

## STORIES ABOUT OLD SONGS.

How the Famous "Woodman, Spare that Tree," Came to be Written.

Many readers will remember the time when "Cher, Boys Cher," "The Good Time Coming," "To the West," and similar songs were all the rage, says the Westminster Gazette. These songs possess a merit to which we are afraid many of the ditties popular since can hardly lay claim. They are at least sensible, and most of them are characterized by an inspiring, if not inspiring, tone which will be looked for in vain in many of the insipid and silly jingles of later days. The gifted and genial author of these rousing numbers is, we are pleased to say, still with us, hale and hearty, at the age of 83, and his book of recollections recently issued will, we are sure, receive a hearty welcome, if only for its author's sake.

Mr. Henry Russell, who was born three years before Waterloo, gave early indications of his musical bent, and was one of a band of little performers in an entertainment given before George IV. in the pavilion at Brighton. Later he studied music in Italy, and when he came back to London was made choirmaster at His Majesty's Theatre. This post lasted, however, only a very short time, and Russell set sail for Canada. It is difficult to realize that Toronto was then only "a small township," and that Yonge street, now one of the handsomest thoroughfares to be found in the dominion, was then "simply a forest road, with scarcely a house or living creature to be seen."

Mr. Russell did not remain long in Canada but proceeded to the states, where he spent a considerable time. But that the tastes of men were also in a somewhat primitive condition at that time is shown by an anecdote which he tells in connection with the post of organist which he held at the Rochester Presbyterian Church. He played on one occasion as a voluntary the "Hallelujah Chorus," thinking that it would please mightily the congregation. But he was mistaken.

After the performance one of the elders came to me and accosted me thus: "You will excuse me, sir, we are all pleased with your smartness on the noble organ; your playing 'Old Hundred' was grand; but that last piece of music of yours is too theatrical, and I guess you'd better not play it again." "You astonish me!" I exclaimed. "Why, deacon, it is one of the finest choruses ever composed." "The Handel and Haydn Society, did you say?" "Yes." "Wall, I've heard of the house before, and I believe them to be a most respectable firm—so I calculate you may play it when you like."

It was about this time that the idea of composing his own songs first occurred to Mr. Russell. He set to music Mackay's "Wind of the Winter night, Whence Comest Thou?" which turned out a great success, and from that day song composing became the serious object of his life.

Some of his compositions originated in a curious way. Take "Woodman, Spare that Tree," for instance. He was out driving in the vicinity of New York one day with George P. Morris, the American poet, and they went to visit a stately old tree which had been planted by the poet's grandfather, and which was associated with the old Morris homestead, to which it was contiguous. As they drove up they found an old man about to cut the tree down for firewood. They ask him how much it would be worth, and he replied, about \$10. A bargain was struck, the money paid, and the daughter of the woodman pledged her word that the tree should stand as long as she lived. The incident made a deep impression upon Russell and he suggested it to Morris as a fine subject for poetic treatment. "Woodman, Spare that Tree," was the result, and after Russell had set the words to music it caught on with sterling rapidity.

Years afterward Mr. Russell was singing the song at Newcastle-on-Tyne when a gentleman got up and cried out: "Was the tree spared, sir?" "It was," was the reply. "Thank God for that!" was the response, with a sigh of heart relief.

During his wanderings in the United States Mr. Russell was for a time, it is interesting to note, the guest of Fenimore Cooper at his home. There he met Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, N. P. Willis, and other famous men. One of his most popular songs then was "Carlo, the Newfoundland Dog"—a song which he always prefaced by telling the story of its origin.

A mother allowed her child, a boy of 3, with whom she was playing on the bulwarks of an Atlantic steamer, to fall into the water. A Newfoundland dog present took in the situation in a moment, and, jumping overboard, kept the child afloat till both were rescued. On one occasion in Niblo's Garden, New York, Mr. Russell had finished the song, when two men rose in the gallery which surrounded the hall, and one of them, clearing his throat, addressed him as follows: "Good evening, Mr. Russell; this is my friend, Joe Taylor" (introducing his companion, who bowed two or three times). "Excuse me, sir," he continued, "was that dog yours?" "No, it was not," he replied. "Did he save the child?" "He did." "Wall," he exclaimed, with the air of a man who was asking a great favor, "I should like a pup. Could you get us one?"

