

If a man had some startling disclosure to lay bare, or some particularly important information to impart, it was always reserved until such time as he could gather his clique of friends about him in the canteen, when, with pipes lighted, and "schooners" of four per cent. beer flowing galore, he would unburden his soul of whatever tales of woe he might have to communicate to those about him. And there were besides others whose time was entirely given up to the unsavoury amusement of dice-shaking for the drinks, and whose capacity for imbibing "four per cent." (beer) seemed infinite. Of the latter class I remember well an Irishman named Casey, a short thick set man, with a perfect brogue, who laughed and talked louder, shook dice more persistently, and drank more "four per cent." than any other three or four men put together. Casey's voice—a husky bass—could be heard at regular intervals of about ten minutes above the din and roar of his surroundings, calling frantically for a fresh supply of beer. When he had succeeded in getting away with eight or ten large-sized glasses, or "schooners," he was a perfect picture of that species of wild, untamable Irishmen, to whom fighting or eating. At such times Casey was ready and anxious to fight everybody and anything that crossed his path, but fortunately he was generally taken in hand by some of his more intimate friends before his aching desire in this direction bore fruit, and led away to his room, to dream of the conquests he had failed to achieve in the arena of fist-cuffs, and by means of quiet repose gather strength and energy for his appearance the following night.

A man who was ever known to sing a song, or against whom there lurked a latent suspicion that he might under any circumstances be capable of singing one, seldom escaped making his debut in this respect if he ever patronized the canteen to any extent. It mattered little what the song was, or in what language it was rendered, so long as it was an effort in the right direction. I remember very distinctly one evening when two newly-arrived recruits—one a short, merry-eyed little Frenchman, who had come all the way from Quebec to join "Le Police Monte," and the other a raw-boned, diffident farmer's lad from Ontario—walked timidly into the canteen to gaze upon the festive throng. Hardly had they crossed the portal when they were singled out and made the unwilling receptacles of all the four per cent. beer *gratis* they were capable of carrying about at one time under their waistcoats, when they were taken in hand, unceremoniously hoisted upon the platform, and a song demanded of each. They, of course, both stoutly maintained that the proposition was absurd, that neither could sing a note, and pitifully begged for their freedom. The crowd was merciless, however, and there seemed absolutely no way out of it. Each must sing a song, it mattered not what. Finally, under such universal pressure, their courage became sufficiently screwed up for the occasion, and the little Frenchman, taking he lead, sang the only song he was capable of remembering at the time, and rendered "La Marseillaise" with an enthusiasm so magnetic that the whole canteen was soon ringing with the chorus. He was honorably acquitted. And now came the young farmer's turn. He looked out upon the audience in that dazed, half-frightened manner peculiar to the average son of an honest rustic under such extraordinary conditions, and, after several long-drawn sighs and ineffectual efforts to clear his throat, he finally settled down to his work amidst the

thunderous applause of those about him. I can only describe this "piece de resistance" as a rustic, barn-yard song, set to no air in particular, but rather embracing every tune extant. It was rendered in that quiet, confident style of childish simplicity, interspersed with an occasional stop in the middle of a word to gasp for breath, that was really too funny for anything. The song was a story of a young man who, in quest of adventure and a wider scope for his many manly propensities than was contained within the bounds of his father's fields, had embarked as a sailor, and the song, or rather the chant, was a minute and detailed description of the thousand and one thrilling and adventurous hair-breadth escapes of the young man during his travels in almost every known land under the sun. There were seventy-five verses.

THE FARMER AND THE OXEN.

At four o'clock in the morning the voice of my boss aroused me from my peaceful slumbers, and little time was lost before another day's work was ushered in. Lighting the lantern, I drew on my damp clothes, and crawled down the ladder leading to the kitchen, where my boss was awaiting my arrival. We were soon hard at work cleaning the stables, hauling water, feeding the cattle, and chopping wood for breakfast. Breakfast over, I again resumed plowing, but with a grim determination this time to wallop those oxen into a state of implicit obedience, or die in the attempt. Well, I knocked and clubbed them in a most heartless manner, and almost incessantly, and at the end of my second day's plowing I had the grim satisfaction of knowing that they now commenced to realize in a marked degree that I meant nothing but business, and were less prone to take the "Gee" turn when I hollered "Haw," and "Haw" when I hollered "Gee" than on the previous day, and I also succeeded in accomplishing a good deal more work.

