

JEAN LORILLARD

Pierre Fevrol was just cooking a midday meal in his cabin on the hill overlooking Dawson when Jean Lorillard tapped at his door and entered. At first Pierre did not recognize his old friend and former classmate for he was covered with snow, heavy icicles clung to his moustache and beard, and the greater part of his face was concealed by his furry Yukon cap.

But when Jean had greeted him the two men embraced, after the manner of good Frenchmen in the Klondyke, and then the new arrival stood near the stove, allowing himself to thaw out, while Pierre put an extra couple of slices of bacon into the frypan and added some water to his teapot.

"What's the news from the claim, Jean?" he asked.

"The water came in on us, Pierre, and now our best hole is full." Jean answered quietly, as he dried his face with a soiled red handkerchief.

Pierre almost dropped the bacon he was holding in his hand and for a few moments the two men just looked at one another.

"Yes," Jean continued, "after we cleaned the fire out three days ago, we tried some of the dirt and found it ran over five dollars to the pan. We felt pretty good and Henri lit a big fire that night; but the next morning the hole was half full of water and before I left it was almost to the top. I could have cried, Pierre."

Jean sat down on the edge of a bunk and Pierre said nothing. He knew that the two men had worked like beavers for three months, rising at 3 o'clock every morning and braving the pitiless cold for 13 long hours every day, Sundays excepted; that they had taken out a large dump of only fair pay dirt and that it would be impossible ever to empty the hole when once the water had started in it.

"It's too bad, Jean," he said at last, "and I'm sorry for you both. How about the other hole?"

"We are still working in it," Jean answered, "but the pay is not so good there and I doubt if we shall clean up more than our expenses now."

"Well, it may turn out better than you expect, Jean," Pierre replied. "Now you'd better sit up and have a bite of dinner. A 25-mile walk on an empty stomach ought to have given you an appetite."

Jean moved a stool, roughly made out of a block of spruce, up to the table and the two men faced one another. For the first time the light fell on Jean's face and Pierre asked him if he felt sick.

"I am pretty tired, Pierre," he replied. "I am not much used to walking, and it was last October since I came to Dawson."

"Take some bacon, Jean," Pierre said, "and you'll find the beans just to your liking. They've been boiling nearly three days now and we've got to empty the pot so that I can put a fresh mess on. How do you stand the work, Jean?"

Jean helped himself sparingly to the victuals and shook his head. "I can't stand it much longer, Pierre," he said, and Pierre noticed how weak his voice was, his breath seeming to be forced with difficulty from the very pit of his stomach. "My right arm has almost given out and I can barely lift this cup of tea. The windlass is too much for me, I'm afraid."

"You overdo it, Jean," Pierre answered, shaking his head. Those buckets of yours must hold eight good pans, and that's too much for any fellow to hoist and keep it up without a rest. You should not let Henri fill the buckets so full, Jean."

"Well, we want to get out a big dump, Pierre," Jean answered, "and then Marchant is always on the claim, urging us on to do more."

"That's the worst of having the claim owner live with you, Jean," said Pierre. "You would accomplish more in the end by hoisting lighter buckets and you would not wear yourself out."

When the meal was over and the dishes were washed and the bean pot had been refilled and placed on the stove, the two men lit their pipes, each being occupied with his own thoughts. Jean was the first to break the silence.

"I don't think I'll go back to-morrow, Pierre," he said. "I told Henri I might stay in town for a week so as to get rested, and that if I did not return by to-morrow night he was to take someone on in my place. I am not feeling like the man I used to be, Pierre," and he shook his head sadly.

"Oh, come," Pierre replied, "you are tired out from your long walk and you'll feel all right after a week's rest. I'm glad you told Henri to take a man on in your place. Francois has gone down the river on a stampede with Nigger Jim and he won't be back for ten days, so you can stay up here with me and I'll look after you."

