

Good Sport and Christmas Cheer to all Sportsmen

A LOST CHRISTMAS IN THE KOOTENAYS.

A Yule-Tide Reminiscence: By Richard L. Pocock.

Seeing that "Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes it brings good cheer," according to the old rhyme, it is a serious thing to lose a Christmas out of one's life, but that was precisely what happened to the tenderfoot trapper the first winter he was in Canada, and his old partner, Boise Basin Jack. You see, when you are away up in the hills of the Kootenay, at an altitude of a few thousand feet more or less above the level of the lakes, which are themselves a few thousand feet above the level of the ocean, where it starts to snow in September, as a general rule, and keeps it up steadily, with rare and short intervals, until the end of March or the beginning of April, when you have forgotten to provide yourself with a calendar to hang up on the wall, and the only breaks in the monotony of the daily round of the traps and the daily shift in the prospect tunnel are the capture of a specially fine marten or the striking of a pocket of good stuff in the working face, there is some excuse for the losing count of Sundays and holidays.

We were just two, putting in the winter together, working a copper claim, which was sure thing going to make our fortunes in the Spring, but, in case of any little accident to delay the coming of sudden wealth, we were tending a line of traps, hoping to catch therein sufficient for a grub-stake for the coming summer's prospecting trip. Having started rather too late in the season, the job of building our log cabin the logs being green, the sap froze in them and helped to keep the cabin cool during the winter months. Before the roof was finished, the snow began to fall, and then it snowed, and it snowed, until, in a few weeks, we had to cut steps down to the door of the cabin, where at the time of the building we had one step up to the threshold.

Every morning one of us used to sallify forth on bear-paw snow-shoes to visit the traps and free them of numerous over-inquisitive squirrels, and flying squirrels, and an occasional marten, while the other would take the beaten trail to "the mine," and work single-handed with hammer and drill following the beaten trail to a mother lode, which would make the Silver King a thing of no moment by comparison with our Paragon. At midday we would meet for lunch, after which we would double up in the mite until it was time to retire to the cabin for the evening meal and a smoke, before turning in to rest and recuperate for tomorrow's repetition of the programme of today. On Sundays, as near as we could keep count of them, we would break the monotony of the week-days-work by cutting firewood and washing shirts. For neighbors we had the timber wolves, who used to serenade us at a more or less respectful distance, the porcupines, who were not so respectful, and would come right up to the rubbish heap for the grease, and the snowshoe rabbits, which used to spend the night gamboling around the door, judging by the multitude of the tracks they left in the fresh snow, but were so hard to see in the daytime, as they squatted under a bush or a tree, that they did not often help to fill the pot, but when they did were esteemed a delicious change from the regulation pork and beans; a flying squirrel occasionally would find its way down the big open chimney at night when the fire was out, and would make things lively in the cabin until one of us would heave the shock of leaving the warm blankets to light a candle and either chase it out with chunks of firewood and rubber boots, or finish it in desperation with a shot from Betsy Anne, which would leave the atmosphere even more sulphurous than the language which preceded it.

Other day time visitors were the crossbills and birds like the English grosbeak, which speedily made friends and came down regularly for their breakfast of crumbs. One fine morning towards the spring, when the sun was beginning to get back his strength, a family of fool hens foolishly settled on a tree in front of the cabin and gave us the opportunity of an impromptu imitation turkey shoot, turn and turn about at two bits a bird, a hit anywhere but in head or neck to count a miss. Extraordinary birds these foolhens—I killed one that same winter with a snowshoe, just inside the tunnel where it had come to scratch for gravel.

Such was our "simple life." Every six weeks, or so, it fell to my lot, being the younger and stronger man, to make the trip to town for mail, and that was no picnic either. Wet snow on an unbroken trail is hard going even to the experienced man, too hard it had proved for old Jack the first time when we went together, and he only just managed to make the cabin long after dark on the return trip, with his almost equally exhausted companion, and, although it was only six miles from the claims to the railroad track, and another seven miles of good going along the track to town, it was a level day's work for the tenderfoot even on kinds of real snow, and carrying on one or more of the aforesaid general lines of business, to the town, and to the store, to buy for their own capital stock and of other corporations, to borrow and loan, to give evidence of indebtedness and to secure the payment of notes, or to otherwise engage in any and all classes of business, or in the natural person might or could in the United States of North America, or in any other part of the world.

