

When Corporal Birch Stayed for Dinner

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Annie Sheppard Armstrong.

An Old Irish Lady and the Mounted Policeman.

CORPORAL Birch, of the Royal North West Mounted Police, Hardisty detachment, rode meditatively along the road-allowance on a December day of 1916. The thermometer stood only at zero, and the Corporal enjoyed the winter sunshine on his trusty bay. With moccasins, fur chaps, fur coat, cap and gauntlets, he was comfortable and his fresh English skin glowed with good health.

But he was not inwardly at ease; discontent was eating at his heart. He had just had a look at the railroad bridge over which a troop train would pass that night, from Edmonton—a man was hired to guard it, but in these times no chances could be taken, and even the watchers must, in turn, be watched.

Birch was chafing to be away overseas with the other fellows, but his time was not out with the Dominion Government until some time in 1917, and, chafe as he

would, he must stay with it—but, then, if the war was not over by that time, hooray for the front!

If only, he cogitated, he were even stationed away up in the North, where the Mounties were still the head push, and there was some adventure, it wouldn't be so bad, but here, in a province, in a little rut of duties, hedged about by important little town magistrates and civilian constables, it was unbearable. Even now, he was to do some little summons serving chore before returning to barracks.

Here and there in the thinly populated district through which he rode there could be seen amongst the fields of whiteness, some straw stacks, relics of threshing, with cattle sheltering and feeding around them. Bands of horses, turned out to winter, pawed and played about. At long intervals a thin column

of smoke ascended from a settler's shack. The point of view is everything, and a city man viewing this wilderness, as it would appear to him, would scarcely understand the Corporal's discontent at being in such a "tame," "civilized," "hedged in" place, but away from Indian Reserves and big game, away from the untrodden lands where the Riders of the Plains were still detective, judge, jury, and, possibly executioner, in their protective capacity in preserving law.

But his wrist watch and the stirrings of a mighty English appetite warned him of the dinner hour, and he guided his horse toward a new car-roofed shack on a claim that had recently been taken up.

"Come, Klunkily, we'll try the vintage here," he said to his horse, as he rode up to the yard gate. The dog barked, and the officer could hear, as he thought, sounds of revelry from the house. A gramophone was playing, "Come Back to Erin," piano and harp accompaniment, and a very cracked voice in the house was following—a long way off—and in several keys lower.

The Corporal left his horse at the gate and betook his six feet two to the shack door, the old dog instinctively admitting his reliability.

In answer to the rap a very clean looking, short, round, grey-haired old woman appeared, who squinted up at the policeman with keen blue eyes.

"Could I—ah—take dinner here, please, if it's not too much trouble?"

"God bless your wee heart, me boy, that could ye."

"Thank you—I shall put in my horse, if you've no objections."

"Lord love you—put in the poor baste, and ye'll find feed there—me man and me son's away the day."

The Corporal bowed and took away the "poor baste" in question, and returned, minus the chaps.

He "sat up" to the fire while the old lady got dinner for the two of them, talking all the time, while the mountie answered at random, in the pleasant sort of stupor that always comes upon one for a time on coming in from the cold.

The house consisted of three rooms, a living and two bed-rooms. The gramophone evidently inhabited one of the latter for it was not in sight. The rafters and studding were uncovered save for some "holy pictures" around, proclaiming the faith of the inmates. To utilize space a high shelf ran all around the room, on which stood in neat array, canned goods, grocery parcels, and kitchen utensils in the section near the stove; over the table, shining cups, plates and saucers, and in other parts, sewing and knitting materials, and clean, neatly folded clothing, and reading matter. The chairs, home-made lounge and wash-stand were compactly arranged. The smiling old woman in the lilac apron was setting out a good meal and lots of it. There was bacon, beans, potatoes, pickles, bread, cookies, and strong, aromatic green tea.

"Sit over," invited the hostess and the Corporal sat over accordingly. He wore the brown duck tunic buttoned up to the neck with R.N.W.M.P. on the shoulders and a corporal's stripes on the sleeve. The old woman paused at the back of his chair in the act of going to the stove for the tea-pot and put her knotted hands to his shoulders, "man," she said, turning to an imaginary hearer, "would ye look at the shoulders on this broth of a boy. And a back like a board, would ye?"

The Corporal laughed good-naturedly and reached for the edibles set before him.

"By your accent you're maybe a French woman, mother?" he remarked. "Aye," she answered, "a French woman be the name iv O'Reilly; and, be the same token you're a German spy, I'm thinkin'."

"Cor-rect," laughed the Englishman—"I thought I heard a gramophone as I came up."

