

clear. 'Hike up there, Nell,' speaking to the nigh mare, who, as he told me, was a nine-year-old and a bit lazy, while the off one was a three-year-old. He fetched her a poke with the stock of his broken whip, which he said was a poor apology for a gad. "Gosh, she knows I aint in that seat. She knows I aint got the blacksnake, too. I allus carry a blacksnake. Garn you! Wait till I git into that seat, my lady, when the gen'lman's off—I'll tickle you up."

There was a hind-end wind. That part of the road was a new trail down from the main highway to the railroad. It was up hill and down the steep; a road that no team could trot on long enough to do anything but raise a dust; and when the team slacked up to climb the opposite hill all the dust came tumbling down over the rig.

"Smoke up, Mister," said Jehu cheerily. "It'll take y'r mind off the dust and the heat."

HE went on to tell his wife—for it was she herself—telling her for my benefit how that same Nell mare of nine years, born and bred in Toronto, had been fool enough to throw a fit over a train the other day and started to jump a gate with the wagon behind her.

"Durn er! she was born down among the trains and clean ferget it," he said. "Tuck that spread around yeh, Mister; keep the dust off. Might's well be comfortable all yeh kin. It's six miles and a half to Moseyville, and the road's all, if anything, worse than this."

We were now on the main road as he said, up among the hummocks of poplar and jackpine and stunted spruce and hemlock, with casual hardwoods sticking through, and an odd bit of corduroy over what used to be a swamp before the dry spell struck it.

"It's a good road now to what it wuz," he said, as we leaned up a rocky hill grinding the sand into the rocks, while the dust wallowed down over us in a thick cloud and the heat chortled along the canyon. All the breeze there was pranked aimlessly among the top leaves of the poplars just where it wasn't needed. Two huge loads of fresh-hewn hemlock went crawling along towards the railway out from the mill, whose smokestack and piles of lumber we could see now on the edge of a lake, with a dam just above where the logs had come down in the spring.

"No, there aint any pine in here now," he said, fetching the nigh horse a poke with the stock. "Gosh! when we come here forty-five years ago there was pine enough. See that house there? That's ours. Rented it once. Had a dickens of a time to git the rent, and the outfit jist about killed the place; tore down my sheds, pulled down the fences. Broadwood's his name. Lives over at Rondeau. Works in a mill there. No friend o' mine. Not much!"

We pulled in at a down-trodden farmhouse—one of those rickety plants that worry sparse crops and Muskoka milk out of a rather niggardly soil among the rocks.

"Ho!" shouted Jehu to a dried-up woman. "Here's the ile."

He yanked out a can and handed it down.

"My gracious!" said Madam Jinepot, "that ile's been leaking all over this coat I'm setting on."

"Never mind," said he. "I've seen cans leak a sight worse on this road. Some of 'em run ile all over the bottom o' the rig."

He was good at this cold-slaw comfort, born of a career which might have made him a cynic.

"Now," he spieled, pointing with his whipstick. "See that log house back yonder?"

I did so.

"Yeh wunt believe me when I tell yeh that forty-five years ago the Governor-General of Canada made a speech there."

"What Governor?" I asked.

"I dunno. But it was him all right. I mind the time we had here gittin' the settlers out to welcome him. There was a reg'lar turnout. He come through from Parry Sound. He made a speech on the steps o' that house. I mind very well that Bob Crow made a bet with some o' the rest that he'd ask the Governor for a

quarter. By gosh! he done it, too. When the Governor was speaking he crawls up the steps and sets down under him lookin' up. 'Well, my man,' says the Governor, 'what do you want?' 'I want a quarter,' says Bob. Sure enough the Governor slips him one. Oh, Bob was a daredevil all right."

Shortly afterwards Jehu drove the team into a lake to get a drink, pointing out a rock at the end of which he said a son of his had been drowned, aged 23, being unable to swim.

"He was a fine lad," said Mrs. Jinepot.

