

## UNCLE LISHA'S SHOP.

From Forest and Stream.

VIII.

The south wind had been roaring for forty-eight hours after its first piercing chill softening the snow so that it took the imprint of the foot of man and beast as sharp and clear as an impression in wax; then bringing to its surface weeds and tops of knolls, then making it so splashy that the brooks burst their bonds and overran them in swishing yellow floods, when one January night Lisha's friends came straggling in over the sloppy roads. The talk ran naturally to tracking 'coons, which the weather favored, then to the life and habits of the animal.

"Wal, boys," said Lisha, splashing a tap in the tub, "s'pose ye'll all be arter 'coons tomorrow, won't ye? This thaw 'll fetch 'm acout."

"Wal, I d' know," Sam Lovell answered; "I kind er' though I'd take a little turn arter 'em 'f nothin' happens."

"Dat what we'll call it chat sauvage in Canada ah guess so, 'coon? Dat same ting ah 'll hear it sometam r-r-ac-coon? Yas!"

"Sartinly, Antwine," said Solon Briggs, "'coon and ra-coon is what we call anonymous terms for one and the same anny-mill. Raccoon, I expect is a Latin or Greece work, which 'coon is the English of it."

"Then grease is their name as well as their natur, for they're the fattest creatures," said Sam.

"Naow, Antwine," asked Solon, "what might be the true meanin' an' interpolation of 'shaw syvadge'?"

"Wall M'sieu Brigg, lemme see, ah 'll tole you—chat, he mean cat an' sauvage, he mean he don't tame—m-what you call 'm wil? Chat sauvage, wil' cat, on'stan'?"

"Hm! yas, wildcat, or to speak more eggzack, puttin' the cart afore the hoss arter the French fashion, 'cat wild,' similar to 'shovlware' for a black hoss, which 'shovel' means hoss an' 'aware' means black. Naow, hain't that a most on-naw-ah-hist'ry name, so to speak, for a 'coon or a raccoon, which it hain't no-ways the natur' of the feline race, but much more resemblances a bear, a layin' dormouse in winter an' eatin' corn an' shuck as much as meat victuals as no critters of the cat speeshy do?"

"Sartin, Solon, you're right!" "a 'coon 'ould make a frat-rate bear!" "I wan't fer his tail. He's jist as independent, on hoggsish, an' sort-r cunning-foolish, an' fond of water an' mud, an' sweet-toothed, an' hot-toothed tew, fer he'll dig wild turn'ps an' eat 'em jes' 's a bear will. Haow on airth any critter 't hain't got its maouth an' insides lined with sheet iron, can chaw an' swaller a green wild turnip 's more 'n I can understand. Why, it's wus 'n forty thaousan' red hot needles a jebbin' int' yer tongue, 'f ye ever bit one."

Almost every one present confessed to having been fooled in the days of his youth by some rough practical joker into tasting the bulbous root of the plant, whose snake-like spathe should warn one that it biteth even like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.

"Wal, naow," said Lisha, laying aside his lapstone, shoving his spectacles on to the top of his head, and resting his elbows on his knees, "that makes me think of a man 'at I knowed 'at come tu his death along of foolin' a boy with a wild turnip, 'n I d' know but what it sarved him putty night right, naow rally I don't. His name was Bijer Jarvis. Why some on ye knowed 'im; he use ter run the sawmill up in the Notch. He was a red-headed, cross-grained, ill-natred creature, 't would wruther see folks in hot water 'n acout of 't. Good airth 'n seas! 'f I hain't spoke in meetin' fer he was Peltier's uncle; Peltier's mother was a Jarvis. But she wa'n't to blame fer it, 'n I haint goin' to spile a story, fer relation's sake, so ye need n't take no pride in what I say, Peltier."

"Hough! Gol darn Uncle Biege! Blast his ole plecter!" exclaimed Pelatiah, "he never done nothin' for none o' sour folks

only cheat father acout 'n a yoke o' tew ole steers, so I hearn 'em tell. You need n't spile no stories 'bout him on my 'caout, Uncle Lisha."