Jean passed his hand across his forehead. "You are very kind, Pierre," he said, "and I shall be glad

to stay with you for a week if you will let me bring my share of grub over. But it is hard having to hire a man to do my work and have to pay out \$60 or \$70 in the spring. There won't be so very much coming to us now. I'm afraid, although we did hope to make \$5,000 apiece. But that was before the water broke in on us."

"It's better than leaving your bones here, Jean," Pierre answered. "You'll make enough to take you home and have a nice little stake besides. There is good pay in your dump and you can still drift for six weeks."

"If I can only hold out for six weeks longer, Pierre, I think I will get through all right," Jean said, as he relit his pipe. "We've got to make a dam then and whipsaw lumber for 12 sluice boxes. It's going to be hard work, but I won't mind that so much. The sun will be shining then, too, and we'll be able to keep easier hours."

"That's it, man," said Pierre, cheerfully. "The sun is getting higher every day and you'll get it on the creek pretty soon. You'll feel much better by that time, Jean."

"And it won't take long for us to get through with the wash up," Jean continued, as if to himself, "and then I'll take the first boat up the river and get home as quickly as I can. It's these six weeks that I fear most, Pierre."

"You'll get over them all right, Jean," said Pierre, and then the two men smoked in silence for some time.

"Has any new mail come in lately, Pierre?" Jean asked, and a ray of hope seemed to light his wan face.

"Yes, Jean," his friend replied. "Two days ago 30 sacks came in and now the police have taken charge again we can expect letters twice a month regularly."

"Did you get any, Pierre?" Jean asked.

"Two old letters," Pierre answered. "Lucille is well and little Jacques wears long trousers now. How proud he must be!"

Jean smiled. "Yes, he must be proud, Pierre," he said. "I think I will go down town and see if there are any letters for me. The last time I heard from Julie she was ill and I have been worrying about her for seven months. My God, how I have been worrying!"

Pierre was on his feet in a moment. "Stay where you are, Jean," he said. "I have to go down town to see Father Judge and I will ask at the postoffice if there is anything for you. You keep the stove going and rest yourself. I will be back in half an hour or so."

"Thank you, Pierre," said Jean. "I am tired. I hope you will bring me a letter."

As Pierre Fevrol walked down the A C trail his face was wreathed in smiles, for he knew that there was a letter for his friend and that it was a late one and came from Julie. He wanted to take the letter to the cabin so that Jean might read it comfortably instead of doing so in the crowded postoffice, his fingers and feet growing cold while he did so.

In the cabin, Jean sat dejectedly, looking out of the little window upon the desolate hills, the frozen Yukon and the snow-covered cabins of Dawson. He knew that he and his partner would barely make wages out of their dump and he feared that he might never see his little home and his loved ones again. He thought of his dear wife, of his romping boys, of blue skies, rich green grasses and flowers and fruits. And Jean was very depressed.

Presently he heard footsteps on the snow outside the cabin, and Pierre entered.

"Here's a letter for you, Jean," he said, before his friend could speak. "I will light the candle and you can read it while I fix up supper."

Jean took the letter and kissed the handwriting on the envelope reverently. Then he opened it and Pierre busied himself with the stove. It took Jean a long time to read that letter, and then he re-read it and re-read parts again.

"Good news?" Pierre asked presently, as he turned over a flapjack.

"Yes, Pierre," Jean answered, faintly. "Julie is well, and the children are well, and an old relative has left the wife a large legacy and she wants me to come home as soon as possible." Then Jean Lorillard hid his face in his hands and wept. "God is very good, Jean," said Pierre, gently after a pause.

"Yes, Pierre, God is very good," Jean answered, as he lifted up his face and smiled.

HOW TO SEAL LETTERS.

It is often very desirable to know how to seal a letter so that it cannot be opened without betraying the fact. Steam or hot water will open envelopes closed with mucilage and even a wafer. A hot iron or a spirit lamp dissolves sealing-wax, an impression in plaster having been taken of the seal. By the combined use of wafer and sealing-wax, however, all attempts to open the letter otherwise than by force can be frustrated. All that is necessary is to close the letter first with a small moist wafer and to pierce the latter with a coarse needle (the same applies to mucilage), whereupon sealing-wax may be used in the usual manner. This seal can neither be opened by dry heat nor by moisture.