Three days before Christmas by our reckoning, behold him then, starting out with the first daylight, under a bright, clear sky, following the almost buried blazes to keep to the trail, which had been filled and obliterated since the last excursion. The first three miles or so were on a steep down grade, and except for a trip or two over a hidden snag, and a plunge or two head first into the soft wet white stuff the poets are so fond of, the going was comparatively easy and rapid. Here and there a squirrel would chatter a morning salute as it scuttled along a little way and stopped to survey the human intruder on its play ground, before starting in again to nibble its breakfast from the fir cone held between its two fore-paws, or a bluejay would scream in impudent derision of the awkward-looking monster ploughing its laborious way through the deep snow, while he could flit silently and easily from limb to limb. When the going was easier and he had more breath to spare, the tenderfoot would whistle a bit or sing a stave—where none could hear and criticize the vocal effort, to keep his spirits up, and keep down the home-sick feeling which would rise as he thought of the last Christmas spent in merry old England, and the contrast between the festivities then, among a crowd of life-long friends and the tete-a-tete Christmas dinner which was to be the lot of himself and old Jack away up in the snow-bound forest of the mountain tops of Kootenay. There is nothing like the silent forest to make a man think, and the sad thoughts will sometimes come uppermost.

The lights of town and the cheerful warmth of the big box stove in the bar room of the old Nelson Hotel, with the jovial artist, on hand to dispense "Tom and Jerry," soon helped to dispel the blue feeling, and it was impossible to be anything but cheerful with the old town "gilliums," shaking one's hands and shouting "Merry Christmases" and all the good wishes of the season to one another.

The next morning it was good to rest an hour or two longer than usual in a nice warm bed, and it was not until a fashionable hour that I met the aforesaid jovial artist at the breakfast table. To his enquiries as to how long I meant to stay in town I answered that I was going to spend that day in resting, and buying the necessities for our humble little Christmas festivities in the cabin on the hills, and the next day, the day before Christmas, would be spent in plugging up the trail with the pack.

"The day before Christmas," echoed the artist, "why that is today, you must have dropped a day out of your reckoning."

And so it was, we were one day out of our count, and if I could not hit the trail that day, there would be no Christmas dinner that year for Jack and little Willie. It was too late then to catch the train, and the whole thirteen mile trip on foot was out of the question. It was beyond my powers going light to get there before dark, and I knew that it would be sheer madness to attempt it loaded with the pack of Christmas cheer, which the old man would be watching still more eagerly. News-papers are heavy things to pack and bottles and there simply had to be some of the latter for what would the mince-pies be without a little brandy, and what would a Christmas dinner be without something a little stronger than coffee? There was nothing for it, we had to lose that Christmas and celebrate it the day after. That night it snowed, as of course it should on Christmas Eve, to satisfy the traditions of Christmas literature; it looked very pretty, but my thoughts were on that trail, and I thought of the way the snow was filling it, and undoing the work of the down journey. The trees would be dropping great masses of it here and there, and my Christmas day's work beating my way back promised to be no pleasant little jaunt by any means.

I think, as a matter of fact, it proved to be about the hardest day's work I ever put in in my life, but I made it somehow, almost I was tempted once or twice to throw away the ill-quit part of the Christmas cheer, the peeviest part and most uncomfortable just after dark, when but I made it eventually just to get anxious and make preparation to come and meet me with a lantern. I did not break the news to him that day, but in the morning, when he started in the preparations to make his mince-pies and roast the sirloin in our little "tin" stove, and had sampled the quality of the best part of the cheer to pack (inside) I told him that we had lost count of a day, and that Christmas Day had gone behind us. Do you think it made any difference? Not much! We celebrated Boxing Day instead, in the good old way, and the roast beef was just as good a change from the old stand-by beans, and the baker's bread from the sour-dough bannocks as if it had been Christmas Day, and the substitute for coffee—well, that helped a little, too. I must admit.

