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Old Tom.

By Alice Jean Cleator.

John Porter mounted the veranda steps with an apprehensive heart. Yet he reassured himself. "Women are such silly sentimentalists in such matters—always letting their sympathies run away with them."

"Better brace 'up and tell her—the sooner the better."

Mrs. Porter looked up smilingly from her letters which the postman had just left. Her pleasant attitude made his task the harder. But feeling that the dreadful ordeal would give ease in his troubled conscience he sat down and began:

"Now, Doris, you mustn't take on over what I'm about to say. But I may as well out with it first as last. I've sold Old Tom. I hadn't expected to sell the old fellow; I'm sorry already, but I had a chance to get fifteen dollars for him, and if he couldn't have got rid of that cough and rheumatics, even a jockey soon wouldn't have bought him for three."

Porter expected a protest of words but there was complete silence. The accusing sentence of a court of justice could not have given him a keener torture.

At last, in a strange tone his wife inquired:

"Who bought Old Tom?"

"Tony Menzi."

"That huckster that was around yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Has the man gone?"

"Yes, he started with him for the city at three o'clock this morning."

Then Mrs. Porter "spoke."

"John, I'm going to say something I've never thought, felt, or said before! I'm ashamed of you! You've often made a protest at cruelty in the community, but what have you done but a thoughtless and cruel deed? Tom gave us twenty years' work for nothing but his board. He's hardly ever had a whole week-day of rest. It's been Tom here and Tom there, always put to do the extra jobs, and trips to town often when he was tired out. And now, just because he was getting old and lame and had a cough, you've sold him to a life of misery and neglect. I thought you despised a traitor. But what else have you been to Old Tom? I wish I could at least have said good-by to him and told him how faithful he has been!" Porter knew he had the wrong side of the argument, yet he made a spirited defense, saying that farmers were a practical sort and couldn't let "chicken-heartedness" stand in the way of business.

Seeing his words of no effect, a happy thought struck him.

He took out his pocket-book and tossed three five-dollar bills into his wife's lap.

"I heard you talking about a new dress the other—"

But she did not wait for him to finish.

"Do you think I could wear a dress bought with the price of Old Tom? I'd rather wear a three-cent calico!"

Little more was said, but each day at the time Porter had been used to prepare Old Tom's bran mash he had a strange sense of remorse and longing for the faithful old creature, and a feeling of loneliness came over him as he passed the empty stall.

Over a year later, Porter on a business trip, was driving his "machine" through a beautiful section of country several hundred miles from home.

He heard angry shouts and saw a short distance ahead a heavily loaded wagon and a fallen horse.

Something was wrong, and he stopped his auto.

The wagon was twice too heavily loaded for the old horse that evidently had passed from one master to another and had at last become the victim of the jockey and been sold to an ignorant, coarse peddler.

The man had been whipping the horse, but finding that of no use was securing a fence-rail to further beat the old creature.

"Put that club down!" commanded Porter. "What's the trouble?"

The peddler obeyed, pointing angrily to the horse and wagon.

"He notta no good! I pay t'ree

dollar! Man cheat. Horse notta no good! I kill him!"

Porter freed the horse from the miserable, ill-fitting harness. A faint neigh of recognition greeted him. It was Old Tom!

"It's the first time John ever forgot," thought Mrs. Porter with a wistful smile as the day passed on to afternoon and no reference was made to her birthday. The pleasing little "surprise" gift that always marked the day was lacking.

She heard voices at the side veranda and going out, was greeted by a sight that filled her eyes with joyful tears. Her birthday gift had not been forgotten! Old Tom's familiar face greeted her—just a shadow of his former self, silent as to the harrowing experiences of the past year, but neighing for joy at the sound of her familiar voice.

"Old fellow, your vacation has just begun," said Porter, "but I fear it's come pretty late. You'll be a star-boarder as long as you care to stay. I've learned my lesson."

Old Tom was a "star-boarder" for two months. Then one dreamy autumn morning he was found "asleep," under the whispering chestnut tree where in his busy life he had seldom had a restful hour in its peaceful shadows.—Our Dumb Animals.

'Bout De Lady H'of De Snow

By Clarence W. McCuaig.
In "Canadian Century."

Dey talk about de wedder.

In dis country,—"Dat it's cole," An' dat h'Engleesh fella Kiplin', Tinks we've got de ole North Pole; But, ba gosh, dey don't know noting Of h'our lan' an' how she's grow, Ef 'e did, 'e'll change 'e's notion 'Bout de "Lady H'of De Snow."

Dat's true, we've got de Winter, An' h'our wedder's hard to beat, But dere's something in de h'air here Dat makes you keek you're feet. Yet all de same, I lak dat fine, Fer it makes ye smart to go; You can't put on too much hustle When de fros' es crack de snow.

We hear tolle lots of story, Bout de man what 'es behin', Dere's de man behin' de ole gun, Dere's de man behin' de time, Dere's de fella tinks he knows it all. What leeves across de sea, But dey make one very, beeg meestake, 'Bout de wedder on dis countree.

Fer we're not pile up wit snow-bank From de Spring de whole year roun', An' dere's more dan beeg, white snow-ball H'on dem apple-tree dat's foun. Ef you'll drop aroun' h'on September, An' make leedle tour wid me, I'll be show you juicy h'apple, Wid red cheek, h'on dat same tree.

In de Summer, when I'm workin', H'on de farm, cuttin' de hay, Gosh, it's hot, just see me sweatin'! I'm very scare for melt away, Fer de Sun 'e gets up h'early, You can boil h'eggs h'on de groun', An' 'e makes you wishin' h'of'en Some dem snow-banks could be foun'.

I'll be travel many countree, Work in h'Egypt, h'on de Nile, Fire some gun off in de Soudan, De tam we fix, dem nigger wile; Den I'll pass me h'on de Klondike, Dere it's cole! Well, yes, sir-ree! Den I'll get job on de States, too, Wild Leduc, on Kankakee.

But in all dem place I'll travel, There's no place lak ole Quebec, Plente work,—and healthy wedder, What more kin one h'expect? H'on de Winter-time we're happy, Lots of wood, and plente snow, Carnival and jolly pleasure, Drivin' roun' in ole burlow.

Here we've got de lan' of sunshine, Plente room an' good, fresh h'air, H'every saison has 'es pleasure, An' fer wile, beas', "Don't be scare," An' h'our lan' can grow de bes' crop H'of all kin,—you never saw, I'm no shame, at all, for sayin', "Hurrah pour Quebec, Canada."

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