

stood glaring down on his brother. "I don't care where you go, or what becomes of you or yours.

The words died on his tongue. The door from the hall had opened to admit the little—no, it was some trick of the imagination, the little mother slept in the bleak churchyard by the country road. Then who was this with the billowy rose-flowered frock, the shawl with the silken fringe, the bonnet tied beneath the dimpled chin? Who was this with his mother's face, her tender eyes, this quaint dear thing with the flowing sleeves and hair combed low over the ears. Daniel had no glance to spare his brother. His eyes clung to the new comer.

"I heard you quarrelling," her tone was of soft raillery, the very tone his mother had been wont to use in alluding to any passage of arms between her boys, "and I came to tell you that you mustn't." She drew so close that the fringe of her shawl trailed over Daniel's knee. "What is wrong?" she asked of Jacob, laying a hand on his bowed head.

"My brother is hard on me," came the answer. "He hates me."

"Not to-night, surely," turning her soft eyes on Daniel. "The angel of Christmas Eve wills it that everyone in the world should be at peace when the bells ring, you remember."

Yes, he remembered, but he had hated Jacob so long, or thought he hated him. He was growing suspicious of himself. What business had he feeling sorry that Jacob had grown a fat old fellow with grizzled hair? He took hold of the rose flowered skirt and drew the wearer closer still.

"No, you're not her," he spoke in a half whisper, "but you are like her. Who are you?"

"I'm Betty Wilson," a warm little hand crept into his cold one, "and I can guess who you are. You're Uncle Dan. Oh, I know all about you. The wildness and the running away and that, and I'm so glad you came home in time for my party."

"Betty," said Daniel very gently, "I took you for a spirit. Where did you get those clothes?"

"In the cedar trunk upstairs. They belonged to grandmother, you know, and as father has told me how much I resemble her I thought I'd dress like her and comb my hair as she did hers for my old time party. Wasn't it lucky that you got here to-night? And oh, Uncle Danny, wasn't it lucky I came in to make peace between you and daddy? We don't want the angel of Christmas Eve to have its feelings hurt, do we?"

Daniel had gathered a bunch of the silk fringe and was making it into a braid. It had been an old, old pastime of his, that braiding of the strands on his mother's shawl. He felt that he was very young and foolish. This coming to the homestead was not the thing he had planned at all. Why that shuffling weak old man wasn't worth hating, and this girl of a sudden seemed near and dear to him. Then those two young villains at the barn with their fun and their games, they had to be thought of. Heavens! he had come home to a fine load of responsibilities!

"Do we, Uncle Danny?" reiterated Betty.

"No, we don't," he agreed. "Just as you say, little girl."

"Now I must run." She got to the door, turned and looked back.

"You're glad, aren't you, daddy?" she asked.

Jacob, with relief written on his visage, assured her that he was.

"And, Uncle Dan, you're home for good, remember. No more running away. Here's something to bind the bargain." She ran back, clasped her soft arms about his neck and kissed him. "It seems good to have you. Mother is dead and daddy is not—is not strong. You'll look after us, won't you?"

Daniel swelled with a sense of his own importance. Oh, yes, he would look after them. The boys came rushing in from the barn and stared at the new comer.

"Here you, Dan, you're a namesake of mine. Pull your uncle's boots off; I'm too stiff to try it. Can you ride?"

Could he ride! Young Dan laughed. "I've never been thrown yet," he announced as he tugged at the boots. "If I'd a horse—"

"There's one in the stable you can have for a Christmas box if you'll ride him to town in the morning and settle up with his owner. I'd go, but riding don't agree with me. There, there, don't tip the lamp over. Ouch! I'm going to have a time with my back."

"Can't I do anything?" asked the younger boy.

"Sure, you can dish me up some of those baked beans and biscuit, I'm most starved." Daniel looked at his brother, scowled, then laughed.

"I say, Jacob," swallowing hard, "by-gones can be by-gones for all I care. That Christmas Eve angel Betty talks of ain't going to get any snub from me, not if I know it."