THE FALL OF PRIDE

At last I know what is meant by anyone who speaks of the value of life's discipline. I have often before wondered, vaguely and mildly, at the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, which seemed to be spent upon failure to lowly quarry. Now I understand. Failure to grasp the bubbles of life, and so forth, was merely preparation of a necessary hardening process, to prevent one from utterly collapsing under irretrievable disaster. Disaster came! Was repeated ad nauseam! I am chastened, but still alive; and not using more violent language than, I trust, the Recording Angel may feel able to summarize under the general heading of "Tut! Tut!" Really I suspect that I felt

an honest pride—possibly what among members of the medical profession might be diagnosed as "caput succedaneum." I am cured, but my nerves are a trifle shaken, as by experience I know that they generally are after an earthquake, which one cannot prevent from recurring, and cannot do much to avoid.

In the course of my life I have killed a dozen salmon, varying between 7lb. or so, and 18lb. I know men who have done as much in a day, and made no fuss about it. Still, considering my limited opportunities, the dozen fish were not to be sniffed at—nor did I sniff. And I realize now that I was pleasantly aware of not having lost any fish once hooked.

The spring of this year on this river has been notorious for lost fish. My angling acquaintances whom I met now and then by the waterside said that with one voice. They are men, too, who have known the river for years, and fish it well and regularly. Day after day I heard of fish raised and hooked, and lost after being played for various lengths of time. Of course I was rather hooked and sympathetic. I reminded them, from my store of (bookish) experience, that these things must happen. If A. had lost two in a day, I was sometimes able to assure him that B. had owned to four fruitless battles. I knew, too, that these discomfited men would, fishing any season through on equal terms with me, take three or four fish to my one. Still, while I listened, condoled, and philosophized, I believe a little devil was whispering, "Queer! You never lose them. What a pity you cannot try your luck at these short-rising tender-mouthed miracles!" Well, through the kindness of someone, I did try my luck for a day. Three fish came, and were fought under quite sufficiently exciting conditions—one I know had all the line off my reel, and performed gymnastics a hundred yards away, while I, wading deep, did not know which was the one safe way ashore. They were all landed, and the little demon whispered, "There!" One likely spot, which I could not get my fly over that day in the high wind, I asked my shivering companion to try. He threw a beautiful line across it, the fly dropped precisely where he said it should; a visibly big fish dashed at it, splashed and kicked on the top of the water, floundered, and was gone—and the little demon said "There!" again. I was out for another afternoon, and got two fish, and continued mutely to wonder at other people's misfortunes. It was roughly estimated that one rod, in about a fortnight's fishing, had lost about forty fish. Then my turn came.

It began quite quietly—a mere diversion, an amusing episode. I proposed for myself an hour or two of trout fishing on the loch which I had to pass in my day's business. The Good Samaritan, to whom I have owed most of my sport in the last few years, suggested a spot, and a modest trout fly, which together might possibly result in a salmon. The salmon actually came, found me alone with my boat's anchor down, and a good wind up. I had pulled against the wind, and then found that the only way to fish was to drop the little anchor, cast for a few minutes, weigh anchor, drift, drop anchor, and cast again. Well, I had several exciting minutes, and three or four good rushes, which made my reel scream. But at last the gut gave way just above the hook, and I, not at all surprised or ashamed, was pleased to have had such an experience. That was episode number one, and I did not fish again for several days. The next reverse was not so easy to bear.

