

A New Leaf.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip—
The lesson was done—
“Dear teacher, I want a new leaf,” he said,
“I have spoiled this one.”
In place of the leaf, so stained and blotted,
I gave him a new one all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled—
“Do better, now, my child.”

I went to the throne with quivering soul—
The old year was gone—
“Dear Father, hast thou a new leaf for me?
I have spoiled this one.”
I took the old leaf, stained and blotted,
I gave me a new one, all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled—
“Do better, now, my child.”

The Chore-boy of Camp Kippewa.

A Canadian Story.

BY J. MAGDONALD OXLEY.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUILDING OF THE SHANTY.

FRANK looked about him with quick curiosity, expecting to see some of the men in whose society he was to spend the winter. But there were only the farm-hands lounging listlessly about, their day's work being over, and they had nothing to do except to smoke their pipes and wait for nightfall, when they would lounge off to bed.

The shantymen had not yet arrived, Mr. Stewart always making a point of being at the depot some days in advance of them, in order to have plenty of time to prepare his plans for the winter campaign. Noting Frank's inquiring look, he laughed and said:

“Oh, there are none of them here yet. We're the first on the field, but by the end of the week there'll be more than a hundred men here.”

A day or two later the first batch made their appearance, coming up by their heavy teams that they would take with them into the woods, and each day brought a fresh contingent, until by the time Mr. Stewart had mentioned the farm fairly swarmed with them, and it became necessary for this human hive to imitate the bees and send off its superfluous inhabitants about delay.

They were a rough, noisy, strange-looking lot of men, and Frank, whose acquaintance with the shantymen had been limited to seeing them in small groups as they passed through Calumet in the autumn and spring, on their way to and from the camps, meeting them now for the first time in such large numbers could not help some inward shrinking of soul, as he noted their uncouth ways and listened to their oath-besprinkled talk. They were “all sorts and conditions of men”—habitants who could not speak a word of English, and Irishmen who could not speak a word of French; shrewd Scotchmen, chary of tongue and reserved of manner, and loquacious half-breeds ready for song, or story, or fight, according to the humour of the moment. Here and there were dusky skins and prominent features that betrayed a close connection with the aboriginal owners of this continent. Almost all had come from the big saw-mills away down the river, or from some other equally arduous employment, and were glad of the chance of a few days' respite from work while Mr. Stewart was dividing them up and making the necessary arrangements for the winter's work.

Frank mingled freely with them, scraping acquaintance with those who seemed disposed to be friendly, and whenever he came across one with an honest, pleasant, prepossessing face, hoping very much that he would be a member of his gang. He was much impressed by the fact that he was meeting the youngest member of the gang, and did not fail to notice the sometimes curious, sometimes contemptuous looks with which he was regarded by the fresh arrivals.

In the course of a few days matters were pretty well straightened out at the depot, and the gangs of men began to leave for the different camps. Mr. Stewart had promised Frank that he would take care to put him under a foreman who would treat him well, and when one evening he was called into the office and introduced to a

tall, powerful, grave-looking man, with heavy brown beard and deep voice, Mr. Stewart said:

“Here is Frank Kingston, Dan; Jack's only son, you know. He's set his heart on lumbering, and I'm going to let him try it for a winter.”

Frank scrutinized the man called Dan very closely as Mr. Stewart continued:

“I'm going to send him up to Kippewa camp with you, Dan. There's nobody'll look after him better than you will, for I know you thought a big sight of his father, and for his sake, as well as mine, you'll see that nothing happens to the lad.”

Dan Johnston's face relaxed into a smile that showed there were rich depths of good nature beneath his rather stern exterior, for he was pleased at the compliment implied in the superintendent's words, and, stretching out a mighty hand to Frank, he laid it on his shoulder in a kindly way, saying:

“He seems a likely lad, Mr. Stewart, and a chip off the old block, if I'm not mistaken. I'll be right glad to have him with me. But what kind of work is he to go at. He seems rather light for chopping, doesn't he?”

Mr. Stewart gave a quizzical sort of glance at Frank, as he replied:

“Well, you see, Dan, I think, myself, he is too light for chopping, so I told him he'd have to be chore-boy for this winter, anyway.”

A look of surprise came over Johnston's face, and more to himself than the others he muttered, in a low tone:

“Chore-boy, eh? Jack Kingston's son a chore-boy!” Then, turning to Frank, he said aloud: “All right, my boy. There's nothing like beginning at the bottom if you want to learn the whole business. You must make up your mind to put in a pretty hard time; but I'll see you have fair play, anyway.”