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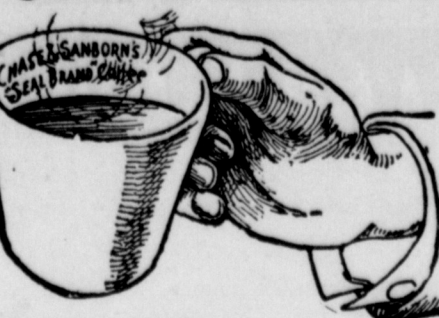
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## SEA OTTER HUNTERS.

They Go Out in Fleets of Canoes and Are Very Skillful in the Work.

The Hoonah Indians are the best sea otter hunters of all the Alaskan tribes. They are very skillful at it, and as the furs are very valuable they make a good thing out of it. The Hoonahs go after sea otter in large companies. Ten or twelve families hunt together. There are very good grounds about ten miles out from Lituya Bay and there the Hoonahs do their best work. They use spruce canoes which are small compared with most Alaskan canoes, and which, being light and easy to handle the chase, are swifter than the ordinary boats. Usually there are four paddlers but the number may be greater or smaller. The head of the family sits in the bow with his gun across his lap in such position that he can drop the paddle and pick up the gun in a fraction of a second. The mother, as often as not a baby in her lap, sits in the stern with a big long-handled paddle and steers. The children do the effective paddling. Every Alaskan Indian child learns to paddle as soon as it learns to walk. The Indians there have been a canoe-travelling race so long that they inherit abnormally developed bodies and arms, but their legs are not strong.

Because of the great bore in Lituya Bay it is only when the weather is very calm that the Hoonahs can go out to hunt sea otter. They kill with shotguns loaded with heavy charges of buckshot. And they hunt otter in much the same way that Western boys hunt bell divers and butterfly ducks. When they sight an otter they fire several blank shots. The otter dives and all the canoes circle around the place where he went down, waiting for him to come to the surface again. When he does they fire more blank shots and scare him into diving again. They keep that up until the otter gets tired out and one of the canoes can get within gunshot of him. Sometimes they have two or three otters diving at once, and it is lively, exciting work, as well as great sport.

Getting back with the day's game to the camp inside the bay is always sharp work and sometimes very dangerous. The bay runs inland about six miles, and varies from three-quarters of a mile to one and a half miles in width. The entrance is about 300 yards wide, with from four to six fathoms of water at low tide. Rocky spits jut out from the mainland at each side. Just at the head of the southern spit are several large boulders, the largest of which is called Cormorant Rock. The northern spit is a rocky palisade morass. Vessels going in and out always wait for slack tide. Except at slack tide the breakers extend entirely across the entrance, and when the tide is running either way the current is extremely swift and a gutter is formed in mid-channel from which the current sets strongly toward the shores, so that a vessel trying to go through on the tide would almost certainly be washed against Cormorant Rock or the northern spit. In perfectly calm weather the tide, ebb or flood, shows a considerable bore, and it is a vessel hit it just right she would go through as if sailing down hill. The mouth of the bay is only about a cable's length long, and after that there is no danger.

The Indian sea otter hunters never undertake the passage except at slack water. If they arrive before the tide serves they wait until it does. If they get in from the outer grounds only a very few minutes after slack water they prefer to stand the ocean swells outside rather than undertake to go through in their light canoes. As a matter of fact, they are safer outside, for there is a big eddy between the tide-way and Cormorant Rock, where they are perfectly safe unless a wind comes up and the sea gets rough. There they wait for the next turn of the tide and it is not unusual to see half a dozen canoes drifting about in this eddy with most of the occupants asleep. If the sea comes up while they are waiting outside the Indians make a landing among the rocks on the ocean side rather than try to make the passage through the breakers. This is an extremely hazardous undertaking, but the Indians are so skilful in handling their canoes that accidents seldom happen. They swim like seals from babyhood, and are usually so covered with oil and grease that the shock of sudden immersion in the cold water does not affect them.

Always Ready for Business.

A Philadelphia magistrate who recently distinguished himself by holding court in the street for a case concerning two men who were brought to his house while he was at dinner, broke his record last Sunday by leaving his devotions in church to hear a case out in the street and then going back to resume his interrupted prayers. Two men were arrested in the Sixteenth precinct on Saturday night for a slight of the peace. Next morning they were willing to pay their fines, and wanted to be released at once. They were taken to the Magistrate's house, where it was learned that he was at church. The wagon was driven to the church and the Judge was quietly called out. He heard the case, inflicted the usual fines, which the prisoners paid, then discharged the men and went back to his pew.