"Wal," Lisha continued after his little interruption, "Bijer was a runnin' the sawmill, an' one mornin' when he was a goin' 'long the road through the woods to the mill he seen a wild turnip an' pulled it, an' kerried it 'long, thinkin' mebbe 't he'd dry it 'agin he had a cough, in the fall, for some sets gret store by wild turnips dried an' grated an' took in 'lasses for a hackin' cough. Curous, haint it, 't when they're dried they ha' no more taste into 'em 'n a piece o' chalk? Wal, he mugged along to the mill an' rolled a lawg on t' the kerridge an' dogged it an' histed the gate, an' jist then there come along a boy a fishin' of the name o' Morrison, an' stopped to see 'him saw. He was al'ays a gawpin' raound, lookin' at the contraptions an' askin' questions, more 'n boy-fashion, for he seemed to be kinder studyin' inter 'em, 'n they said 't the made a regular little sawmill complete, kerridge, rag wheel an' 'all, an' sot it a runnin' in a brook cluser ter his folkses. I al'ays made Bijer crosser 'n two sticks to see him raound, 'n he didn't take no notice on him till bimby he happened to think of the turnip, 'n he ast 'im 't he liked apples, 'n he said he did, for who ever see a boy 't didn't? Thens' he 'did you ever eat any sweet graound apples? Here's one o' the sweetest ever ye see' handin' on 'im the turnip; 'take a bite on it.' The boy took a good bite an' chawed it kinder slow, lookin' at Bijer, but Bijer looked turrible honest, 'n clever 's he ever could, so the boy didn't think nothin'. In tew three minutes it begin to take a holt, 'n then he begin to sputter 'n cry, an' holler 't his maouth was full o' humbeebes an' hornets, 'n Bijer settin' there on the lawg goin' into fits a laughin' at 'im, till the boy cleared acout mos' crazy with the fire in his maouth. 'n Bijer didn't didn't see nothin' on 'im agin for a month, till one day he popped up behind a pile o' boards a shakin' his fist at 'im and hollered, 'You ole red headed heap! 'I'll pay ye some time see 'f I don't.' 'n, scooted acout o' sight 'fore Bijer could fling 'n aidgin' at 'im. All this while an' arter, things kep' gettin' acout o' kilter 'raound the mill; sticks in the wheel, bull-wheel rope wore acout 'n breakin', saw duller 'n hoe, all kinder onaccable, no body knowed haow. Bim-by long late in the fall when when the pond froze over, Bijer was a fussin' 'raound the bulk head one day, choppin' a lawg loose or aouthin, nather, 'n bime-by he broke through an' went in kersouze! 'n he couldn't git acout, for the ice 'ouldn't hold an' the lawgs an' bulkhead 'n things was all ice so 's 't he couldn't keep no holt on 'em, 'n the water all the while a suckin' his laigs int' the flume. Jest then he seen that 'ere boy come skatin' 'long the pond, 'n he hollered for him to reach him a pole or a board, but the boy kep' a skitterin' 'raound a laughin' at 'im, an' say's he, 'Ole red head, don't ye wish ye hed one o' them sweet graound apples to warm ye up? Mus' be kinder 'cool bathin' in there. I'd go 'n dig ye one 'f 't wa'n't froze up.' Bijer begged an' splashed 'raound, an' cussed an' begged, 'n then when he was mos' tuckered acout he begin to pray, 'n then that 'ere imp of a boy hooked a pike pole into his out-cloak an' hauled him on t' the ice 'n snaked 'em ashore. He couldn't stan' 'n the boy went arter somebody 'n they kerried 'im hum. He never got well agin arter, nor able to walk. Some said 't was rheumatiz 'n some said 't was dyspepsy in the laigs—I do' know. One day the nex' summer when they'd sot 'im on the stoop tipped back in his cheer that 'ere darned boy come along 'n stood 'n gawped at 'im. Bimeby says he, 'Mr. Jarvis, says he, 'I've brug ye aouthin' 't 'll good. I've took lots o' trouble to git it for ye.' 'n he pulled an' alfred gret wild turnip rut acout 'n his pocket. 'Take a bite an' chaw 't down,' says he, he, a shovin' on it undes his nose; 'take a bite I've owed ye one more 'n a year.' Bijer

gin a kinder start, 'n the hind laigs of his cheer slipped 'n down he come ker lummux! 'n hurt his head some way so 's 't hedied in a week or tew. 'N that's what he got for feedin' boys wild turnip."

"Bah gosh! Ah guess wen he begin to dead he'll sorry he foolish dat boys ain't it?"

"That boy," said Solon, "was vindictive."

"I do, know as that was what they called it," said Lisha; "seems though they said he was injennuous. Anyway he went off, they say 't he's what they call injin-near on one o' them 'ere steam railroads, down in Massachusetts some wheres."

"Dew you think, Sammywell," Solon asked getting back to the subject under consideration, "that the vocal voice of a 'coon resemblances a screechaowl?"

"Wal," Sam answered, "I do' know. Some says that a 'coon does make a noise sometimes 'at saound 'outhin' like a screechaowl, only kinder hoarser. I had a tame 'coon onct for most a year, but I never hearn him dew anything but graowl when he was mad, an' squall when he was hurt, jes' you've hearn 'em when a doawg hed a holt on 'em. He was the cunningest little cuss! Inter all the mischief he would think on, an' more tew. The chickens hed to suffer when he got into the hen haouse, every time, 'n he'd raise tunkit with every thing he could git into in the haouse. When he was eatin' he'd keep a sozzlin' his grub in his pan o' water all the time. Uncle Lisher makes me think on 'im every time he splashes his luther in his tub. Shouldn't wonder, Uncle Lisher, 'f you turned into a 'coon yit."

"Darr'd 'f I wouldn't like tew part o' the year, Samwill. Wouldn't it be cute to curl up when the col' weather come on an' snooze till spring or a thaw come, an' not haf to bother gittin' wood or grub?"

