

Gradually and slowly the events which preceded my accident came back to me,—the hunting-field, the long run with the catastrophe at the brook; but all beyond was an entire blank. I found my arm bandaged, and an extensive wound on my head, which was covered with damp bandages also. While I lay striving to connect the past with the present, I heard the door open very gently, and Squire Kingsford stood at my bedside. He shook me warmly by the hand, and told me with many protestations of gratitude that I had saved his daughter's life, and that henceforward he should regard me as a son. From him I learnt that Louisa had been rescued uninjured, and that I, with considerable difficulty, had been extricated from beneath the body of the horse, whose back had been broken by the fall; that I had then, with all speed, been conveyed back to Hatherley, and that the doctor who had been with me during the night believed that the injuries which I had received, although serious, would not prove dangerous, if I remained quiet and free from excitement. It was ten o'clock on Christmas morning, and the bells which I had heard were the bells of Hatherley Church. The doctor soon afterwards visited me, and congratulated me on my escape and the probability of speedy restoration to health. Towards night I was sufficiently recovered to leave my bed and recline upon a sofa. Ah, how well I recollect the events of that joyous Christmas evening; when, as the soft mellow light faded and the shadows deepened in my room, the door opened, and Louisa, her face suffused with blushes and her eyes beaming with gratitude and tenderness, entered and knelt down beside my couch. How well I remember that, as with my hands clasped in hers, and the tears starting from her soft brown eyes, she poured out her words of thanks, my arm stole round her taper waist, and, drawing her yet closer to me, I asked her for that most precious boon that man can win, a true woman's love. I know not now, I knew not then, what her answer was; I only know that her head, with all its wealth of dark and silken hair, rested upon my shoulder; that her breath fanned my feverish cheek, and that in spite of wounds and pain I was happy, deeply and intensely happy, with a happiness such as I never had known before. At length she left me, and for a few minutes I was left alone to muse upon my unexpected good fortune, and to vow that to win such love as hers it were good to risk a thousand dangers.

I have a theory,—some may regard it as old-fashioned and utopian, still it is one to which I cling with steadfast faith,—that no man loves, in the fullest and truest sense of the word, more than once in the course of his life. This one, real love, may come in early youth, to some in more mature age, and to others even in middle life; but when it does take possession of the soul, it differs as much from the caprices of the voluptuary or the morbid fancies which the sentimentalist dignifies by the name of love, as the warm glowing sunshine of a tropic morning does from the cold calm starlight of an arctic night. It may be the lot of some to pass through life without once experiencing the feeling; not always because they are case-hardened or unimpressionable, but simply from the chance of circumstances. Or it may be that it is not until youth has past and the shadows of time are lengthening across our path, that the love light falls upon us, awakening in our hearts feelings to which we have before been strangers. Thank Heaven that my case was different, and that while I was yet young I became deeply and truly in love, and with so thoroughly good and amiable a girl as Louisa Kingsford. For three blessed is he who while yet his pulses throng with "the fullness of the spring" wakes to that passion.

"Generous and refined,
The hallowed son, invited on the mind,
That in its blossom, though with blush repressed,
Vegete to beauty on congenial breast;
But Heaven delects it, still its tendrils spread,
Round nature's breast, the living and the dead,
Till at the last, the sun and stars above,
Be grafted in the fields of light and love,
By that blest hand from whence its being came
To bloom through all Eternity the same."

I have little more to tell, for in our case the truth of the old adage was for once refuted, and the course of true love ran smoothly along. Although I was unable to join in the Christmas festivities below stairs, a short visit from the Squire and a longer one from Louisa made me so completely happy that I had no desire to mingle with the crowd of merry-makers, whose songs and laughter made the old mansion ring.

The Yule log blazed and crackled, the holly and mistletoe adorned the walls, and every heart seemed filled with glee and merriment, as it should be at this jovial Christmas season; but a calm content reigned in my mind, as with Louisa by my side I listened to the voices of the little carol singers ringing sweetly through the frosty air.

"Rejoice and be merry, cast sorrow aside,
For Jesus our Saviour was born on this tide."

Seasons of all the best and brightest; filled with holy memories and kindly associations, when peace and love and charity should reign in every heart, when old feuds should be forgotten and old friendships renewed, how sweetly and how clearly through the mists of years long past away, the echoes of your cheery music seem to linger on mine ear. But never through all the changes time has brought, have I for one moment regretted "HOW I SPENT CHRISTMAS AT HATHERLEY GRANGE."

IN THE SNOW.

Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.

EVERYTHING was prepared. The turkey, a jolly fat fellow, had been killed weeks before, and two days ago was taken out of the ice, so as to be thoroughly thawed before the time came for being adorned with a rich brown skin in the oven, to the delight of the youngsters; all the materials for the plum pudding had been laid in; the presents for the little folks had not been forgotten; green boughs from the bush had been drawn up in the wood sleigh, more than sufficient to adorn and beautify all the rooms of the little grey wooden house, that stood under the shelter of the gently rolling hill, which sloped gracefully to receive the first beams of the rising sun, and in

the glorious summer weather lay bathed in sunlight from "morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve." It was but a small house, but inside a few choice pictures were on the walls, and a book-case with its shelves well filled with a miscellaneous collection of literature, was probably not an unapt representation of the curious mixture whom the house called master.

