

patrol or carrying despatches which were brought to us from headquarters (Hatley) and transmitted by one of us to a trooper at Cranby who in turn took the message to another relay en route to the Commander-in-Chief, at Montreal and vice-versa. Our nights were spent alternately on guard at the point, or in frolics at the farmers' houses. That is—to use a military expression, we bivouaced by files, but we frolicked in couples. And a great difference there was in the two occupations, for while the file invariably returned for a late breakfast, chilled, seedy and cross, the couple, on the contrary, returned to bed by mid night well-fed, comfortable and jolly.

The year was passing away. We were to be relieved on the last day of December and hoped to be recalled to Headquarters and to enjoy the New Year's ball in the meagry Christmas was at hand, but we had not given it a thought. Divested of the customary beef and ale, goose and plum-pudding, let alone the misletoe, yule and blind-man's buff, what could the day signify to us.

The twenty-fourth day of December came at last without our having seen a foe or having been in the least disturbed. Winter had set in, in its most rigorous aspect. Snow covered the ground and the Lake was frozen solid, a fact which added considerably to our work and increased our vigilance. Bands of Ruffians under the guise of sympathy for the Canadian rebels, were assembling on the frontier watching their opportunity, in case of a defeat of the royal forces to cross the borders and make a foray on the peaceable inhabitants. In a few instances they succeeded in making an irruption and were given at Navy Island and Prescott a lesson which has had the good effect of teaching Canada's big envious neighbour "that discretion is the better part of valor."

Early in the afternoon of December 24th, Charlie Hill and I left for our post at point "Look out." We intended to cut a few holes through the ice in hopes of catching a few grey-trout to send to our friends in Hatley. This we accomplished to our satisfaction, having caught a fourteen pounder and four smaller ones by sunset. After partaking of a cold snack and a small allowance of potatoe whiskey which we had brought in our haversacks with a feed of oats for our horses, at mid-night, we mounted our chargers and rode on the Georgeville road until we met the patrol from that post with whom we exchanged the customary challenge and sign, and then returned to our camp, tied up our horses and commenced our nocturnal guard, Hill taking the first watch.

I accompanied my comrade to his post a large rock on the upper beach of the point from which on a bright starry night one could see an object a considerable distance off. The ice being hard and crisp teams, horses and pedestrians unless shod in moccasins could be heard a long way before they were seen, but when we arrived at the rock all was as still as death with the exception of an occasional snapping of dry branches ashore and a rumbling noise on the lake, which sounds, we knew, were caused by the intense coldness of an atmosphere then far below zero.

Leaving my comrade with the intention of visiting the night lines which were some five hundred yards below the point I had proceeded but a few yards when I was recalled by a shrill note from Hill's whistle, I therefore retraced my steps when upon arriving at the rock Hill desired me to look up the lake and listen. "Well!" said he, after a few moments, "Do you hear anything?" "Yes!" I replied "a horse galloping."—"More than one, Cal—Hark, they are in the bay, close in shore." "What had we better do?" I asked, "Do! why challenge, of course and if we don't get a civil answer, discharge our carbines at the two foremost, and cut like blazes for the hut, then you must mount and ride as fast as you can for Headquarters and report to the Colonel. Don't mind me, I'll take care of myself and the boys. I only hope they are not

off sparking to-night for I shall require one to ride to Sherbrooke." "All right!" I answered "Hist! They have slackened into a trot and—yes, by George! I hear the clinking of sabres." "You're right Cal! say old fellow! now don't be making a d—d fool of yourself and get excited. I know you to be plucky, but if you don't keep cool, I'll knock you over with the butt of my carbine. Don't fire until I tell you and then hit your bird just above the pommel of his saddle—in the bread-busket."

Hill had hardly finished the last sentence when the horsemen came into sight three of them on the full trot. "Who comes there? Halt in the Queen's name!" broke from my chums stentorian lungs, "Rein up, or we fire!"

The three men, evidently cavalry-men, pulled up their horses and one of them whose voice we recognized as that of Lieutenant Longworth of Our's returned our challenge by "Who's there?—Stand or we fire!" to which Hill answered, "Cavalry Patrol—Alls well!" This was again answered by the other party—"All right! officer—Cavalry, Alls well, and a Merry Christmas! A Merry Christmas my lads, Glad to see you alert on your posts. Where are your nags?" "In the shanty on the point, sir," replied Hill, "would you like to inspect? We have a path cut to the main road which I would recommend you to take as the ice is not safe at the outlet." "Very well," said the Lieutenant, "we will go there, you may both safely leave your post for an hour. We have ridden fast and there was nothing astir on the lake when we left."

We all went to the hut, the Lieutenant and his two orderlies dismounted and tied their horses to saplings. We brisked up our fire, lighted a pine torch and things began to look comfortable. Our officer having expressed himself satisfied with our arrangements, inquired of the loyalty of the people and other matters relative to our post, suddenly asked if we had any thing to keep Christmas with, and upon being answered in the negative, desired one of his orderlies to unstrap his valise and bring it into the shanty. Upon its being opened, the Lieutenant produced three bottles of wine and one of Cognac, also a fine turkey ready trussed, stuffed and cooked. "There, my hearties," said our jolly officer, "I thought you would be hard up for Christmas cheer and told the landlord of the Georgeville inn to put up the luscious and sweet Mrs. Bigelow handed me the bird asking me to give it to that pretty young dragoon who 'has no more mustache than I have on my own lip.'" "So Mr. Calestigan, you owe your supper to your bare face."

Our impromptu meal was soon despatched, two or three glasses of wine drank in honor of the season. "A merry Christmas! to you both!" "The same to you, Sir, and a safe ride," and the inspecting party mounted their horses and departed. So Christmas had found us out in our bivouac, in the heart of a dismal Canadian forest. Were our hearts softened by the reminder? I think so—I know they were.

My little story is told. Bright happy days were those with their many shadows and varied tints of joy and sorrow, good and evil, thoughtlessness and negligence. They have left no great sting behind or misdeed to amend, but alas! too many opportunities neglected and chances left ungrasped.

Since that memorable bivouac fifty one Christmas eves have passed away. The giddy, thoughtless youth is now a gouty querulous old man, the chestnut curls are blanched, the lithe and wiry frame is shrunk and withered, the sabre now hangs cobwebbed on the wall, the guns and rods are rusting in their racks, the trophies of the chase are mouldering into dust. Each Christmas eve—warns.

What is this; my relaxing fingers no longer hold the pen which lays dry and mute upon the paper, a strange languor steals o'er my wasted frame; a flickering shadow passes before my closing eyes, a sudden flash from the expiring lamp, a gasp.—Is this death?

A musical tinkle from the mantel piece in my study restores me to partial consciousness, it is the French clock striking mid-night. The door is softly pushed ajar a flood of light pervades the room and a comely matron stoops before my chair, she places her disengaged hand upon my shoulder and a soft, and loving kiss upon my lips. "Dear wife! I think I've been asleep."

"Asleep!—yes, and scribbling you dear old Cal. I wish you a merry Christmas, dear; but come they've all returned from church and the children are impatient to greet their grandsire." I take my fair old partner's arm and we enter the ivy-decked apartment where around the furnished board sits clad in happy smiles the young mother and her pretty brood.

"Merry Christmas! merry Christmas Grandpa!" rings in shrill and shriller strains—"Melly Kissmas" is hisped by the cradled babe.

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