A week or two later I found myself at the Fall Pool in the late afternoon. The river was dead low, and I was told that since there was very little breeze this was almost my only chance of a fish. I had never fished this pool before, and was amused to find myself hanging over a bridge and watching a small double-hooked Black Fairy playing immediately below me, worked altogether by the stream. It hardly seemed serious business, and remained of far-off days, when I leaned over a parapet and watched bleak about my waist bait in the Lea at Tottenham Marshes. However, when a salmon came from the depths, as he did, and I threatened the Black Fairy, though without touching it, I began to take things seriously. "Try a bigger yin or the same," my mentor suggested, but the "bigger yin," as I anticipated, did nothing. My companion asked for my flies, and calmly offered me a larger still, "a sort of eagle," he called it. I suggested doubt. It seemed more likely to prove a scare than a lure, but he was unshaken, and the "sort of eagle" had only worked twice or so across the fall when up came the fish again in the same place, and took the fly under my nose.

The next twenty minutes or so gave me new sensations. The fish, which we often saw clearly, and which my companion judged at about 10lb., seemed bent upon going up the fall beneath us. Strong though the current was, he kept right about my waist bait in almost its whole length. Now and then he rose with a swirl, or crossed from side to side of the narrow stream, but always returned to head up under our feet. After ten minutes or so of constant strain I suggested getting off the bridge and trying to drag him down. That, however, I was told, meant a very long line out, and almost certain loss. "He's drooping himself fast," I was told. "He canna go on like that. No! Something'll give, if you pit on him strain." Could not he go on like that? He did for apparently another ten minutes, then we saw a silvery streak as he turned over. "Well! he's him soon," was the remark made.

Incautious remark! The fish at once left the stream for the first time, and, tearing down the pool to the tune of a screaming reel, leapt twice far away. Still on! I was surprised.

There he was, on his side again. "A fine fish—and a fine fish for the mistress," said my friend. "He's fair done." Was he? The words were no sooner said than the fish flashed up again till riht under my feet, leapt twice at the fall, and—the "sort of eagle" played once more in the stream, alone.

"Well!" I said. My friend supplied an emphatic rhyme, and we leant over the bridge together, peering into the dark pool for what we were never to see again. "A good fighter. He deserved it," was all that I could say. To my surprise, only two or three minutes later, in spite of the racket that plucky fish had made, another came at the still larger Mar Lodge, and which I was advised to try. The same, and came well, but seemed to miss it owing to an eddy in the stream, and would not come again. So ended my second reverse, but I was not sufficiently humbled. That was reserved for my next day out.

That day I went alone. The river was very low and it seemed likely that I should not raise a fish at all. A gillie seemed superfluous, and, besides, the lower water where I went was so small that it could all be fished from either bank. If I saw the rod opposite, I meant to slip away and leave him in undisputed possession. I sneaked along, therefore, in very poacher-like fashion, spying the water pool and again with my glasses. Fate meant me to have my lesson, and gave me a free hand. My possible vis-a-vis kept to the upper water, and actually was kind enough to leave my old battlefield, the Fall Pool, unvisited, because he thought I might go there.

Let me tell my sorrows briefly. In the Otter Pool, that romantic pool hidden among the firs and edged with heather, where the Merganser flaps away before you, and you may sometimes see, as I have, the red stag standing watchful in the wood in the Otter Pool, from a likely lie, which I could barely reach, for some four or five minutes, and was beginning to look for a convenient place at which to use my little gaff, when the small double-hooked Black Doctor came away. Half an hour later, in the Ford Pool almost under the bridge, stalking along the low water, and hiding at that moment half behind a big boulder, I raised another fish, had him on for a minute or two, and then my small Dusty Miller also returned to me, for no reason that I could guess.

Then followed hours of patient tramping and casting and useless changes of flies, until late in the evening. By that time I had fished all the fishable water twice without moving another fin. Then about 9 p.m., throwing a long line across the stream of the Rawlin (haunted for many of us now by the shade of the best and keenest of gillies.) I thought I saw the fly checked for a moment, where there should be nothing but a fish to check it. I had my "sort of eagle" on for the dusk, and, feeling nothing, I let it come round, and cast carefully again. Again the check, and this time the least possible pull. I struck firmly; my third fish for the day wallowed on the top of the water, the fly came back, and my fifth consecutive failure was achieved. I plodded sadly home through the dusky summer night, quite sufficiently humbled. I don't know how to kill fish, and if anyone will kindly tell me how to hold them when I've got them, I shall be obliged.