It had been thawing for a couple of days. I, the aforesaid master, had been engaged drawing wood all forenoon, but after dinner—taken at the primitive hour of noon—had to go to the village, about two miles distant. It was a pleasant day. The sky, to be sure, wore a leaden hue. The clouds, or rather the covering to the blue firmament, were dull and slate coloured. A rift here and there allowed the slanting rays of the sun to stream down, like the pictured Jacob's ladder in an old engraving of the Patriarch's dream. Away to the north were little blue black lumps of clouds, indicative of an approaching storm, and the sharp peaks of the distant hills, rising white beyond the rolling land, dark with black timber, shone dimly through a purple haze, which tinted even the pure undriven snow. The silence was unbroken as I started to walk down, save by the tinkle of the water of the creek, making itself heard through a glade in the ice, and the rustle of a few yellow leaves, still hanging dead and hard on the beeches, like ghosts gibbering round the scenes of their youthful joys.

I tramped on steadily along the road, reached the village, called at the Post Office, and shortly after was deep in discussion of municipal matters, road squabbles, and half a dozen of the little local disputes that the township Council had been specially called that day to consider. The Council chamber was primitive. An old-fashioned stove of the regular three foot style was in the middle of the room. The pipe was led through the window, one pane of which had been replaced by a sheet of iron, through which the stove-pipe passed, not fitting very well. At a rough table, between the stove and the window, sat the *patres conscripti* gravely deliberating, when at once, as if the witch of Norway had unloosed the strings of the bag in which was tied up the North Wind, came a sudden squall which made the crazy building rock again; filled the room with smoke, and nearly blew the ashes and half-burned boards out on the floor. A small sifting snow began to penetrate, and darkness setting in, it was agreed to defer further consideration of important questions till another day.

There were two roads to the little grey house on the hill. One, that by which I had come; the other, only used in winter, up by the river road till it crossed the creek already mentioned, on the top of whose frozen surface, sheltered from every wind, except one, there was a smooth and level road. One of my neighbours who lived on the side of the river road above the creek, offered me a "lift," which I gladly accepted. How the wind howled as we drove along. The small snow beating on one side of our faces pricked us as with innumerable needles. The road became heavy, but the stout Canadian pony jogged along, fair weather or foul seeming to make but little difference to him. Every blast of the icy northern wind mocked at the thickest coverings, and searched through to the very bones, till we turned up the creek, my neighbour insisting on driving me to the mill dam, which barred further progress on the water, and from which my own house was but a few minutes' walk. Sheltered by the high banks, covered with hemlocks, spruce, and balsam, we could hear the furious gale roaring overhead, now dying away in fitful moanings, and then rising again as if lashed into fury by ten thousand demons.

The jingling of the sleigh bells brought to the door some of the youngsters of the owner of the mill, whose house lay close down upon the edge of the creek. It was a small wooden house, not of the most pretentious style of architecture, but snug and cosy within. Somewhat exposed in summer time, it is true, to the attacks of mosquitoes, which harboured among the low shrubs and bushes by the water side, and sallied forth to enjoy a feast of blood in the evenings. Now they had retreated, and the high banks which then reflected unpleasantly the hot sun, now stood as grim sentinels to keep off the raving winds from the low-roofed cottage.

I had a stiff tramp before me to ascend the hill and face the tempest on the higher ground, so the invitation of Mrs. Milton to step in and have tea before proceeding further, was not declined. The change from the piercing cold outside to the cheerful blaze of the fire within, was by no means one for the worse. On the hearth was sparkling and crackling a bright wood fire; a stove was roaring in one room, and the coal oil lamps, then a recent introduction, added to the bright fire light, made a cheerful picture, as I took off my outer wrappings, from which I shook off the snow. Mr. Milton himself was in the woods lumbering, although expected back next day, but his wife and blooming daughters made me heartily welcome; one tall and saucy of tongue, the other dark-haired, black-eyed, and demure. It is not a love story, for I had long been settled down, with a family growing up around me, and the young ladies were young enough to be my daughters. We had tea as it is only given in the country; and then Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, intermixed with lighter music, filled up the time, which passed rapidly away, for in the rural districts we are not quite savages. At nine, the fury of the gale appearing to have passed, I prepared to start, muffled myself up, and answered gayly to the invitation to return if I could not reach home, that I certainly would, laughing at the idea of not being able to get over a few hundred yards of ground.

How cold it was! I passed through the gate, I shivered as I drew my great coat closer round me. Above me was the high snow-covered bank, round which the road wound about mid height, the lower side going sheer down to the water. The wind appeared to have lulled, the blowing of the surface snow from above being the only indication that there was still a breeze. But overhead a star might be seen here and there, soon blotted out by the rapid send of the wreck, showing that in upper air there was still fierce elemental disturbance. As I wound up higher

and higher, the wind seemed to increase, till as I turned the shoulder of the hill which had hitherto protected me, and began to face towards the North-West, there was a rush and roar, and with pitiless pelting half frozen sleet came rushing slanting down, blinding me for the moment and struggling as if to rend me to pieces. I caught but one glimpse of the light gleaming from the window of my own house, and then the air was filled with snow, driven furiously before the wind and mixed with frozen rain. Staggering, I almost recoiled before it. But setting my teeth resolutely, I pushed on with lowered head, in my blind desperation not caring to look where I was going, for I knew every inch of the way.

