



ON DUFFERIN LAKE, NEAR ORANGEVILLE, ONT.
(Mr. E. Havelock Walsh, Toronto Amateur Photo. Association)

IN THE "RARE OLD USED-TO-BE."



suppose there comes a time in the life of every boy when he feels as though the restraints of home have become unbearable, and that nothing can fill the longing of his heart save running away and plunging his grief-stricken parents into a torrent of unfeigned sorrow.

Such an incident happened to the writer once, in the halcyon days of youth, when he wore a glad smile and a freckled straw hat through the sunny days of drowsy summer. (This, I will remark *en passant*, did not, by any means, complete his attire). Something had gone wrong with the domestic harmony of the household. A reluctance had been expressed in regard to coaxing a dull-toothed saw through a birchen knot, or in regard to taking the family cow gently by the hand and showing to her mind where grew the toothsome grass greenest, or something of like import, and the writer and a younger brother concluded that the house was entirely too cramped for our soaring ambition.

We therefore resolved to crush our parents with a new born woe, and strike out for ourselves. The intention at first was to go to Italy and write from there apprising the folks that we were alive, but not satisfying them with our address. But my brother objected to this part of the programme. He said he knew he would be just as sea-sick as could be, going to Italy. He had studied our "jografy" and had ascertained that the proposed trip involved a certain amount of water. He wanted to go out west to the Black Hill mines and come home some day with a red shirt and tall whiskers, and all his pockets just fairly aching with their weight of the evanescent fruit of the gold mine. Finally I suggested counting the firm's assets before we came to a decision. Will had two penny-tokens, a piece of E

fiddle-string, six marbles ("stonies"), a jack-knife afflicted with spinal trouble, a rabbit's paw, and a cedar whistle, fashioned by the hand of an unskilled artisan.

My resources comprised four shingle-nails, a candy horse that had lost its head under strong excitement, a 3-cent coin, and a shaving-ticket, burglariously extracted from an elder brother's dressing-table. Italy and the golden West then assumed an abnormally distant and reserved aspect, and we finally compromised by taking a journey to the barn adjoining the house, from which we could look out and study the tear-stained cheeks of the afflicted family. We left the house at 6.30 a.m., and arrived at our destination at about 6.33 a.m. of the same day, without any mishap or incident worthy of note.

In the upper part of the barn was a sliding-door, into the middle of which had been placed a small pane of glass, and it was here that we stationed ourselves.

No sign of life was visible until about 7 o'clock, when the servant girl came out looking for kindling-wood and merrily trilling a roundelay taken from the Irish with great loss of life. Then about 8.15 the paternal ancestor came out into the door-yard, calmly picking his teeth. If his heart smote him at the loss of his sunny-haired offspring, he certainly concealed it most admirably.

Things passed along smoothly till noon, when the family had dinner and came out and sat down on, and near, the door-step and discussed the weather and other matters—little recking, in their heartlessness, that the roof-tree had been deserted by their children.

The same wanton callousness was exhibited at supper-time, and the two eager watchers marvelled greatly that it should be given to mortals to so easily curb the corroding

anguish and smile outwardly when probably the chords of their hearts were cruelly rent.

About nine o'clock in the evening, when night had fallen, the younger of the two broke the oppressive silence as follows: "Say, them brothers an' sisters an' father an' mother o' ourn don't care wot becomes of us, do they?"

Then I spoke up out of the gloom: "Well, their fortitude under suffering is remarkable—but, say, home had no charms for me. Did it for you?"

"Naw, not a blame' charm. Say, I wouldn't go back, would you?"

"Go back? Well, I guess not. I never knew what life was before. No father to say go an' drive that old cow to pascher; no mother to send a feller after cream o' tartar er extrack o' v'niller. Go back—nothin'!"

Then all was still for half an hour, when I said: "Say, Will, you know that tin whistle o' mine? Well, I forgot all about it. You wait here a minute an' I'll go an' sneak in an' get it."

"Yes," said he, "but I guess I'll go, too, an' git a clean handkercher. This one seems dirty."

"Oh, oh! Afraid to stay alone! I'm coming right back."

"Well, I don't care. I'm goin' with you," and as the moon momentarily emerged from the shade of Wilkins' woodshed, it lit up the anxious features and classic outlines of two tender olive-branches climbing to rest in their bed. The next morning we took our places as usual at the breakfast table, and were met by no embarrassing queries, and everything passed off as though nothing had happened, although at times I fancied I could detect the musical titter of some of the members of the household. By dint of carrying water and wood for the servant girl we ascertained that our parents, by some means, became acquainted with our intention to forsake home and kindred, and had concluded to wait until hunger claimed us for its own, when the family circle would once more be united.

KIMBALL CHASE TAPLEY.