I thought my jeremiad had ended, and I hoped my misfortunes had ended, too. But listen! Meeting F. G. G. after I had finished writing this, I was invited to join him for an hour or two for trout on the loch. I told him what I had set down my tale of woe, at which he chuckled, and suggested that even now I might possibly raise a fish and change my luck. Presently, close to the boat, showed a huge fin. I held my breath, and my hand, till I felt a pull, then struck. "That is a big trout!" quoth my host carelessly. "Trout!" I gasped. "A big salmon!" There was a flurry, the flourish of a mighty tail, a strain, which I tried hopelessly to relieve by pulling line off the reel—then a smash.

The big fish had rushed under the boat, smashed the top joint, and carried off the fly. The rest is silence.—R. S. in The Field.

AN ADVENTURE WITH BEARS.

We were at Sprinkle's camp when the events I am about to relate took place. We were all three griffins—that is Anglo-Indian for greenhorn, new chum, snooker—and I hope this explains the term clearly enough. The three were Sprinkles, my brother and myself. Sprinkles was camped in a beautiful top—or grove—of mango trees, which provided a very grateful shade at that time of year—that is the month of April. We were a very youthful and inexperienced trio, but we were very keen on shikar, very anxious to slay something big, which up-to-date none of us had succeeded in doing. We were in very good country for all sorts of game, from tiger downwards, and our men were out holding the hills for bears, etc., while we had several buffaloes tied up in like-ly places for tigers. It was about eleven o'clock in the day, we had had breakfast, and were en-joying our pipes when Cassim, Sprinkle's head shikari, appeared, and, salivating long, informed us that he had got a bear marked down. You may be sure that this news excited us not a little, and we were soon on our horses, and on the way. Before starting we drew lots as to who should have first shot—a very great mistake, as will be seen later on. It was a terribly hot day, and we felt the sun considerably as we proceeded to look Bruin up. We had to

ride at a walk, to allow our shikaries, gun bearers, etc., keeping up with us, and we had a distance of some four miles to get over. On drawing near the spot where the game had been marked down we dismounted and proceeded on foot. Cassim had left two men to watch the place and to see that our quarry did not move, and these men took with them the information that all was going well; Bruin had not stirred from under the thick bush in which he had ensconced himself when the day began to warm up, and was still enjoying his siesta.

He had chosen a most shady and retired nook, a narrow, deep ravine about halfway up the side of a chain of low hills, over-shadowed by small trees and high bushes, and thus completely protected from the rays of the sun. Sprinkles had won the right to fire the first shot, and as it was decided by Cassim that no beating was necessary, we proceeded to walk the bear up, Cassim showing the way, Sprinkles next, and my brother and I bringing up the rear. We went forward very cautiously until Cassim came to a stop and pointed to his front. It was then that we found out what a mistake we had made in drawing lots as to who should fire the first shot. Sprinkles had drawn the longest straw, and was therefore entitled to open the ball; but unfortunately he was extremely short-sighted, and he could not, for the life of him, make out what Cassim was pointing at. It was the bear. Rather difficult to make out in the dark shadow of the bush under which he was lying, even to a man of ordinarily good sight, his color being black, and therefore blending in with his surroundings. "The bear," "Where?" "There." The colloquy naturally got louder and louder, and equally naturally, woke up the bear. My brother and I could see the beast all the while easily enough, and could have killed it as it lay, had it not been for that unlucky drawing for first shot. When Bruin at last discovered our near approach, up he got. Sprinkles saw him then, and fired at once, whereupon the bear turned, and, rushing up the hill, was over a slight rising and out of sight in a minute, Sprinkles giving him another shot to hurry him up as he went.