"Oh, aye," said the old lady, jumping up, "they do say the grand folks has music while they ate; sure we're as good as any. I'll go and put on a record."

"Let me see," he could hear his hostess cogitating aloud over the gramophone.

(Continued on Page 15)

NEW AND EASY WAY TO LEARN MUSIC



Learn to Play and Sing in Spare Time at Home—Every Step Made Simple as A B C by Print-and-Picture Lessons That You Can't Go Wrong On.

TRY IT ON APPROVAL

Entire Cost Only a Few Cents a Lesson—and Nothing Whatever to Pay Unless You Are Satisfied.



How often have you wished that you knew how to play the violin or piano—or whatever your favorite instrument may be—or that you could take part in singing?

How many an evening's pleasure has been utterly spoiled and ruined by the admission "I can't sing," or "No, I am sorry, but I can't play."

At all social gatherings, some one is sooner or later sure to suggest music. When the others gather around for the fun, the one who can take on part feels hopelessly out of it—a wall flower—a mere listener and looker on!

Or those long and lonesome evenings at home, when minutes seem like hours—how quickly the time would pass if you could spend it at the piano or organ—or in making a violin "talk," or in enjoying some other instrument.

And now—at last—this pleasure and satisfaction that you have so often wished for can easily be added to your daily life.

No need to join a class or pin yourself down to certain hours for lessons or practice. No need to pay a dollar or more per lesson to a private teacher. Neither the question of time nor expense is any longer a bar—every one of the obstacles that have been confining your enjoyment to mere listening have now been removed.

My method of teaching music by mail—in your spare time at home, with no strangers around to embarrass you—makes it amazingly easy to learn to sing by note or to play any instrument.

You don't need to know the first thing about music to begin—don't need to know one note from another. My method takes out all the hard part—overcomes all the difficulties—makes your progress easy, rapid and sure.

SUCCESS

"Since I've been taking your lessons I've made over \$50 with my violin. Your lessons surely are fine."—Melvin Freeland, Macopin, N.J.

"When I started with you I knew nothing about the Cornet or music, but now I can play almost any piece of music."—Kasson Swan, Denmark, Col. Co. Nova Scotia.

"I want to extend the heartiest approval of your Piano Course. It has done more for me than years of other lessons."—Moxie N. Lewis, 319 Jefferson, Neosho, Mo.

"The folks at home are delighted to hear me play the Organ so well. You have a wonderful system of teaching music."—M. F. Allard, Carquet, N.B.

Whether for an advanced pupil or a beginner, my method is a revolutionary improvement over the old methods used by private teachers. The lessons I send you explain every point and show every step in simple Print-and-Picture form that you can't go wrong on—every step is made as clear as A-B-C. My method makes each step so easy to understand and practice that even children only 7 to 10 years old have quickly become accomplished players or singers under my direction by mail. Also thousands of men and women 50 to 70 years old—including many who had never before tried to play any instrument or taken a

Learn to Play by Note

For Beginners or Advanced Pupils

Piano
Organ
Violin
Viola
Banjo
Tenor Banjo
Mandolin
Clarinet
Flute
Saxophone
Cello

Harmony and Composition
Sight Singing
Guitar
Ukulele
Hawaiian
Steel Guitar
Harp
Cornet
Piccolo
Trombone

lesson of any kind—have found my method equally easy. My method is as thorough as it is easy. I teach you the only right way—teach you to play or sing by note. No "trick" music, no "numbers," no makeshifts of any kind. I call my method "new"—simply because it is so radically different from the old and hard-to-understand ways of teaching music. But my method is thoroughly time tried and proven. Over 225,000 successful pupils—in all parts of the world, and including all ages from boys and girls of 7 to 8 to men and women of 70—are the proof. Read the enthusiastic letters from some of them, which you will find printed at the left—samples of the kind of letters I am receiving in practically every mail. My file contains thousands of such letters. Largely through the recommendations of satisfied pupils, I have built up the largest school of music in the world.

But I don't ask you to judge my methods by what others say or by what I myself say. You can take any course on trial—singing or any instrument you prefer—any judge entirely by your own progress. If for any reason you are not satisfied with the course or with what you learn from it, then it won't cost you a single penny. I guarantee satisfaction. On the other hand, if you are pleased with the course, the total cost amounts to only a few cents a lesson, with your music and everything included.



U. S. School of Music

1210 Brunswick Bldg.
NEW YORK

Name.....
Address.....
City.....

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," and particulars of your Special Offer.

Mr. David F. Kemp, President U. S. School of Music, 1210 Brunswick Bldg. New York City.