At the end of my first week at this business I felt that I had good reason to congratulate myself on having gained considerable experience in the art of handling a yoke of oxen. I had shouted my voice clean away, however, and it now required the greatest effort to speak above a whisper. . . . One certainly can't sing hymns and plow with oxen at the same time! I used sometimes to watch my employer at work with them, and for awful, unadulterated and comprehensive swearing he was by long odds ahead of anything I ever heard or hope to hear in this direction. His flow of language in this respect was most original, not to say phenomenal.

One night about six o'clock he was driving the oxen home from a distant field, when darkness overtook him before he knew it, and subsequently rendered the remainder of his journey somewhat interesting. A small, sluggish stream ran through the farm, and when about two hundred yards from the stable, where the ground on either side was of a rank, marshy nature, he stuck fast, the wagon sinking axle deep in the mud, and the oxen up to their bellies. I was standing at the door of the stable at the time awaiting his return. It was a calm, still night on the prairies, and as I looked out at the awful blackness about me, and then at the stream of light gleaming from the windows of the lonely little shanty which afforded my nightly shelter, my thoughts wandered away to happier scenes and I became pensive.

Suddenly, and without the slightest warning, there broke upon the still air a loud bellow, half human, half fiendish. I had little time for reflection, for the sound was soon repeated,

when I was able to distinguish the voice of a man in the distance. I immediately shut the stable door, and walked hurriedly in the direction from whence came the sound, hardly knowing what to expect. When within about fifty yards of the place, I stopped to listen, thinking I heard my name pronounced at intervals in a half-frenzied wild kind of style. In another moment the situation was partially explained. I recognized the voice of my boss, and was also the unwilling auditor of language concerning myself and things in general, which made me think the final day had at last arrived, and that heaven's most powerful enemy was now before me himself, pouring out a few fiery denunciations before finally consigning me to my awful doom. I cautiously approached, unseen and unheard as yet, to within ten yards of the spot, when lo! and behold! the whole situation was explained at a glance. There were the oxen grunting and tugging in a vain effort to extricate themselves and the waggon from the mire, while my employer stood by heaping curses galore upon everything in general. He had long since exhausted the stereotyped terms of common profanity, and was now indulging in a streak of originality that caused my lower jaw to unconsciously drop with wonder and amazement at such heretofore undreamt-of versatility in this direction. His denunciations were most sweeping, and his language was made to vary and apply to everything and everybody within his knowledge.

I felt it would be useless to announce my presence at this stage, and so stood by unobserved until I actually saw the man lie down on the ground and wildly kick and howl in a frenzy of insane rage. "Alas! those oxen again," quoth I to myself. When the storm had subsided somewhat, he picked himself up and started towards the house, evidently in search of me, when I stopped him as he was walking away, and asked him what under the sun was the matter. This he signified by merely pointing at the oxen in a dazed kind of way, not trusting himself to again open his mouth. My presence seemed to renew his courage somewhat, and after resorting to various means, we finally succeeded in getting the oxen and waggon both extricated at the end of about two hours' hard work. Needless to say, it was a great relief to all concerned, but the incident served to very forcibly demonstrate the fallibility of human resolutions, for it was only the night before, as we were sitting smoking our pipes in the kitchen, that my employer informed me of his late conversion at a salvation army meeting in Morris, and his determination to henceforth "lead a new life."

So much for oxen, in so far as they relate to human patience! I broke about ten acres of virgin soil with them, and considered my knowledge of their peculiarities not a little augmented in consequence, but my experience left not the least desire to contract any more extended acquaintance in this direction.—*Life in the N. W. Police and other Sketches, by Chas. P. Dwight.*

—Because a man has a husky voice, he is not necessarily a corn doctor.—*Utica Observer.* Nor if he is mealy-mouthed, does it follow that he is a miller.—*Philadelphia Millers' Review.* Nor is the baker, who always kneads something, a beggar. Nor is the cook with her batter a base-ballist. Nor is the chop-mill a wood-cutting concern. Nor is the miller with a bu(h)r a chestnut. Nor is the red-dog bin a kennel.—*Buffalo Milling World.*