"But I've got two other sons, both at Niagara Camp," said Jehu. "Oh, we ain't so far off the map up here as you folks might think. But we had far livelier times years ago than we have now. Why, I mind one winter there was seventeen surprise parties at our house."

Next house along Jehu was hailed by a woman with a sack.

"That's fresh buns," she said. "Take 'em to Mrs. Barnes. Tell 'er they're just baked."

"Oh," remarks Jehu, "I s'pose that's to pay for the loaf o' bread she sent yeh last week."

She admitted that it was. The age of swap and barter still rules in northern Muskoka. Money is not always needed. Not even tokens are sometimes necessary. Jehu's itinerary included a lot of these travelling bills of exchange, covering fish, butter, bread, fresh meat and other things—even among the campers with whom he did a casual but thrifty trade in the carrying line—always for money, however.

"Great country for fish up here," he said, as he stormed at the Nell horse again. "Bass—well, I guess so."

He proceeded to tell his wife the story of Lost Lake. That was a lake that lay in a basin up in the crags twenty feet higher than the next one; a small plot of water, twenty acres or so. Once upon a time a camper fished in that lake and got nothing. There wasn't a bass in it. So he dumped into it a few small bass. Three years later some school-ma'ams came up to camp. One of them went strolling up by this lake—at that time nameless. She came back to the farmhouse much excited to say that she had seen a tremendous-sized bass. What did a cunning Yankee tourist do but hire exclusive the only boat that could be got and fish in that lake all summer alone, bass from six pound down to three and no less?

"Well, yeh know that fella was pretty cute," sniggered Jehu. "He sure had a monopoly, if ever there was one. Whenever anybody came around tryin' to find that lake he steered 'em anywheres but to the spot. None o' the reg'lar settlers had time to bother about it. The campers said the lake was lost. The Yankee himself—had lost it. But he was yankin' six-pound bass out of it all the time. That's how the lake come to be called Lost Lake."

NOW the road became extra villainous. There seemed to be two rock hills to every hollow. The dust swarmed down over our backs and filled up all the crevices in Mrs. Jinepot's hat. The heat was furious.

"Mosey up there!" he shouted to the Nell mare. "Consarn yeh!"

He brought her a swat with the stock.

"Gosh! when this gen'lman's off I'm goin' to borrry one o' your shoe laces for a lash," he said to Madam, who expostulated with him for being so harsh and herself talked to Nellie in reassuring tones.

"Indeed you'll not," she retorted. "I've got on me button boots this time."

"Oh! So I can't do it then," he growled. "Gid-up!"

He told her over and over of the good old days when the pine logs came butting down from the upper waters; of the swaggering river-drivers that used to make the bush and the river resound with

the crack of epics now extinct. He had himself been a river-man upon occasion. The memory of those old heroic days was still strong upon him. His wizened old hulk had still the clutch of an earlier day. He lived much in the past, talking, however, considerably of the ice-cream he would buy when he got to Rondeau; of the church they would attend in the morning—by which it was quite evident that Madam Jinepot had made this trip on purpose to be at divine service, since it was every other Sunday only at the train end, and she had much respect for the church.

Jehu and his wife seemed to be intimate with every animal, every rock, lake, sugar-bush, human being and fence-corner along the route. He admitted that he sometimes went to sleep in the rig, waking to find the team off the road nipping in among the brouse.

Soon we came to the gleam of another large lake. He pointed with his whipstock at the woods that rose about the lake.

"See that high clump of bush there?" he asked. "Well, if you get the time before you go, you stroll in over there. You'll find the greatest piece o' God's woods left anywhere round these parts. It's wonderful!"

HE did his best to describe this enchanted forest. His vocabulary failed him. Madam took a hand. Her dictionary became exhausted. Their very failure to depict what they had seen so often led me to believe that the forest of Arden was never a more fitting haunt for A Midsummer Night's Dream than this magical, whispering, light-dotted sugar-bush whose cathedral arches rose on the shore of Bass Lake.

