

The Free Press Short Story

THE GIFT CABIN

GERTRUDE NORTON LISBEE

A FEW years ago when I was making a tour through what had not long ago been an Indian country, in company with some friends, we came upon a substantial double log cabin set in the crook of a stream in the midst of a grove of trees. We were tired and hungry, and when we presented ourselves at the door, we were met on the threshold by a man of middle age who bade us enter and make ourselves at home.

When I asked him if we could have something to eat, he said: "Shore you can, Madam, if you can eat the cookin' up an' old settler that hain't seen any civilized grub fer more years than ye can count on yer fingers."

We followed him into a wide, well-lighted room that served as dining room and kitchen, where we were given seats and told to wait until he could serve us. "Josquin, my Mexican cook, is away," he said by way of apology, as he bustled himself over the range, dropping slabs of ham into a big skillet and pushing the coffee pot onto the stove, "an' so I'm doin' my own work."

While we were eating the good ham and eggs and the dark, fragrant bread, he told us the following story:

"I've bin here nigh on thirty years," he began. "An' I seen some pretty hard times—times when a piece of dry bread and a slice of bacon looked liked a spread at Delmonico's. I hain't had a visitor for a long time, an' maybe I'm doin' more 'n my share of the talking, but my talkin' machinery is gittin' sort of rusty fer want of use, an' I'm takin' the first chance to limber it up."

"Well, I guess I was one of the first settlers in the Black Feather Valley, and that was years before any whites could get a title to any of this land, as it was the property of the Indians. There was bad men in those days, an' it was no uncommon thing fer some of them to drop down in this region so as to get out of the main travelled roads of the law. I was little more than a boy when I came here, being but nineteen. Dick Barry was come with me, was bery twenty."

"We came with Dick's uncle who had a land lease from the Indians, and was raising cattle. There was talk, at the time of the land coming in, of settlement before long, and so Dick and I took claims, by permission of the Indian chief, with the understanding, of course, that we should vacate if the Indians needed the land."

"Dick and I built our cabins right together, almost being near the dividing line, an' we made a sort of make-believe at farmin' and cattle raisin' till such time as the land should be open to settlement."

"Our claims lay out on the open prairie, almost a mile from the nearest timber, an' as winter approached, we saw the need of laying in a supply of fuel. But when we tried to cut some wood at the nearest point where there was timber, we made the acquaintance of the 'Bad Man.'"

"This feller lived in the crook of the creek, and no one far or near seemed to know anything about him. He was a man of some forty years, an' he wore a big, bushy beard which we surmised was kept to conceal his features. Anyhow, we had him marked down as a fugitive from justice who was hiding away in that neck of the woods to keep out of the reach of the law."

"It was when we attempted to cut wood along the creek that we really made this shanty man's acquaintance. He came down almost at a run, till within a dozen rods of us; then he stopped an' put up his hand. We was not sure there wasn't a pistol in the hand, and when he spoke his voice cut through the silence like a crack of a whip. He uttered but two words, 'You git!'"

"We did not wait for him to give further instructions as to how our exit should be accomplished. He claimed the land on which the timber stood, we 'flew, though he, too, was on Indian land. We saw him later, with his heavy cart and big, stout horse, hauling wood to his cabin."

"Well, as we couldn't get wood there, we had to look elsewhere. An' Dick went over to his uncle's ranch to find out if he had some wood on his lease we could get. He had, but as it was necessary to haul it ten miles, we hesitated to tackle the job."

"The weather was exceedingly fine, an' all through November we went about in our shirt sleeves, thinking little of our winter's supply of wood. It was late December before we got ready to go to work on the wood, having been busy helping Dick's uncle with his fall roundup."

"When we came back home, we were ready to get up our wood, and at the same time lay in a stock of provisions. We had planned to go to town the next day; but that very evening the blizzard came!"

"About three in the afternoon I see a bluish, ashy-colored cloud lay in a dark ribbon along the horizon in the northwest, but there was no wind, and the air was as balmy as May."

"Two or three miles away, as I can reckon, though we could see what looked like a gray mist. It came so fast that we just stood watchin' it. As it drew nearer we could see that there was wind behind it, and here an' there, as if some giant was jugglin' with 'em, a

"No, I won't," he says. "I am warm and sleepy." "With main force I dragged him to his feet an' hustled him to the shanty, rushed him in and rubbed his face and hands with snow. By this time he began to waken to the truth, an' we both realized more than ever the peril of our situation."

