



Some Christmas Fun.

It was we three boys that had it; I and my brother Jack and my cousin Bony. And it was fun, no mistake—all but the bread-and-milk part; and that wasn't so very bad when you came to think about it afterwards.

In the first place, you see, it was Christmas morning, and I and Jack and Bony we went away down in Mr. Seavey's woods, looking for running evergreens to trim up the meeting-house. And we didn't find a very great lot, so we kept going and going in Mr. Seavey's old wood-road, further and further, till pretty soon we saw smoke through the trees.

"What's that!" said Jack, stepping up.

"Looks like smoke," said Bony.

"'Tis smoke," said I.

"I know that," said Jack; "but what's it there for? Nobody lives in these woods," said Jack.

"That's so," said Bony.

"So 'tis," said I.

"Any old how, I'm going to find out!" said Jack; and Bony and I said we were, too.

So we crept along and crept along, just as easy, till we came almost up to a little shed made of bark and stuff, with a canvas door.

"What's that?" said Jack.

"I guess 'tis," said Bony. "Let's go home."

"Indians," said I. "Ned Hayes said there was a fam'ly of 'em round, making baskets."

"So he did," said Jack. "I say, boys, let's we go and peep in. There's cracks enough, and I never saw any Indians close to."

And I never had, nor Bony, and so we said we'd go. At first I thought 'twould be kind of mean—I know if I was an Indian, I wouldn't want folks pecking through cracks at me; and then I thought 'twouldn't, because I wanted to go.

So we went up easy. There was quite a wide crack on one side, and we took turns pecking. There was a man-Indian, and a woman-Indian, and a little boy-Indian.

They weren't the reg'lar Indians that you read about, you know—the kind that paint all up, and ride round on ponies and scalp people. They looked a good deal like common folks, only a lot blacker, of course; and the Indian man was sitting on the ground weaving a basket, and the little boy was cuddled down in one corner on some boughs, with his eyes shut.

He wasn't asleep, though, for pretty soon he opened 'em, and 'twouldn't take half an eye to see he'd been crying.

There was a fire in the middle with a tin pail hung over it on a stick; and in a minute the Indian woman took it off, and 'twas potatoes.

And they sat down round and commenced to eat 'em, with salt on,—just potatoes and salt, and not a thing else, and 'twas Christmas Day! And the little Indian boy didn't eat much; we could see that. No wonder, was it?

And his mother looked at him just the way I've seen my mother look at her boys when she thought maybe they were going to have the measles or something. And she and the Indian man jabbered back and forth a minute, and she got up and went to a little box there was, and looked in, and jabbered a little more, and tipped the box down-side up, and there was just a few crumbs fell out.

"Understand?" said Jack, backing off.

"There's nothing for him but 'taters and salt." Bony and I nodded and waited for Jack to say something else. We knew he was going to say it.

"S'pose 'twas you?" said Jack. "How'd you feel? Let's we fetch 'em a Christmas dinner, boys."

That's what we knew he was going to say.

"All right!" said Bony; "we will."

"That's so," said I. "But how?"

"Borrow one of his baskets," said Jack. "I saw more'n a dozen in there."

"Maybe he won't lend one," said I.

But he did. Jack stepped up to the canvas door, and asked him, real polite, and made signs that we wanted to carry the evergreens in it, and we'd bring it back. And he jabbered to his wife a minute, and then threw a basket to Jack, and said, "Tak it!"

I didn't think that was a very polite thing to do myself, but I s'pose 'twas his bringing up.

So we took the basket and went home, after we'd filled it with evergreens, and dinner was all ready.

My! but we were hungry! If you don't believe it, you'd better just tramp round in the woods four or five hours some snapping cold day, and see for yourself.

We rushed in all of a breath. Aunt Esther's folk's were there, and Uncle Jedediah's.

"Why, boys!" said my sister Katey. "What are you going to do with that big basket?" We'd turned the greens out, you know.

We told as fast as we could, and that was pretty fast, because we all talked at once.

"Dear me!" said mother, and she looked sober as a judge, though Jack said afterwards he saw her eyes twinkle. "I don't believe I'll have enough for another family, boys. I guess they'll get along well enough."

I just looked at her. I didn't want to think my own mother'd be mean. But Jack, he fired right up.

"Now, mother," he said, "you wouldn't say that way if you'd seen 'em—nothing but taters and salt, and cold's Greenland, and Christmas to boot," said Jack. "Mother, I—I!"

And the tears came in his eyes till he couldn't talk, he was so earnest. That's my brother Jack all over. But mother laughed easy.

"Well," said she, "I don't believe there's enough for all, but if you three boys will eat bread and milk!"

Now! Just give a guess how we felt. Bread and milk! And right before our faces and eyes was a table loaded all up with cakes, and nuts, and apples, and roast turkey, and pies, and four kinds of preserves, and sliced tongue, and cold chicken! I never'd thought it of my mother, true as true! And we were AWFUL hungry!

I and Bony looked at Jack, and we all three looked at each other for more'n a minute, and then Jack cleared out his throat and straightened up.

"I will!" said he.

"I will!" said Bony.

"I will!" said I.

And we did; we took bread and milk in the kitchen. That's the part there wasn't much fun about.

When we were most done, Katey poked her head in the door.

"Do you want us to put your share of the dessert in?" said she.

"Yes-es, ma'am!" said we.

But it was worth while, when Jack set that basket inside that canvas door. I and Bony we stood at the crack and pecked in, if 'twas mean.

My! but you'd ought to've seen the little chap jump and clap his hands! Didn't he go into the cake and pie and stuff—and didn't they all three, and jabber, jabber, jabber all the time! I tell you one thing; there was enough Christmas dinner in that basket for ten boys.

We didn't have our Christmas dinner till New Year's, and then we did. Mother was just trying us. She says it's easy enough to give away other folks' things.

Two or three days after Christmas that Indian man walked up to our back door and knocked; and when Katey went to the door, he gave her a bundle.

"For boys," he said, and then he walked off.

There were three splendid bows, and half-a-dozen arrows to each bow!

