

into the frosty air. The shame of it—he, king of huntmen, beaten!

It was with a sense of guilt that Ramon sat among his companions that night while the stories went in turn. He did not mention the black fox, and later as he lay awake in his blankets he pondered on how it had happened, how an untutored fox of the wild could have baffled him.

There he was wrong, for this was not an untutored fox. Necessity had tutored him, and although he was a stranger in the vicinity of St. Voltaire, his forest craft was not forgotten with the change of residence. Moreover, he was a named fox, and when a fox is characterized with a special name one may look with doubtful eyes upon him. Leagues away at the mission of St. Camille he had been named "Naxelle" by the trappers. He was the king. They had at many times poured leaden missiles after him; they had trapped for him in their wily ways; they had invoked the aid of the priests' prayers in the enterprise and set poison daintily disguised in his haunts. All to no purpose—he lived to leap from their rifle-balls, to shun every trap and snare, to scorn the poisoned dainties and to scurry from view, a living derision of their prowess as craftsmen of the woods. They suffered it till their pride could suffer it no longer; then they burnt and ravaged the rabbit pastures where Naxelle found his chief source of food, and, driven almost to starvation through the bleak months, he skirted the timber for long leagues down to St. Voltaire. There he found plenty to eat; there he stayed, and thus it was that he crept as a nightmare into Ramon's dreams, whether waking or sleeping. Like Naxelle's former enemies, Ramon hunted and trapped for him to no avail. The year ran out, and the sable shadow was still conqueror. The next twelve months slipped by, and Ramon was no nearer his aim. Then a wondrous thing happened, fearful as well as wonderful.

In November, the Freezing Moon of the Indians, little Pierre, Ramon's son, strayed from the post early one Sabbath morning. At noon he was missed, and they scoured the woods for him. All the long afternoon they searched and searched in fruitless endeavor, and when the dark set in with the cruel, merciless frost, a sinking horror gripped their souls, for they knew what they would find when their search would end, if it ever would. By torchlight they trod the trails of forest and slope, and well on towards morning the anguish-stricken father, in company with the good priest Leblanc, stumbled on the tiny form in a nook in the rocks. The little legs were frozen stiff, but, behold! the arms encircled the neck of Naxelle, the black fox, and his tender face was buried in the deep fur, while the wonderful brush, the brush that had flipped derisively at the father, was round the child's throat, covering the baby form from the sting of the elements. It was the warmth of Naxelle's body and peerless fur that had kept the spark of life glowing. The arms would not unloose, and with eyes of mute wonder the fox felt himself lifted with the child to Ramon's strong breast and borne down the path into the fire-bright cabin.

The doctor from the next mission was brought in haste, but the legs had to come off. While little Pierre lay in bed there were two who never left his side, Ramon at his pillow, and Naxelle, all the roving spirit quenched, with the light of pity in his wide eyes, crouched among the blankets, where the chubby arms of his master could find their way round his neck, even as they did that night of the frost.

When the boy cripple could hobble around on his crutches, no dog would have attended him more faithfully than did Naxelle. He was half the sunshine of the little future-darkened life, a life that was soon to be in peril, for ere the spring had begun to stir in the woodland glades came the blood-thirsty destroyers—the Iroquois.

In one short hour the post was no more. Only one person escaped. His most vivid recollection is that of a great, goating creature brandishing a weapon above him, and then a leap at the intruder's throat by the king of black foxes. Everything vanishes thereafter, until the awakening at St. Camille. There they told little Pierre that they had found him near the ruins, well

guarded by a big black fox. But they would not believe the little fellow when he told, as best he could, of how the fox had come to St. Voltaire. Nevertheless, they kept Naxelle, and built a large den for him, just as if he were a public charge. And as time went on the people became accustomed to the story about the fox, and now it pleases them to tell it. None, however, except the little folk, really believe it—none but me.

After all, perhaps I am a little too credulous. But I might be pardoned for that weakness, because—well, you see, I was little Pierre.—S. A. White, in Canadian Magazine.

THE SPICE OF LIFE.

"I see a man intends to let a rattlesnake bite him and depend on prayer for a cure. I call that faith."

"I call it cruelty to animals, unless somebody's going to pray for the snake after it's bitten such a fool as that."

The lettering on the plate-glass window of a store recently acquired as the site for a new saloon read "ALBUM MANUFACTURER." A painter was sent for to change it at as reasonable a price as possible, when he informed the successful license applicant that the cheapest and quickest method would be to obliterate the first two letters.—The Catholic Abstainer.

"Sorry, sir," telephoned the butcher, "but we are out of sirloin. Why don't your wife order you a round?"

"What's that?" exploded Harker at the other end of the line.

"I say, why don't your wife order you a round?"

"Why don't my wife order me around? Man, that is all she does from morning until night! If you were nearer I'd—" But the startled butcher had hung up the receiver.

The Retort Courteous.—The Veracious Verger—"In the far corner lies William the Conqueror; behind the organ, where you can't see 'em, are the tooms o' Guy Fox, Robin 'Ood, and Cardinal Wolsey. Now does that guide-book, as I see you 'ave in your 'and, tell you who is lyin' 'ere, sir?" The Skeptical Tourist.—"No, but I can guess."