"As the afternoon was drawing to a close, and clouds began to gather in the northwest, our hearts almost sunk in us. I tell you, we thought we was about at the end of things, unless God sent some of the help we'd both been prayin' fer. The sun was near its set when I see something dark away out across the prairie in the direction of the creek. Just a black blur in the frosty air, but in a little while I saw it was movin'. I called Dick to the window, an' we both looked. Somethin' was comin' across the snow, but what it could be we could not guess. At it drew nigher, we discovered that it was a mover's wagon with a single horse hitched to it, an' it was makin' right fer the cabin."

"Who could be venturin' out on such a day as this?" we asked ourselves. In a little time the cart drew up to the cabin, and a man, muffled like an arctic explorer, got out an' frosty air, but in a little while I saw it was movin'. I called Dick to the window, an' we both looked. Somethin' was comin' across the snow, but what it could be we could not guess. At it drew nigher, we discovered that it was a mover's wagon with a single horse hitched to it, an' it was makin' right fer the cabin."

"I reckon you could 'a' knocked Dick an' me down with a feather. I held out my hand to give him welcome; though I knew we had but little to offer. 'Come up to the fire an' warm,' I invited, but he only stamped the snow from his boots, an' said: 'You boys git what trepe ye want an' tumble inter my wagon out thar. I've got it half full of hay an' a couple of buffalo robes. I took it that ye didn't have any more sense than ter stay hyar an' freeze an' starve while a neighbor had grub an' fuel.' So this was the man who had run us away from the woods an' whom we took to be a fugitive from justice!"

"Well, we crawled into his cart, takin' some blankets, an' we set out fer the stranger's cabin in the woods. Say, I never seed anything so nice in my life as the blazin' logs that old-fashioned Indian chief had shown him friend-ship an' had given him permission to live there as long as he pleased. To repay the chief's kindness, he did what he could to keep off the plunderin' whites who often cut the Indian's timber an' destroyed it."

"When Oscar Merrill got ready to return to the East, he gave his improvements, includin' his cabin, to Dick an' me, an' this is the cabin yer in right this blessed mornin'. Yes, Oscar Merrill was a good man, an' I want to tell you that an Indian always knows a good man."

"The roar of the wind, as it stormed about the shanty, and sent the sleet through every crack an' crevice, was awful. There was times when we was afraid the shanty would be blown over, an' I tell you that would have been dreadful, beyond anything that could have happened."

"To us, shut up there in that frail box shanty, the day was a gloomy one. The snow continued to fall in blinding clouds, an' everywhere the drifts grew, like magic. When we stepped out to replenish our supply of fuel, we found ourselves waist deep in a drift that had formed about the shanty like a wall."

"It was impossible to see more than a hundred yards, an' I reckon there never was two boys in a much worse predicament than Dick an' me. There was no neighbor within several miles, exceptin' the 'Bad Man,' as we called the stranger on the creek, an' even his cabin was out of reach of us, if he was really there yet, being more than a mile. Even to save ourselves from freezein' or starvin', I don't think Dick or me would have called on him if it had been possible to reach his place."

"The day ended dark an' forbiddin'. We sat about the stove till about ten an' then crawled into bed. As soon as the fire burnt down, the cold was awful, an' I think we'd have froze if we had stayed in bed. We got up an' rekindled the fire an' we slept no more that night."

"The next mornin' was somethin' to make us afraid. The cold was so intense that we could scarcely feel the fire when the stove was not red-hot. The snow was still falling thinly, an' the wind had gone down in a measure. But as far as the eye could reach there was drifts an' drifts, piled everywhere, with here an' there a splash of black where the burnt prairie had been swept as clean as a floor."

"By night our wood would be gone, an' so we must make preparations ter git more, an' that could only be done by knockin' my shanty to pieces an' usin' it fer fuel. We went to work an' took part of the boards from one end an' reduced them to fire wood, carrin' them over to Dick's shanty. By the time we got this done, Dick found one of his ears was frost bit, an' I had to stick my hands in the snow after I got in the shanty so as to prevent their bein' froze."