SNAKES LIKE CHILDREN

THEY RESPECT THE CONFIDENCE OF LITTLE FOLKS.

Instances of This Characteristic Taken From Life in the Australian Bush.

I have found that children in the bush show very little fear of snakes. The bigger the snake the greater the joy of getting near it and the stronger the desire to play with it. The snake's bright eyes and sinuous motion probably charm. And snakes even the most vicious, respect the confidence, says Chamber's Journal. I have known numbers of cases in which they return it with what must be called affection. A snake that will wiggle away from an adult will placidly survey a child and wait for encouragement to approach.

Here is an instance to my hand. We all knew there was a snake in the house. Glimpses of it had been caught on three separate occasions, but it was too swift in getting under cover. Bush houses in Australia are roughly put together, and odds and ends of various sorts are littered about, with occasional heavy articles against the walls. To move the heavy things is somewhat dangerous unless the light is good and an experienced bushman be of the party. The usual plan is to watch and wait. The sides of the cottage were built of round timber, and there was a likelihood on each occasion that this particular snake had wriggled through and out.

Minnie, a child of three, was more vivacious than usual next morning. She sat on an opossum rug on the floor of the room adjoining the breakfast room, where most of the family were collected. Her chattering excited comment. "Stay," whispered her father; "something strikes me. She's talking to something, and I bet it's the snake."

With his riding whip in his hand he stepped softly to the open door and peeped in. The snake had its head in Minnie's lap and was being fed with little snips of a

SQUARE OF LUMP SUGAR.

It was a black snake of a dangerous size, and the father was doubtful how to act. If alarmed it might viciously attack the child. He surveyed the possible means of escape, and whispered to his wife to call Minnie. The child moved at the call and the snake drew back and made a sudden dive toward a chest of drawers at the opposite wall. That was what was wanted, and the riding whip did the rest.

A friend of mine tells of an incident of a similar kind. At Koon-drook, a little settlement in Victoria, a woman heard her child, 18 months old, laughing as if she were having great fun. The child was supposed to be asleep in bed. The mother went to the room and found the child scrambling over the bed after something she could not see.

That happened several times. Once, however, the mother went in suddenly and heard something drop off the bed. Looking hurriedly under the bed, she distinctly saw a large snake that turned upon her with evident intention to fight. When the husband came home he pulled up the boards of the floor, but there was no sign of the snake. Next day, however, snake and child were discovered lying together on the floor, the child asleep, and the snake apparently so. That night the husband tried a plan. He placed a candle on the floor alongside of the child, and asked the wife to play a slow air on the harmonium. Movements of the snake could be heard, but the rustle was all he vouchsafed.

Next night the child was similarly posted, and the mother tried the effect of working her sewing machine. The sound was too tempting. The snake wriggled to the child with alacrity, and was promptly despatched by the father.

IT WAS A TIGER SNAKE,

nearly five feet in length, and when killed was fondled by the child as an old pet.

We never hear in the bush of a snake biting a young child. On the other hand, numbers of cases are recounted in which mothers have laid infants on the bed in dark rooms and discovered a second later that a snake was underneath the child. The snatching up of the child released the snake, and invariably the trouble ended there.

A governess in charge of a child was fond of sitting among the rocks at the seashore. She read a good deal, and was contented so long as the child played about without making noise. At last, perhaps she had finished her book, it struck her as strange that at that particular place among the rocks the child was always preternaturally quiet. She rose slowly and glided to a projecting boulder, behind which she knew the child had crawled. The child was motionless on hands and knees, and was staring at some small object beside a tuft of withered grass.