We followed in hot pursuit, and on gaining the crest of the slight rising alluded to, we saw our game lying apparently dead a little way down upon the other side. Sprinkles gave vent to his feelings in a wild yell, and forgetful of the fact that he had not reloaded after firing off both barrels, and that he was consequently defenceless in case of anything happening, dashed down on to our seemingly de-funct foe. When he had got about half-way down the slope, and was only about ten yards off, up jumped the bear and went for Sprinkles, who promptly turned to come back again; but alas, in turning, his foot slipped, and down he came right on to his face. Luckily the bear gave me a broadside chance as he made his rush, and I bowled him over dead with a curious shot, which we found, on cutting up the carcass afterwards, had raked him almost the whole length of his body, smashing his liver and heart and various other internal arrangements in the most wonderful way, and eventually lodging in the brain. Sprinkles did not seem to mind much and soon recovered both his wind and his equanimity.

We were still talking it over when a messenger arrived from another party of watchers, to tell us of still another bear that had been marked down. It was now past one o'clock, but we determined to push on at once, and getting back to our horses, we set off in search of the present object of our search was a she bear, with two young cubs, and that she was lying up in a valley on the other side of the hill we had now reached. The hill was tearfully steep and the grass on it very slippery, consequently we found our guns uncomfortably heavy to carry. Sprinkles, indeed, found his so heavy that he handed it to a native. On we went till we got to the top of the hill, and here the place where the new bear was lying up was pointed out to us. It was a cluster of rocks and bushes near the foot of the hill, on the further side of the valley we had opened up. Delighted with our success so far, we began to descend, when bang, bang, went both barrels of Sprinkles rifle. He had handed it over, as I have just mentioned, to a native, who was just mentioned, with curiosity to find out how the gun that broke in half—it was a breach loader—was worked, and in fumbling about with it, he had inadvertently touched both triggers, with the result described. The poor fellow was horror-struck at what he had done, and in his panic fell over, not doing much good to the rifle thereby. Sprinkles naturally used much bad language over the incident, and I rather think my brother and I spoke very feelingly to Sprinkles about being more careful with loaded weapons. The bear woke up and went for her life up the opposite hill, up which we watched her go with her two cubs on her back, and that was the last we saw of her. However, we had bagged one good bear, anyhow, and had quite a thrilling time of it. We went back to camp that evening three fairly happy griffins after all. I don't know how we should have contained ourselves had we bagged both bears.

The Lady—My 'usband, sir, 'as sent me to say 'e won't be able to come and do the little job you 'ar' im to; 'e's promised to go round the town with the unemployed.

"COMPANIES ACT, 1897."
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT "The Vancouver Island Power Company," an extra-provincial company, has this day been registered as a company under the Companies Act, 1897, to carry out or effect all or any of the objects mentioned in the Memorandum of Association of the company, which the legislative authority of the legislature of British Columbia extends.

The head office of the company is situated at Phoenix, Arizona.
The amount of the capital of the company is one hundred thousand dollars divided into one hundred thousand shares of one dollar each.

The head office of the company in this Province is situated at 1123 Government Street, the City of Victoria, and J. H. Smith, manager, whose address in Victoria, B. C., is the attorney for the company. Not empowered to issue and transfer stock.

The time of the existence of the company is twenty-five years, from the 5th day of January A. D. 1908. The company is limited.

Given under my hand and seal of office at Victoria, Province of British Columbia, this twenty-seventh day of November, one thousand nine hundred and nine.
(L. S.) S. Y. WOOTTON,
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies.
The objects for which the Company is established and registered are:
To do general mercantile, investment, promotion, brokerage, theatrical amusement, irrigation, power, transportation, manufacturing and mining business, owning all necessary appliances, machinery, buildings, ships, boats, vehicles, etc., etc., and operating, leasing, buying and selling all kinds of real and personal property, and more of the aforesaid general lines of business; to take and issue shares of its own capital stock and of other corporations; to borrow and loan money; to issue bonds and notes; and to give evidence of indebtedness and to secure the payment of notes, or to otherwise engage in any and all classes of business, or in the natural person might or could in the United States of North America, or in any other part of the world.

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