"It was a mighty dark night fer Dick an' me, an' we slept but little. It was so cold that our breath was a white fog in front of our faces, an' I made up my mind right then that I'd never trust myself another winter in a box shanty. The next mornin' we had nothing but some hard bread to eat, an' that would soon be gone; then the cold would do the rest."

"As the day wore on an' no favorable change in the weather took place, we felt about as blue as we had ever felt in all our lives. The situation was tragic, an' I could see by Dick's face that he was pretty near ready ter give 'up.'"

"Along in the afternoon, as we was bringin' some wood from the shanty, he sank down in a little huddle on a board. 'I guess it's gittin' warmer,' he says, fer I ain't half as cold as I was. I ain't cold at all,' he added. I knew in an instant what the matter was. He was freezein'! I grasped him by the shoulder and shook him roughly. 'Come with me, Dick,' I said, 'you'll freeze to death if you stay here!'"

DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL FARMS Weekly News Letter

Beauty Parlors for Dairy Cows An important step in clean milk production is to clip the udders, hips, and flanks of the cows, thus making the daily brushing much easier and more effective. Clipping of the tail, head, neck, and shoulders adds to the appearance of the cows, and aids in getting rid of lice, which multiply quickly at this time if not promptly eradicated. A good wet, or powder shampoo repeated in ten days time will do the trick.

Milk Cooling During the Colder Months Do not attempt to cool milk by setting the cans out-of-doors, even in freezing weather. It takes far too long for the milk to cool to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, for air is a good insulator but a poor cooling medium. Use a cooling tank with water as cold as possible, and keep the level up to the necks of the cans.

Watch the Seed Fairs The adaptability of different varieties of grain to different soil and climatic conditions is reflected to no small extent in the degree of development attained by individual kernels. Varieties which consistently win high places at our seed fairs are therefore likely to be at least reasonably well suited to the district from which they come. Moral: Watch the winners at the seed fairs!

Finish the Fall Ploughing In the few days that may remain before freeze-up, the ploughing of any remaining clay land intended for corn, turnips, mangels, potatoes or grain crops will yield profitable returns, according to experience gained on the Dominion Illustration Stations. The action of the frosts and various weathering agencies improves the texture of such soils, assures a better and more easily prepared seed-bed, renders stored up plant food available and combats insects destructive to farm crops.

Preparing Upholstering Kow When preparing upholstery for from flax straw careful attention should be given the following timely advice from the Economic Fibre Division of the Dominion Experimental Farms: Make sure that the straw is dry and free from weeds or other foreign material. No. 1 grade tow should be passed through the brakes three times and thoroughly shaken each time. See that the tow is free from moisture before baling and then put in dry storage.

Persian Balm imparts a rare charm and distinction to the woman who uses it. Fragrant as a flower, deliciously cool to the skin, it always results in complexions delightfully young and lovely. Indispensable to every dainty woman. As a powder base for oily-textured skins or as a beautifying lotion, it is unrivalled. Tones and stimulates the skin. Recommended also to soften and make the hands flawlessly white.

GEMS OF THOUGHT. Conversation is an exercise very dangerous to the understanding when practised in any large measure as an art or amusement.—Taylor's Notes from Books.

It is when you come close to a man in conversation that you discover what his real abilities are. To make speech in a public assembly is a knack.—Dr. Johnson.

By all means show that you are alive; but do it not by kicking, but by pulling."

Worry is interest paid on trouble before it falls due.—Dean Inge.

The greatest happiness comes from the greatest activity.—C. N. Boove.

"I have generally found that the man who is good at an excuse is good for nothing else.—Franklin.

Many of the most precious rewards of life do not lie on the side of material gain.—Calvin Coolidge.

Some men are optimists until they judge their neighbors, and others are pessimists until they judge themselves.—G. T. Evans.

There's not a leaf falls upon the ground But holds some joy of silence or of sound.—Samuel L. Blanchard.

Real happiness is cheap enough; yet how dearly we pay for the counterfeit!—Hosea Ballou.

Happiness lies in the consciousness we have it, and by no means in the way the future keeps its promises.—George Sand.

Leave your mistakes behind you, but don't forget how you made them.—General Booth.

Happiness consists in activity; such is the constitution of our nature; it is a running stream and not a stagnant pool.