"Ye'd want to take yer 'long pipe with ye, an' some terbacker an' matches in yer pocket when ye went inter a holler tree—'t would be lonesome goin' without a smoke so long."

"Naow, does 'coons hev pockets?" asked the man who never spoke but to ask a question.

"Course they dew," Sam answered shortly; "inside pockets, 'n I d' know but cut-tail pockets an' trowsers pockets. An' then agin, Uncle Lisher, when the come a thaw an' ye turned acout an' went traipin' raound an' somebody tracked ye into another tree haow 'd ye like to hev 'em cadd acout the tree 'n knock ye in the head?"

"'I would be you, Samwill, 'at saound me, an' you'd know me by the smell o' luther, 'n you wouldn't hurt yer Uncle Lisher. 'N I'm glad you made me think on 't, for I guess I'd ort to hev a smuk afore I turn into a 'coon." Whereupon he cleaned the bowl of his pipe with an awl, ran a waxed end through the stem, blew through it, and then shaving some tobacco from a plug on his cutting board with a shoe knife, was presently in the full enjoyment of what he called a "n" down good smuk."

"Ah bet too he a'n't frogit when he 'coon as' you, Sam, haow you lak it you boot, 'n when you tole 'im he too tight he say 'he straysh!' Wen you tole 'im he too loose, he say 'he shrimp!' Hein Onc Lasha, you don't frogit dat, a'n't it?"

"Arrrh! You dum peasouper!" Lisha growled, like a good-natured bear.

"'F you want fur," said Sam, "trackin' 'coons on the snow 's all well 'nough, but it's mortal hard work wallerin' in the soft snow all day. But 'f you want fun an' music, take yer dawgs an' hunt 'em nights in cornfields, an' when they've ben shuckin' under sweet acorn trees, an' sometimes you'll strike 'long a brook when they've ben a froggin'. Hev tew three good haouns a bootin' on a track fer a good spell, an' then singin' halleluy er raound a tree! That's what I call fun alive! Some druther hev a cur dawg, 'at won't bark till he trees, but gimme more music, 'f I've got to hev less 'coons."

"Wal," said Lisha, ramming his pipe with the handle of his awl, "everybody to their notion, 's the ole woman said when she kissed her kyow, but I could n't never—sen I was a boy—see no gret fun in stumblin' raound in the dark, 'n fightin' skeeters half the night, for one or tew 'coons with 'baout as much hair on 'em 's the 's on the back o' yer hand, 'n like 's not, not git nary 'coon arter all."

"Why, Uncle Lisher," said Sam Lovell, "is that rally your idee of the fun o' huntin', jest to git aouthin' that's wuth money? Seems to me, if fur an' treat 's all a fell'er's arter, he aint goin' to git no gret comfort acout on 't."

"Shaw, Samwill! you haint a goin' to ondertake to make me 'b'lieve 't 'f you don't feel better a bringin' hum a fox skin, er a 'coon skin, er half a dozen partridge, 'n ye dew comin' hum wi' nothin' 'f I know better 'n that."

Of course I like to git 'outhin' to show for a day's hunt, an' it's comfortable to the feelin' to make a good 'shot, but 'f I didn't never git nuthin' only what I c'n show, I sh'd stay to hum more 'n I dew. If dollars an' cents an' aouthin' 't eat was all I was arter, I'd snare partridges 'n trap foxes, an' you never heard o' my doin' nary one."

"Wel, then, Samwill, what on airth dew ye go for? Ye hunt more 'n most anybody I know, an' ye git more game."

"I can't hardly tell, Uncle Lisher. It comes nat'ral for me to run in the woods 'f I do get more game to show for it 'n some does, I git aouthin' besides I can't show. The air o' the woods tastes good to me, for 't haint ben breathe by nothin' but wild creatures, 's 'n ole fell'er said 'at useter git up airy daown in Rho'd Island where my folks come from. I luffter breath it 'fore common-folks has the smell o' the woods; smells good to me, dead leaves 'n spruce boughs, 'n rotten wood, 'n it don't hurt in none if it's spiced up a leetle bit with skunk an' mink an' wassel an' fox p'fum'ry. An' I luffter see trees 'at 's older 'n any men, an' graound 't wa'n't never plowed 'er hoed a growin' nat'ral crops. 'N I luffter hear the stillness of the woods, fer 't is still there. Wind a 'sytin, leaves a rustlin', brooks a runnin', birds a singin' even a bluejay a squalin', haint noises. It takes folks an' waggins an' horses an' cattle an' pigs an' sech to make a noise. I git lots o' things a huntin' 't I can't show ye nor tell ye 'bout, an' a fell'er that don't, don't git the best o' huntin', 'cordin' to my idee."

"I do' know but what ye've got 'bout the right on 't, Samwill," said Lisha, after smoking slowly and gazing for some minutes out into the dark through his long window, "I do, know but what ye hev, Samwill. Wal, boys, 'f ye 'r goin' arter 'coons tomorrow ye'll want'er sleep some fast." And he arose and took off his apron. Presently the wooden latch clicked behind the last departing guest.

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