The governess watched intently for several seconds. Gradually she made out two beadlike eyes, like little points of fire, and with further inspection was able to define the small head of a snake, similar in color to the withered grass. A hole ran under the rock, and the snake's head alone protruded. The pupils of the child's eyes were dilated, but in other

respects it was half asleep. This would help the claims of those who endow snakes with power to fascinate birds. But there is nothing to indicate that the snake in question meant injury to the child.

A bush clergyman visited me on one occasion, and, dismounting, threw his saddle-tag on the veranda. The flap fell open and a green whip snake popped out. It happened that there was no weapon handy, and the snake disappeared under the house. The clergyman was

GREATLY FRIGHTENED.

He calculated that the snake must have been in his bag during his last mile ride, and reflected that he had put his hand in several times for one article or another. He carefully examined his right hand for marks of fangs, and became reassured when not a single scratch could be discovered.

We kept a sharp lookout for some days for the snake, and renewed acquaintance with it under singular circumstances. Minnie, the child previously alluded to, was overheard giving something like words of command near the stump of an old iron-bark tree a little way from the end of the house. On stealthily approaching I was thunder-struck. I beckoned to other members of the family to tip-toe to me. It was no optical illusion. There, in real fact, was a green whip snake dancing before the child.

The inference was, of course, that it was the clergyman's whip snake. Its motions were most grotesque, its head lolting from side to side and occasionally shooting straight up. It evidently danced for the entertainment of the child, and responded with alacrity to her words. The spell was broken by the incautious movement of one of our party; but though the snake made off it was pursued and despatched.

It is right I should complete this somewhat astounding narrative by adding that the clergyman on his next visit complained of having been made the victim of a practical joke on the previous occasion. The hotel people had placed in his saddle bag a showman's performing snake, not at all dangerous, and altogether too valuable for the fate that befell it.

But when a snake is pleased or desires to please it displays, even in its wild state, gyrations which may be described as dancing. I have seen them, semi-erect, bobbing heads and moving protruding tongues with a near approach to waltz time. They are very fond of going partners with infants in the contents of feeding bottles. While snake and infant take turn about at the bottle the former will bob and curtsy as assiduously as

A POUTING PIGEON.

A storekeeper who had a private cottage adjoining his store closed his garden gate about 11 o'clock at night and returned to the sitting room. It had been burning hot all day and every one was exhausted. He says he was aware of some weight pressing on his shoulders, but was too tired to think about it. On a sofa under the window lay a child with the tube of a feeding bottle between its lips.

The storekeeper soon realized what weighed upon him. A tiger snake leaped from his shoulders to the sofa and went straight for the feeding bottle. At the close of an exciting couple of minutes the members of the household had forgotten their exhaustion and the snake was killed. The storekeeper, in his alarm, made the leap much greater than it really was. It is likely indeed that he stooped toward the sofa. When his senses were so dulled that he did not feel the reptile crawling on him from the gatepost he was not likely to be much of a judge as to how it got off. Snakes do not—in fact, cannot—execute the prodigious jumps with which they are often credited.

But while it can be held that snakes are friendly to young children, on occasions showing what may be called affection for them, they can be charged with harboring unstinted enmity for boys and girls of from 8 to 10 years up. The antipathy appears to be mutual. The bush chronicles an endless war between them. Numbers of boys die of snakebite year by year. When the bite is on finger or toe the average bush boy chops the member off. It is quite a common thing to find two or three of a selector's family short of a finger or toe on this account. It happens that devoted friends of childhood become implacable enemies later on.

BRACKEN AS FOOD.

The Japanese have worthily demonstrated that they are well versed in the art of warfare; now they seek to instruct us in the art of eating. At the Japan Club, in Covent Garden, London, Baron Suyematsu gave a demonstration of the uses to which bracken—the ordinary common fern—may be put in gastronomy. The Baron explained that in Japan and in China the plant is in universal use as an article of food, and seeing that it grew so plentifully in England he considered it his duty to bring the suggestion forward. Dainty samples of the "delicacy" were handed round, and pronounced to be good eating; and those present were much interested by the Baron's description of the methods followed in cooking it.

