

A YOUNG HERO.

WRITTEN FOR THE CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL BY
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MOTHER, why are you always so sad about Xmas, when every one else is so bright and jolly?"

"Because, my dear boy, the saddest events of my life have occurred at this time of the year, and as each Xmas returns it brings me my saddest memories."

"Tell me about them, mother, and let me help you to bear them. I share all your joys why should I not also share your sorrows?"

"I have often thought of doing so, Harry, but did not like to bring even a shadow on your bright young life. However, I think you are old enough now to appreciate his great sacrifice and let it influence your character; so this Xmas eve I will tell you the story of my noble boy hero."

"Oh mother! A real true hero? Tell me quickly!"

"Yes, dear, as true a hero as was ever burned at the stake. My first sorrow came on Xmas eve, for twelve years ago to-night your father died suddenly in the full prime of his manhood and left me with two children—Fred a boy of twelve, and you a baby of a few weeks old. I had lost several children between you two, consequently Baby Harry seemed a precious charge to be guarded and watched over with more than ordinary care. When dying your father said to Fred, 'I leave your mother and baby brother in your charge, Fred, promise me that you will guard them well and prove yourself the manly boy I think you.' Fred looked his father steadily in the eyes and gave the required promise. Fred was proud of his charge and very fond of 'little brother Harry,' as he always called you, and no one could have been more faithful in looking after you. He was always ready to amuse you when I was busy, and would leave his play or the most attractive book at your slightest call. He was such a help and comfort to me that sad and trying year."

"We lived on a new farm about ten miles from my father's farm, and the road lay through a thick woods which was infested by wolves, and dangerous at night, and even in daylight if the fierce brutes chanced to be particularly hungry. A few days before Xmas mother sent word by a neighbor who was passing letters were rare in those days,—for me to drive the boys over and stay till over Xmas with them. She thought it would cheer me to get away from my home at that sad anniversary, and mingle with those who were bright and happy. We went, and Fred enjoyed his visit amazingly, he was the life of the family party of aunts, cousins and grand-children. But he never neglected you. No fun or pleasure could draw him away if you seemed to wish him to stay. The day after Xmas we started for home, as I was afraid to trust the man who was looking after the stock any longer. It was very cold and I thought he might neglect them. Fred drove and I carried you in my arms. We had dallied at the last till it was late in the afternoon when we got started, and the dusk soon overtook us. 'Drive fast,' I said to Fred, 'for we may be followed by wolves,'

and my heart sank as I thought of the last time I had driven through these woods after dark; my strong, brave husband was by my side and I had no thought of fear. Now, alas, I had only a boy for a protector, a brave reliant boy, yet only a boy in strength and judgment."

"Was Fred afraid, mother?"

"I don't know, dear, he did not say. We were speeding along, the bells jingling, the horse's feet crunching the hard snow, when suddenly out on the clear frosty air rang that deep dismal bay which once heard can never be forgotten. The wolves were on our track, God help us, and we were just in the thickest part of the wood, with no house within sight or hearing. Fred had heard them once and instantly recognized the terrifying sound. He turned white, but did not seem to lose his courage or presence of mind. 'They seem a long way off, mother, we may beat them yet,' said he. Then lashing the horse to its fullest speed he kept a sharp watch behind. Not a word more was spoken, but the fearful bay-ing gradually came nearer and more distinct. Suddenly the leader of the pack appeared in full view, and as he sighted his prey he leaped into the air and gave one fierce, resounding howl to signal the pack to hasten forward to the banquet."