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A Fortune Dependent on the Grammatical Construction of a Sentence.

A fortune of \$118,000 is hanging on the grammatical construction of a single word in the Superior Court of San Francisco. A jury, among whom there is not a school teacher or any one claiming to be an authority on grammar, had, up to a week ago, devoted twelve days to the consideration of the point, and at last accounts the case was still unsettled. The learned Judge and some half dozen high-priced lawyers had been helping to disentangle the intricacies of the problem.

The prize depends on the exact meaning of the word "their" as it appears in a clause in a contract. It is plain that the word is a pronoun, standing for an antecedent noun in the sentence, but there are two such nouns, and the point is as to which it refers. This is the \$118,000 sentence.

And at their option the Adams Company is to have the use of all the machinery and coal-hoisting appliances now in use by the Southern companies.

The Southern companies referred to have money which is at stake, and it the jury decide that the "their" refers to them, they will keep it. If they hold that "their" refers to the Adams Company, then the Adams Company will get it. The sentence occurs in a contract by which the Adams Company was to unload all the coal ships of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company for five years. The Adams Company owned machinery for unloading the coal, but it broke down, and then the Southern Pacific Company's machinery was used, the Adams Company claiming the right to use it by virtue of the clause quoted. After the contract had run six months the Southern Pacific's machinery also broke down, and the Adams Company alleged that the Southern people ought to repair it. The Southern objected and insisted that as long as it used the machinery the Adams Company should keep it in order. The trouble thickened, and finally the Southern Company turned the Adams Company out and got another concern to unload the coal. Then the Adams Company brought suit to recover \$118,000, the profit which would have been made had the contract run its agreed length.

It is said that the Southern Pacific company's lawyer did not see the possibilities in the queer bit of grammar until long after litigation had been begun. It was admitted in the first answer to the suit, the San Francisco Examiner says, that the Adams company had the option of using the Southern Pacific Company's machinery. But the latter company now rests the entire case on the contention that the word "Their" meant the Southern Companies and not the Adams Company. In the sentence under dispute appears the words "Adams Company is," and the Southern companies claim that the word company is therefore written in the singular sense and the word "their" cannot apply to the Adams company or they would have used the word "its" instead of "theirs" and must refer to the Adams company because it is the nearest noun to the disputed pronoun.

## A Dakota Cold Snap.

"Mr. President and gentlemen," began Mr. Calkins. "I am not an old man, and therefore the winter I speak of is familiar to all of you—that of 1873. Five of us, with our wives, had gone to Dakota in order to obtain homesteads, and settled twenty-five miles from the then small village of Fargo, near where the city of Castleton is now situated, but then a wild, desolate prairie, with no neighbors nearer than Fargo, and bands of Indians or droves of wolves placing us in constant peril. The five families, although having sod houses of their own, all lived in one house for companionship and protection. Well, at 10:30 o'clock Wednesday night, Oct. 2, it turned so cold we could see the walls moving and the house grows smaller from the natural contraction caused by the atmosphere! It grew colder constantly until morning, and then remained as it was."

"What was the degree?" some one asked. "To tell you the truth, gentlemen, I do not know," was the response. "We had half a dozen thermometers, but they were the mercury kind, and the mercury froze so solid within an hour that the children used the bulbs to play marbles with all that winter and until they thawed out the following Fourth of July. We had plenty of fuel and wore heavy winter wraps in the house, in this way keeping from freezing. After a few weeks we became used to it. One of the ladies discovered how beautiful the icicles were that grew upon the windows. They then wore them as jewels, and diamonds never looked prettier. There was no danger of their melting, even in the house, and it was actually a source of sorrow to the ladies when the weather grew warm enough for us to go out doors and to melt the diamonds with which they had decorated themselves. That was the coldest winter I ever experienced, but I cannot tell just how cold it was, owing to have no spirit thermometer."—Detroit Journal.

## The Mascot Worked.

Otto Feudner has been buying lottery tickets for years and has never won so much as an approximation prize. He concluded that he would have to get a mascot, so, on the advice of a colored friend he set a box trap out in the cemetery to catch a graveyard rabbit.

Feudner caught a great big fellow the first night and put him in a big dry goods box. It was the day before the drawing, so to make sure that the mascot would work all right Feudner put \$25 worth of tickets in the box with the rabbit. After the drawing he went to see what he had won. It had eaten up all the lottery tickets.—San Francisco Post

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