As I stumbled on nearly stifled with the blinding snow from above and the drift raised swirling aloft from the ground, until the whole atmosphere seemed filled with the white fury of the storm, my mind turned as it were mechanically to that night, well nigh nineteen centuries ago, in which the Shepherds kept watch with their flocks under the peaceful skies of Judea, when the angel appeared to them and a glory shone round them. The gale roared, its icy breath freezing my face; my body was drenched in perspiration, while my feet were deathly cold; yet as in a dream I passed the little shanty where lived one of the mill hands and struggled downwards into the hollow through which the winter road wound, turned aside from the ordinary highway to avoid the annual drifts. Sometimes my feet were on the beaten path, and I could plunge through with the snow considerably above my knees. Then I would by a false step slip from the path, and feel myself struggling up to the shoulders, and yet without firm footing till I again could painfully and laboriously work over to the track. Yet through all kept sounding in my ears an old Christmas song, long since familiar, and years ago, it had seemed, forgotten. Slowly, step by step, I fought my way as for very life. Deeper and deeper I was descending into the hollow through which ran a stream, crossed at one point by a temporary bridge of a few loose planks. More and more laboriously came my heaving breath; the torpor of death was stealing over me; the old carol mingled itself confusedly with the howling of the storm; and I was yielding myself up to the slumber which would have been my last, when the faint sound of a bell roused me for a moment. I recovered consciousness enough for a supreme effort as I realized my danger. Drawing the cape of my coat round my face and head, I stood still for a minute or two, and turning my back to the wind, I raised the high pitched call which carries so far, and can be heard for a long distance, repeated it again and yet once more, and the drowsiness had fast hold of me ere the last call had well left my throat.

A sharp stinging sensation on my face, a painful pricking of my feet seemed to recall me to consciousness. I was sitting, half lying, near a roaring fire. Half dazed I looked and recognised the mill labourer and his wife, who had been aroused by my call, had gone out with a lantern and directed by my last cry had managed to reach me, and had led me into their shanty, walking like one in a state of somnambulism. Fortunately I was not much the worse. I stripped off my stockings and dried them, filled and lighted my pipe and was ready to take the road again, not forward but back to the house I had left, which I reached with little comparative trouble, under the friendly shelter of the hill; and stretched on a sofa near the fire, slept without a gleam of consciousness till the grey dawn and the household sounds awoke me.

It was a lovely morning. Freezing hard and not a cloud to be seen. I breakfasted before leaving, and rejecting snow shoes started on my way. When I once more ascended the hill up which I had struggled the night before, not a vestige of a road could be seen. The smoke was curling up in the keen morning air, from the house in which I had found timely shelter and from my own grey cottage. One smooth unbroken expanse of snow, unbroken by even the shadow of a fence, all buried out of sight, lay between me and it. I struck across in a direct line for my own door. For a few dozen yards I could walk on the hard packed surface, and then, without warning, down I went, dragged my legs up, sometimes having even to do so with my hands, then mounted the hard snow again, got briskly on for a few yards and then the same wearisome floundering. At last the shrill cry "Here's papa," was heard, and a little figure seen at the front door. The hired man, who had been out breaking a road to the bush, was summoned and came trampling a path to meet me. A short time longer and I was seated cozily at home; learned that my wife did not think I would have been mad enough to leave the village in such a fearful storm, and so had kept her mind easy. The turkey was done to a turn; Santa Claus had visited the children's stockings and his gifts were gleefully shown me; and thankful for my safety, I looked back with a grateful heart to the narrow escape I had made when on that Christmas eve, I was struggling IN THE SNOW.

A SEVERE JOKE ON AN APOTHECARY.—Macready's hand-writing was curiously illegible, and especially when writing orders of admission to the theatre. One day, at New Orleans, Mr. Broughan obtained one of these from him for a friend. On handing it to the gentleman the latter observed that, if he had not known what it purported to be, he never would have suspected what it was. "It looks more like a prescription than anything else," he added. "So it does," said Mr. Broughan; "let us go and have it made up." Turning into the nearest drug store, the paper was given to the clerk, who gave it a careless glance and proceeded to get a vial ready and pull out divers boxes. With another look at the order, down came a tincture bottle, and the vial was half filled. Then there was a pause. The gentlemanly attendant was evidently puzzled. At last he broke down completely, and rang for his principal, an elderly and severe-looking individual, who presently emerged from an inner sanctum. The two whispered together an instant, when the old dispenser looked at the document, and with an air of pity for the ignorance of his subordinate, boldly filled up the vial with some apocryphal fluid, and duly corked and labeled it. Then handing it to the gentleman who were waiting he said, with a bland smile, "A cough mixture, and a very good one. Fifty cents, if you please."