

THE RULING PASSION

The huge stove in the southeast corner was blushing a rosy red through its thin coat of whitewash, and exhaling a furious dry heat flavoured with the smell of baked iron. At the north end, however, winter reigned; and there were tiny ridges of fine snow on the floor, sifted in by the wind through the cracks in the window-frames.

But the bouncing girls and the heavy-footed guides and lumbermen who filled the ball-room did not appear to mind the heat or the cold. They balanced and "sashayed" from the tropics to the arctic circle. They swung at corners and made "ladies' change" all through the temperate zone. They stamped their feet and did double-shuffles until the floor trembled beneath them. The tin lamp-reflectors on the walls rattled like castanets.

There was only one drawback to the hilarity of the occasion. The band, which was usually imported from Sandy River Forks for such festivities,—a fiddle, a cornet, a flute, and an accordion,—had not arrived. There was a general idea that the mail-sleigh, in which the musicians were to travel, had been delayed by the storm, and might break its way