As Frank looked at the rugged, honest, determined face, and the stalwart frame, he felt thoroughly satisfied that in Dan Johnston he had a friend in whom he could place perfect confidence, and that Mr. Stewart's promise had been fully kept. The foreman then became quite sociable, and asked him many questions about his mother, and his life in Calumet, and his plans for the future, so that before they parted for the night Frank felt as if they were quite old friends instead of recent acquaintances.

The following morning Johnston was bestirring himself bright and early getting his men and stores together, and before noon a start was made for the Kippewa River, on whose southern bank a site had already been selected for the lumber camp which would be the centre of his operations for the winter. Johnston's gang numbered forty men all told, himself included, and they were in high spirits as they set out for their destination. The stores and tools were, of course, transported by waggon, but the men had to go on foot, and, with fifteen miles of a rough forest road to cover before sundown, they struck a brisk pace as, in two and threes and quartettes, they marched noisily along the dusty road.

“You stay by me, Frank,” said the foreman, “and if your young legs happen to go back on you, you can have a lift on one of the teams until you're rested.”

Frank felt in such fine trim that, although he fully appreciated his big friend's thoughtfulness, he was rash enough to think he would not require to avail himself of it; but the next five miles showed him his mistake, and at the end of them he was very glad to jump upon one of the teams that happened to be passing, and in this way hastened over a good part of the remainder of the tramp.

As the odd-looking gang pushed forward steadily, if not in exactly martial order, Frank had a good opportunity of inspecting its members and making in his own mind an estimate of their probable good or bad qualities as companions. In this he was much assisted by the foreman, who, in reply to his questions, gave him helpful bits of information about the different ones that attracted his attention. Fully one-half of the gang were French Canadians, dark-complexioned, black-haired, bright-eyed men, full of life and talk, their tongues going unceasingly as they plodded along in sociable groups. Of the remainder some were Scotch, others Irish, the rest English. Upon the whole, they were quite a promi-

ing-looking lot of men; indeed, Johnston took very good care to have as little “poor stuff” as possible in his gang; for he had long held the reputation of turning out more logs at his camp than were cut at any other on the same “limits;” and this well-deserved fame he cherished very dearly.

Darkness was coming on apace when at last a glad shout from the foremost group announced that the end of the journey was near, and in a few minutes more the whole band of tired men were resting their wearied limbs on the bank of the river near which the shanty was to be erected at once. The teams had arrived some time before them, and two large tents had been put up as temporary shelter, while brightly-burning fires and the appetizing sizzle of frying bacon joined with the wholesome aroma of hot tea to make glad the hearts of the dusty, hungry pedestrians.

Frank enjoyed his open-air tea immensely. It was his first taste of real lumberman's life, and was undoubtedly a pleasant introduction to it; for the hard work would not begin until the morrow, and in the meantime everybody was still a-holidaying. So refreshing was the evening meal that, tired as all no doubt felt from their long tramp, they soon forgot it sufficiently to spend an hour or more in song and chorus that made the vast forest aisles re-echo with rough melody before they sank into the silence of slumber for the night.

At daybreak next morning Dan Johnston's stentorian voice aroused the sleepers, and Frank could hardly believe that he had taken more than twice forty winks at the most before the stirring shout of “Turn out! Turn out! The work's waiting!” broke into his dreams and recalled him to life's realities. The morning was gray and chilly, the men looked sleepy and out of humour, and Johnston himself had a stern, distant manner, or seemed to have, as after a wash at the river bank Frank approached him and reported himself for duty.

“Will you please to tell me what is to be my work, Mr. Johnston?” said he, in quite a timid tone; for somehow or other there seemed to be a change in the atmosphere.

The foreman's face relaxed a little as he turned to answer him.

“You want to be set to work, eh? Well, that won't take long.” And, looking around among the moving men until he found the one he wanted, he raised his voice and called:

“Hi, there, Baptiste! Come here a moment.”

In response to the summons a short, stout, smooth-faced, and decidedly good-natured looking Frenchman, who had been busy at one of the fires, came over to the foreman.

“See here, Baptiste; this lad's to be your chore-boy this winter, and I don't want you to be too hard on him—save? Let him have plenty of work, but not more than his share.”

