at the right time from our adolescence among peoples, our inexperience in things, our crudeness in culture, our inaptitude in arts, our distrust in self, shall be made manifest the purpose of our calling as a nation.

And we may fairly say all life will furnish scenes and characters for the art of fiction, which is becoming such a power in the reading world. Our first mental inquiry on beholding any picture is as to its truth. It may be a grand Alpine panorama which makes us catch our breath, or only a rush grown brook, stirring a sense of tears within. But if it be true to what it represents it is a great help to us, and we feel a sense of improvement and gratitude.

Among our inland vales and along seacircled shores, are the homes of a peasantry, whole personality has many aspects, much originality, noble and interesting qualities, novel and entertaining characteristics. Some day a Dickens or a Hugo, or an Eliot shall be born among them perhaps, who shall do them justice,

or at least we may behold the work wrought in Acadian lands, that has been accomplished in a neighboring country by Howells, Cable and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Far be it from the writer to attempt to vie with such eminent ones as the above in this simple tale. He just offers it as an experience of his life among a lowly yet pure and true people. It brings back to him a roll of breaking icy surf upon a boulder-strewn shore, and a sonorous answer from dark pine woods above; where cold and loneliness, and fierce tempests could not chill the glow of loving hearts, which were happy in the ways of simplicity and duty in the cabins all along among the rocky nooks.

The shores of Nova Scotia present every variety of coast scenery. In some places we find the utmost grandeur of cliff and crag. Who that has sailed upon the basin of Minas has failed to be impressed with the castellated and battlemented towers of Blomidon, the island heights of Parrsboro, the elegant lines of Cape Split, and the strange abruptness of Isle of Hawte, lying there when I saw it last—black against the glorious evening light—like some wave washed fortress or Sanctuary.

Or again we find regions of sand stone with recurring rounded dunes gleaming in a most peculiar way when seen from ship-board. Then again there is the "barren" coast, where rock and clay, and tree and pool are flung together chaotically, and men must set things to rights, ere they can put a foot down.

The homes of the fisher folk rise and fall with the coasts that are their life. But they rarely fail along those long wavering, winding, changing, billow-sculptured ramparts. We behold them from passing decks, clinging far up where scarce a tree will brave the decaying, blasting salt winds, and lying low down where white waves seem to break over their thresholds. It must be so. Semi-amphibious, watching and searching over those whitened harvest fields day after day, yet fluttering in like worn sea birds, at night for roost and rest, they yet wrest from the rugged marge in scant uncertain harvests the vegetable food they need. The sum of their joys is never great, but who shall tell the sum of their sorrows. Toil, waiting, chance, blight, famine, these are the heritage of those who "go down to the sea in ships," and therefore of those who wait and watch for them at home. And then there is that awful lowering, merciless fate of the sea, shadowed in the short sudden smile of the men, and the wistful absent gaze of the women.

It was my part once to be for two years in a fishing settlement on the west coast of Shelburne Harbor. The houses numbering a hundred or so are scattered about

The Worst Torture Yet.

Mrs. Gazzam—Oh, the barbarity of the Russian government!

Gazzam—What has it done now?

"Imprisoned a woman Nihilist in a cell swarming with mice."—N. Y. Sun.

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