He—"I would lay the world at your feet." She (haughtily)—"My dear sir, it is there already. Don't assume credit for the law of gravitation."

CURSED TREE SHUNNED

MEXICAN PEONS AVOID SHADE OF BRANCHES.

Said to Have Been Planted by a Man in League With Satan.

Because of the many fatal accidents that have occurred under a huge tree that grows in the Hacienda ranch, in the Zamora district, Michoacan, Mexico, peasants of the region are growing more and more superstitious about its supposed fatal omen and they begin to call it "arbol maldito" (cursed tree).

The tree is supposed to be over 75 years old, and is said to have been planted by a man who, because of his enormous crimes and his forgetfulness of the divine law, was swallowed up by the earth. The man never went to mass, never confessed, did not have the image of a saint in his house, did not carry a rosary around his neck, and never made the sign of the cross. There was not a beggar in the town who had ever received a "tlaco chiquito" (old coins equivalent to 1½ cents) from him. He never gave anything for the church and never took off his hat when he met a padrecito on the street.

It was rumored that he was responsible for many murders and other atrocious crimes, but he was never in jail, neither could he be incarcerated because he had a

COMPACT WITH THE DEVIL,

and whenever he invoked his satanic majesty the latter rendered him either invisible to human eyes or smaller than an ant, so that he could easily escape danger. He had no friends nor relatives, because he was shunned by all.

Two things he loved—birds and trees. He planted numerous tress and fed big flocks of birds that knew him and came to his home every morning to pick the crumbs of bread which he threw in the patio.

Many years ago, and this is well remembered by the peasants, it was Good Friday. Everybody in town had attended the religious services of the morning and they were going to their homes, when a terrific noise was heard. They rushed to the street where it came from to find out what it was, and saw how the earth had opened under the cursed man's feet. He was enveloped by thick flames and smoke and disappeared beneath the surface of the earth. This was considered a most deserved punishment.

While the faithful were in church the cursed man was loafing around, and, having seen a big crucifix upon an altar erected on the street, as was done in those days, he placed a burning cigarette in the lips of the image. Scarcely had he made eight or ten steps when he was engulfed by the inferno.

That day all the trees he planted, except the cursed one, dried up, and all the birds he had fed died.

An attempt was made to cut down the tree that had not dried up, but the man who made the attempt dropped dead upon stepping upon the shadow of its foliage. The man's body had to be left there to be

EATEN UP BY THE CROWS,

because nobody had the courage to approach and remove it.

Since that day numerous persons have met a tragic death under that tree. A pedestrian who went under it for shade on a hot summer day was bitten by a snake and died in two hours. Three men, on different occasions, sought shelter from rain under its branches, and were struck by lightning. A woman who was hanging some clothes to dry from the trunk of the tree was attacked and killed by a billygoat that came from nobody knows where and that was never seen again. Two years ago a little boy who was riding a burro innocently led his animal to the tree. The burro threw him off and kicked him to death. The last victim of this fatal tree was a man named Melquiades Arevalo who, three of four days ago, during a heavy rainstorm, ran under the tree for shelter; like his predecessors on such occasions, he was struck by lightning.

The horror that peasants have for this tree is so great that peons refuse to work on the fields half a mile around it. Prospero Garcia, the owner of the ranch where that tree grows, is said to have made up his mind to have it blown up with dynamite, but he has been unable to find a man who is willing to do the work, so it seems probable that he will have to do it himself.

FRUIT TREES ON HIGHWAYS.

One of the ways for beautifying the country in the Grand Duchy of Baden without any ultimate expense to the taxpayer is the planting of fruit trees along the Government highways. These are cherry, apple, pear, and in some places walnut trees. The trees are planted 32ft. apart along each side of the road, and when the fruit is ready for market it is sold at public auction on the trees, the purchaser being obliged to harvest it at his own expense.

Bore—"Halloa, old man, what are you going to do?" Glum Friend—"Nothing." Bore—"How about a walk? I think it would do us both good." Glum Friend—"So do I. Good-bye!"