A SACK OF PLUM PUDDING

A Christmas Story of the Far North

By HOPKINS MOORHOUSE

TO FIND it one must go far northward, beyond the country of the Crees, beyond Ile a la Crosse and by way of the long Buffalo Lake up to where the Portage la Loche rises between the long chain of waterways southward and the flow of rivers that sets toward the Frozen Ocean; then miles and miles through the deep winding valley of the Clearwater where pine-clad hills are high and on to the Forks of the Athabasca; after that, leagues along the broad reaches of the mighty river and straight away into the wilderness that stretches ever northward to the "Meeting-Place-of-Many-Waters; and there, where the lonely waters of the "Lake-of-the-Winds" lave the granite rocks, it will be found—the Hudson's Bay post at the Fond du Lac. There alone in the country of the Chipewyans for seventeen years had lived old John Hawkins. Once, four years before, his dogs had travelled many weary miles southward to Fort Carleton to meet the winter-packet.

Twelve days' journey farther still into the North beyond the borders of the Barren Grounds and far across wintry wastes to the desolate shores of the Great Slave Lake lay the way to "Rory's Hope." There alone, at this little lost fur-trading post, for sixteen years had lived old Roderick MacQuaig in the country of the Slave Indians and the Dog-Ribs. Once, three years before, his dogs had dragged his sled south and east, many weary miles over the frozen distances to the Fort at Fond du Lac.

And at that time these two old traders had agreed that three years hence they would meet, God willing, and spend Christmas Day and the Yuletide together. For three years now, each had been looking forward to this.

For great friends they had been in younger days when side by side they worked for the company as clerks at old Fort Garry, two thousand miles to the south; that was before the remoter wilds had exiled both from the far-off busy world of men and their activities. And great friends they were now when the years had laid upon their beards and sifted in their hair the silver-frost that does not melt away; and the friendship of their latter years had grown



mighty in the dreary isolation of the lone spaces where pine trees stretched arms to an icy sky.

Big framed, broad shouldered, bright of eye and red of cheek, was the Englishman, John Hawkins. His work was always well done; the company knew what they were about when they made him Factor at Fond du Lac. His store within the stockade was filled with blankets, coloured cloths, guns, ammunition, bright handkerchiefs, ribbons and staples of Indian trade; in his storehouse the pelts accumulated till from the beams hung myriads of skins, worth many a gold piece in the marts of London City—martens and minks and dark otters, fishers and black foxes, bears and beavers. The Indians came in blanket robes and dirty white capotes; the pointed poles of a wigwam or two would rise on either side of the outer palisades while the Indians stayed and smoked; by and by they would go away. From the tapering staff, day after day, the red flag flew in the cold north blast.

Throughout the long, rigorous winters it was so; throughout the short, lonely summers, too. In the summer the harsh cry of the "wavy" kept time to the lapping of the waters on the rocky shores of Athabasca; the pine islands rustled in the western breeze—nothing else moved over the eight thousand square miles of crystal sea; perhaps at long intervals the canoe of a Chipewyan might glide along the bay indented shores or cross some traverse of

the open lake. In the winter—but only the "winterers" themselves could really know what that was! Late dawns, a few hours daylight; dusks, closing into long dark nights; tempests sweeping and roaring and moaning through stunted pine forests while wrack and drift hurled across the frozen lake! Landscape and life alike a drear monotony without excitement, each day just a little taken from the dreary prospect before and added to the hopeless separation behind! Wailings of storm and the haunting hush of solitude! Firelight and memories of faraway Scottish glens and English lanes, primroses, and heather! Roderick MacQuaig had known these things for sixteen years and for seventeen, John Hawkins.

The one bright break in the long winters for the Factor at Fond du Lac was when he journeyed two hundred miles to Fort Chipewyan at the west end of the lake to meet the winter-packet. There the huskies of the voyageurs from the far Yukon and the distant Peace River country came together and fought; there the voyageurs themselves sat and smoked and told stories of the long trails while they waited. And there among these untamed men of the *pays du nord* had waited old John Hawkins many a time for the coming of the packet—had peered many a time far away through the *poudre* haze that hung low upon the surface of the lake for the first glimpse of an incoming dog-train.

And the excitement that always broke loose when at last shadowy figures could be seen through the drift! *Sacre!* but there was one grand noise! Maybe it was only Antoine la Fleur, a solitary "Freeman" from the Quatre Fourche, going like a good Christian to his prayers at the French Mission; but maybe not. For were not the dogs steering for the Fort? Hurrah! *Voici le paquet!*

That was the way of it. Here was news—glad news, sorry news, letters from faraway homes, tidings of great doings on the earth, brought after months of toil, two thousand miles through a winter wilderness! No wonder there was excitement! No wonder there was noise! How could two wooden boxes possibly carry so much? Here at Fort Chip-