My mother had loaded the sleigh with Xmas cheer of all kinds—a large piece of meat, fowls, mince pies and cakes. I suddenly thought of them, and setting my baby down between us I dragged the piece of meat from under the seat. This was difficult to do and took time, as the sleigh was rocking with the galloping of the horse, and I could scarcely keep my balance. 'Hurry, mother!' shouted Fred, 'they are nearly here.' When I raised my head and looked behind the sleigh, what a sight met my eyes! The whole pack had reached us, their eyes glaring like balls of fire, their fierce hungry jaws open, with sharp, white teeth showing, and all seemingly ready for the expected feast. I steadied myself as well as I could and making a big effort, threw the meat back as far as my strength would let me. The horse rushed madly on, his nostrils dilated and snorting with terror. Such snarling and growling, and fierce fighting for the treasure! We could hear the crunching of the rib bones, and the sound filled me with horror as to our probable fate. 'Get out the turkeys, mother,' shouted Fred, above the noise of the snarling and growling, 'but only throw one; we can keep them off as long as the food lasts.'"

We were going at great speed—your father always loved a good horse and this had been his favorite, and were fast increasing the distance between us and the ravening wolves, but we knew the meat must be nearly consumed. I rose again and threw out the large turkey which my dear mother had destined for our New Year's dinner, little dreaming of its fate. On we flew, taking eager glances backward. We soon saw the yelping pack of demons again on the move, but once more their wild progress was arrested by the second turkey whose bones they stopped to snarl and wrangle over. This gave us another respite. Then the pies and doughnuts followed the turkeys, and were snapped up almost in falling. On they came, fierce and more eager even than at first, their ravenous appetites seemingly only whetted by what they had devoured. I was in despair, for we had nothing more to throw; we were at last

at their mercy and we knew what that was. I took my baby again in my arms clasp-ing him closely to my heart, trying to soothe his terrified crying; for the swaying of the sleigh and the howling of the wolves had awakened him. Closer and closer they came, their wild eyes glaring, their white teeth gleaming, their red tongues lolling; we could feel their hot breath as two of the largest sprang at the back of the sleigh. Like a flash Fred struck at the first one and then the other with the butt end of his whip, causing them to drop back among the others. Then he snatched the Buffalo robe and threw it among them. This caused some confusion and Fred took advantage of it to lash once more the panting, lagging horse, and we gained a few paces on the wolves. Then Fred turned to me, his young face like death, his jaw firmly set, and said, in a strange, quiet tone, 'Mother, there is only one thing more to be done, and I am going to do it, God helping me. Here, take the reins quick!' Then, before I had the least idea of what he intended, he jumped from the sleigh calling out 'Good-bye, mother! it is the last chance of saving you and little brother Harry. Father will know I did my best.'"

"On my God, the horror of that moment! I can see the awful scene now as if it were actually present. The gloating joy of those cruel beasts as they rushed to meet their victim. The howls of anticipation! the snarls of greediness! Fred had taken his whip with him, bent on selling his life as dearly as possible. He laid about him with all his boyish might, rushing this way and that to elude their snapping teeth. Oh, how noble he looked, his stern white face bravely fronting his savage foes! It only took a few seconds; for while he was fighting several wolves in front a large one leaped up on his back and in the dusk and fast increasing distance all became indistinct confusion. I gave one last despairing scream as I lost sight of him, and mercifully I knew no more till I opened my eyes in a kind friend's house. They had heard my screams and come out to find an exhausted horse, a fainting woman and a crying baby."

"But, dear mother, was Fred saved?"

"Not saved, Harry, but safe with his father in heaven. He had given his young life for yours and mine, and more than redeemed his promise."

HAMILTON, ONT.

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Related to a Hero.

THE greatest gift God does bestow on human frailty, Is a hero's death, a noble one, yea, one of loyalty! But next to that, o'en poorly clad and cold below zero, Its warmth fills each beating heart related to a hero.

Who among you would not be his mother, kind and tender,
To pray the prayers our mothers can, for her brave and true defender,
He left his fireside, home and friends, with our country's noble band,
To face the foe so far away and fight for Motherland.

God's wisest ways may sometimes seem the heaviest
strifes to bear,
But He alone knows best to cause you mourning
rape to wear;
Your head in sorrow may bend low, and your blood
chill to zero,
But your heart should beat the proudest, you're related
to a hero.

TORONTO, ONT.

CONROY LAWLOR.