Baptiste examined Frank's sturdy figure with much the same smile of approval that he might bestow upon a fine capon that he was preparing for the pot, and murmured out something like:

“Bien, m'sieur.” I shall be easy wid him if ee's a good boy.”

The foreman then said to Frank:

“There, Frank; go with Baptiste, and he'll give you work enough.”

So Frank went dutifully off with the Frenchman.

He soon found out what his work was to be. Baptiste was cook, and he was his assistant, not so much in the actual cooking, for Baptiste looked after that himself, but in the scouring of the pots and pans, the keeping up of the fires, the setting out of the food, and such other supplementary duties. Not very dignified or inspiring employment, certainly, especially for a boy “with a turn for books and figures.” But Frank had come to the camp prepared to undertake, without a murmur, any work within his powers that might be given him, and he now went quietly and steadily at what was required of him.

As soon as breakfast was dispatched, Johnston called the men together to give them directions about the building of the shanty, which was the first thing of all to be done, and having divided them up into parties, to each of which a different task was assigned, he set them at work without delay.

Frank was very glad that attention to his duties would not prevent his watching the others at theirs; for what could be more interesting than to study every stage of the erection of the building that was to be their shelter and home during the long winter months now rapidly approaching? It was a first experience for him, and nothing escaped his vigilant eye. This is the way he described the building of the shanty to his mother on his return to Calumet:

“You see, mother, everybody except Baptiste and myself took a hand, and just worked like beavers. I wish you could have seen the men. And Mr. Johnston—why, he was in two places at once most of the time, or at least seemed to be! It was grand fun watching them. The first thing they did was to cut down a lot of trees: splendid big fellows, that would make the trees round here look pretty small, I can tell you. Then they chopped off all the branches and cut up the trunks into the lengths that suited, and laid them one on top of the other until they made a wall about as high as Mr. Johnston, or perhaps higher, in the shape of one big roof forty feet long by thirty feet wide, Mr. Johnston said. It looked very funny then, just like a huge pippen, with no windows and only one door—on the side that faced the river. Next day they laid long timbers across the top of the wall, resting them in the middle on four great posts they called ‘scoop-bearers.’ Funny name, isn't it? But they called them that because they bear the ‘scoops’ that make the roof; and a grand roof it is, I tell you. The scoops are small logs hollowed out on one side and flat on the other, and they lay them on the cross timbers in such a way that the edges of one fit into the hollows of two others, so that the rain hasn't a chance to get in, no matter how hard it tries. Next thing they make the floor; and that wasn't a hard job, for they just made logs flat on two sides and laid them on the ground, so that it was a pretty rough sort of floor. All the cracks were stuffed tight with moss and mud, and a big bank of earth thrown up around the bottom of the wall to keep the draught out.

“But you should have seen the beds—or bunks, as they call them, for the men. I don't believe you could ever sleep on them. They were nothing but board platforms all around three sides of the room, built on a slant so that your head was higher than your feet; so you see I'd have had nothing better than the soft side of a plank for a mattress if you hadn't fitted me out with one. And when the other fellows saw how snug I was they vowed they'd have a soft bed too; so what do you think they did? They gathered an immense quantity of hemlock branches—little soft ones, you know—and spread them thick over the boards, and then they laid blankets over that and made a really fine mattress for all. So that, you see, I quite set the fashion. The last thing to be made was the fireplace, which has the very queer name of ‘camboose,’ and is queerer than its name. It is right in the middle of the room, not at one end, and is as big as a small room by itself. First of all, a great bank of stones and sand is laid on the floor, kept together by boards at the edges. Then a large square hole is cut in the roof above, and a wooden chimney built on the top of it, and then at two of the corners cranes to hold the pots are fixed, and the camboose is complete. And oh, mother, such roaring big fires as were always going in it after the cold came—all night long, you know; and sometimes I had to stay awake to keep the fire from going out, which wasn't much fun; but, of course, I had to take my turn. So now, mother, you ought to have a pretty good idea of what our shanty was like, for besides a table and our chests there was nothing much else in it to describe.”

Such were Frank Kingston's surroundings as he entered upon the humble and labourious duties of chore-boy in Camp Kippewa, not attempting to conceal from himself that he would much rather be a chopper, or teamster, or road maker, but with his mind fully fixed upon doing his work, however ungenial it might be, cheerfully and faithfully for one winter at least, feeling confident that if he did he would not be chore-boy for long, but would in due time be promoted to some more dignified and attractive position.

(To be continued.)