"Ah, Mr. Depew, you're the very man I am looking for!" exultantly cried a feminine member of the Kankakee Tourist Association. "You must introduce me to the President."

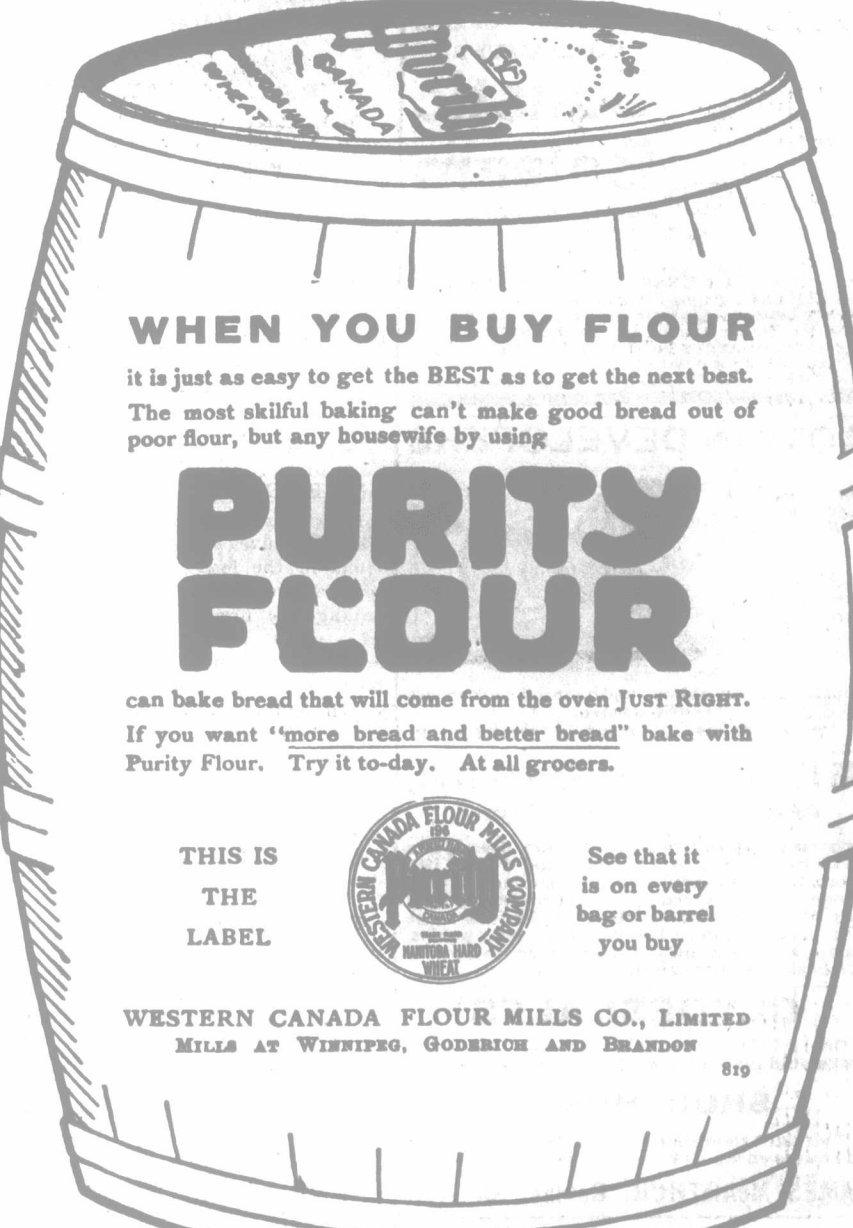
"But I don't remember ever having met you, madam," protested the Senator, with hand uplifted in a deprecatory gesture.

"Don't remember me, Senator Depew!" exclaimed the lady. "Why, I met you when you spoke at Amsterdam, New York."

"Ah!" mused Mr. Depew. "Amsterdam-m-m. Let me see, now. That was 46 years ago. Impossible; you were not born then."

And with a courtly bow Chauncey disappeared behind one of his broadest smiles.

A woodpecker sat on a knotty limb; his head was red and his temper grim; for the world was out of whack with him. He had hammered the stumps till his head did swim; he had looked for worms till his eyes were dim; he had punched each tree and knot and limb, and never a bug there was for him. Not a song he sung, not a woodland hymn, for how can a bird with hunger slim, and gaunt starvation gruesome grim, looking right into the eyes of him, get up a voice like a cherubim, and with melody make the welkin swim? His crop was vacant, and only a whim was in the stomach of him. Then he flew to the river and drowned him, and never made an effort to swim. His last words were "Oh birdie trim, why did you vote for that hawk so prim, who got to work on each woodland limb, and placed a trust on the bugs of him? I'm like the farmer, gaunt and grim, who gets surrounded by a rim of trusts that fill him to the brim with wind till there's naught in the stomach of him." The woodpecker then was out of breath, and the fish that ate him starved to death.




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