Having visited that bush since, I am free to confess that the ecstasy of John and his wife was quite justified. As they praised the great woods they seemed to become lifted out of the heat and the dust and the rocks into a bigger, more humanizing life.

Our next stop was the postoffice proper—Moseyville. Before we came to it John told his wife about the man and woman who ran that farm and who owned so much of the land thereabouts. It was the postmaster who owned the great sugar-bush. He told her of the remarkable way in which the postmaster's wife, a perfect lady, adjusted herself to the crude life of a backwoods country; how she carried her baby two miles beyond dusk after the cows, singing and rejoicing in the cool of the day and the gathering dew. In his praise of these people and of the great woods he seemed—and she also—to have forgotten all their animosity against Hiram Broadwood, the man whom they had accused of spoiling their farm back along the road.

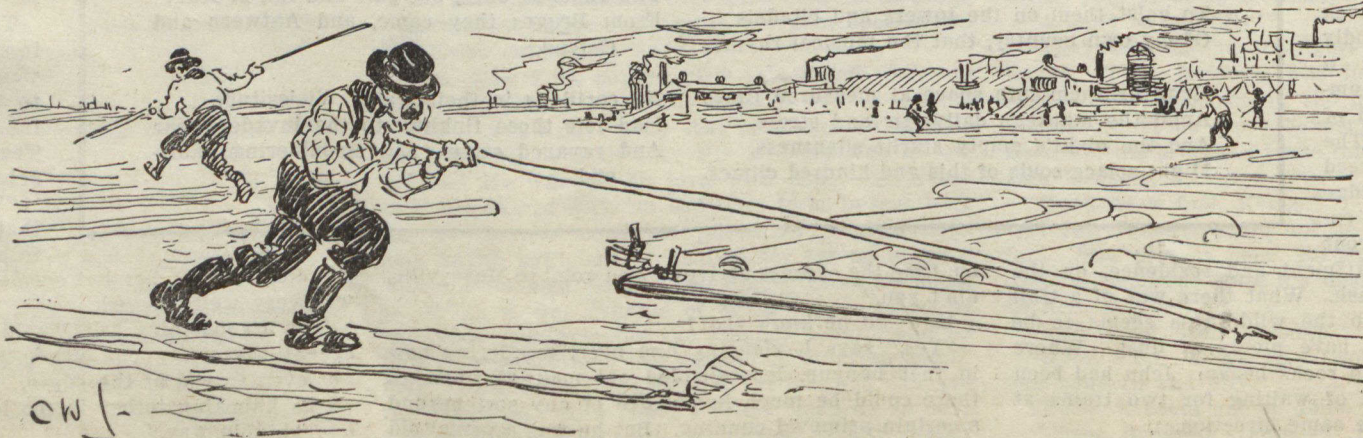
When we drew up, the postmaster's wife came running out. Her husband was away over the hills with the hay-teams. She was alone.

"Mr. Jinepot," she said excitedly, "please throw off the mail as fast as you can and hurry along. Mrs. Broadwood has just been here. She's ill. She came to telephone for a doctor. She went away again on foot. She said she would be home before she got much worse. But I'm afraid—"

John gave her no time to finish. He brought both horses separate cuts with the whipstock and started them off on the gallop along a level road. What a dust they raised! At once the heat was forgotten. Jehu Jinepot and his wife were flung fair into the arms of a crisis that ruled everything else out. The old wabby rig became a chariot of salvation. They forgot all about me—except to drop me off at the spot to which I was bound. Away they went in a whirl of clatter and dust.

The sequel? I learned afterwards that Jehu Jinepot overtook Mrs. Broadwood a mile down the road. She was struggling along in the heat, a sudden-stricken woman, knowing that nature had overtaken her when human help was far away. They got her

into the rig and took her home. That evening she was delivered of a child, with Mrs. Jinepot as the sole attendant. Jehu drove post-haste to Rondeau to fetch the husband, working there in a mill—his enemy. And over the new-born child the Jinepots and the Broadwoods buried their animosities, as they might.



"He told of the swaggering river-drives that used to make the river resound with epics now extinct."