

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF TOBOGGANING.

There is a general and widely diffused idea that sport, in an Englishman's mind, to be truly such must include some personal risk or else destruction of something, an opinion embalmed by the light hearted Gaul in his well known characterization of the English character, "Let us go out and kill something," the latter word by its indefiniteness leaving it uncertain whether the something might not be the speaker himself. But with all this, the Englishman, in courting risk generally did so with some ulterior aim; it might be only a fox's brush, but still it was an aim. It was reserved for the Canadian branch of the English race, influenced by climate and different conditions of life, and consequently in an abnormal condition, to devise an amusement attended with the maximum of risk and the minimum of object; in fact no object at all, except the satisfaction to be derived from encountering the risk, and this particular amusement is the one known by the somewhat harsh name of tobogganing. We have had any number of descriptions of the feelings of anyone going out hunting for the first time, but none, as far as I am aware, of the first tobogganing experience; and it is this unaccountable omission that the writer, although feeling himself unequal to the task, will endeavour to remedy, offering as an excuse the plea that he writes from a full heart having just been initiated into its mysteries.

Accepting an invitation to join in an exclusively Canadian amusement, to him totally unknown, we will suppose the novice, on his way to the rendezvous, clad if as ignorant of the sport, as the writer was, in ordinary costume, whose inadequacy he will quickly discover. Trailing behind him is the toboggan, whose playful vagaries are a matter of some concern to him. Going down a slippery hill he will find it cheerfully running on his heels, at the imminent risk of upsetting him, though this alacrity is fully compensated by the reluctance it exhibits to follow up hill, except at an expenditure of labour seemingly ridiculous when exerted on a frail construction of bark. Having, as before stated, never seen the amusement of which he has some very vague ideas, he imagines it to be a quiet and sedate slide down a gently inclined plane with just enough speed to relieve the monotony, this fancy sketch being completed by the introduction of a nice flight of steps at the side to enable one to reach the top with little labor. Alas, how different the reality. On arriving at the spot he finds it to be a hillside covered with frozen snow, sloping at the angle of an ordinary house-roof. In the recognition of introductions he will perhaps unwisely leave go of the cord holding the toboggan, and will be recalled to the consciousness of this fact by an exclamation from his companion, and the sight of his toboggan sliding by itself at a rapid pace down the incline. He of course starts to recover it, and in the course of his descent is impelled by

circumstances to consider an artificial contrivance for sliding down the hill is wholly unnecessary. But it is in the ascent, after capturing the wandering vehicle, that he first recognizes its perversity. Is he slowly and painfully ascending a particularly slippery portion of the hill, it will seize that opportunity for hanging back suddenly in a way that reduces him to the ignominious necessity of dropping on all fours, recovering from this, and determining to avoid the slippery parts, he plunges into a snowdrift up to his knees, and finally reaches the summit in a profuse perspiration, caused by exertion and suppressed strong language. This is the overture to the grand act. He will see a couple launch themselves down the hill to what appears imminent destruction. They will disappear in a miniature snow storm, through which they will be seen at intervals bounding wildly from one lump of snow to another, and just as he is on the point of advancing a pressing engagement as an excuse for leaving, will be invited to take a seat on one of the frail conveyances and be steered (hollow mockery) down the incline. With a somewhat sickly smile, intended to convey the idea of extreme pleasure, he assents, seats himself, and in a moment finds himself flying through space. The first sensation is of a total inversion of his inner economy, and the idea that he has been dropped off a precipice into a tremendous snow storm, he feels his senses leaving him, then there is a tremendous shock, he is flying through the air, a vague wonder flits across his mind as to whether it is his neck or his leg that is destined to be broken, coupled with an indistinct regret that he did not leave instructions with his legal adviser as to the disposal of his property (should he have any), when he suddenly feels the toboggan again. I say feels advisedly, as he strikes it with a violence that suggests a steam battering ram. Again he is urging on his wild career, and in a final shower of lumps of ice and snow that insinuate themselves down his neck and up his sleeves, and in fact everywhere, he finds to his amazement he has reached the bottom safely. "Good course that," remarks the steerer, "just a little lump in the middle." Little lump!! He remembers his flight in the air and his thought that it was a haystack or a tree stump that they had struck, but he assents meekly, and adjoined by his companion, helps to pull the toboggan up the hill again. Verily, a pilgrimage up the hill of difficulty, complicated by the uncontrollable desire of the toboggan to break from his grasp and descend the hill on its own account, exhibited most when at the most icy portion of its ascent. Wet and weary he finally reaches the summit, and is greeted with exclamations of "Wasn't it splendid?" "Don't you think tobogganing a lovely amusement?" To all of which he of course returns an assent, though qualified with many mental reservations. One point, however, he does venture diffidently to mention, viz., "Whether a ten minutes climb up a steep hill covered with ice is sufficiently compensated for by a slide down it occupying about ten seconds, although the exquisite pleasure of the