EGG LAYING CONTESTS Completion of the 14th Canadian and 13th Ontario Contests

The completion this year of the 14th Canadian Egg Laying Contest and the 13th Ontario Contest has been marked by most gratifying results. These contests between pens of ten birds each have more than justified their purposes of stimulating interest in the breeding of birds for egg production and of providing a media of qualification for the registration of poultry. Canada, it may be remembered, is the only country in the world where egg-laying contests have been so standardized as to make an undertaking of this kind possible in a national way, and also where poultry registration on the production basis, backed by the Federal Government, has been put into effect. Incidentally Canadian poultry exhibited at the Fifth World's Poultry Congress at Rome this year were the only birds with Government certificates.

The 14th Canadian Contest this year has in many respects been the most successful yet held. The most outstanding and important improvement being the increase in the number of birds which passed the "Registration" qualification. This year's figure was 185 as against 118 last year. Better results were obtained among the individual birds records, and pen totals also showed a considerable increase.

The winners of the contest are the White Leghorns in Pen 43, belonging to the Manor Farm, Clarkson, Ont. These birds came to notice during the early weeks of the contest, gradually improving their position until the lead was obtained during the 41st week and held for the remainder of the contest. They won by 28.6 points with a total record of 2646.9 points for eggs.

The second pen are the White Leghorns, Pen 31 from Hollywood Poultry Farm, Woodinville, Wash., U.S.A. This pen commenced to figure prominently during the 14th week and obtained the place in which they finished during the 44th week, their final record was 2618.3 point for 2528 eggs, which placed them 28.7 points ahead of the next birds.

W. S. Hall's White Leghorns in Pen 32 obtained the third place with 2599.3 points for 2396 eggs. Good work for many weeks gave these birds their final standing which was held by 69.9 points.

The last few days of work gave A. J. Urquhart's Barred Rocks the advantage over G. S. Taylor's White Leghorns for fourth place in the year's work.

The records in the 13th Ontario Egg Laying Contest were closed on Monday, October 23rd, 1933. Excellent work has been given throughout the year and from it has been the outstanding Ontario contest conducted at Ottawa. The pens were particularly free from sickness and the good health maintained has contributed toward the record results obtained.

The most gratifying result is the largely increased number of birds which have qualified for Registration. This year's figure is 241 against last year's 177 and only 100 of two years ago. Pen records were much improved and an outstanding individual bird record of 378.9 points for 321 eggs—an all-time Ottawa record—to lead a list of very much higher individual records.

The final pen results of this contest could be foreseen for some time past as the positions of the first three pens did not change since the 18th week.

A French scientist has developed a method of forecasting cyclones based on the phases and declination of the moon and its distance from the earth.

SCOTTISH SHEEP

According to the fourth census of agricultural production in Scotland, in 1930-31, a report of which will be issued shortly, the steady increase in the number of sheep since 1920, when stocks were at their lowest, is one of the marked features of post-war agriculture in Scotland. In 1931 a total of 7,831,000 sheep was returned, the larger number in forty years. In 1932 a still larger number of sheep was recorded. The wool clip of 1931-27,300,000 lbs. — including skin wool, the value of which is included, under mutton, naturally kept pace with the increase in flocks.

"You cannot tell what the scientists will do in the next war except that they are bound to make a mess of it.—H. G. Wells.

A QUICK THINKER

"Mrs. Briggs," said the new boarder at breakfast, "who owns those ferryboats I tripped over coming down the stairs just now?"

"The landlady shot him a fierce look. 'Ferryboats, indeed,' she cried. 'I'll have you understand they are my shoes.' The boarder gulped uneasily. 'I didn't say ferryboats,' he hastily replied. 'I said fairy boots.'"

SHE DID AND HE DIDN'T "How does it happen," asked the teacher of the new scholar, "that your name is Allen and your mother's name is Brown?"

"Well," replied the boy after a moment's thought, "you see, it's this way: she married again and I didn't."

"No, I don't see the youngsters for months on end now they're settled in the city, but I'll tell you in on a secret, Joe. I visit with them every week by telephone. There's nothing like it to take the edge off a separation." Illustration of a man and woman talking on a telephone.

For 30 cents you can telephone about 100 miles by making an "any-one" call (station-to-station) after 8.30 p.m. See list of rates in front of directory. Illustration of a telephone booth.

"Royal Scot" in Rugged Setting. Illustration of a steam train crossing a trestle bridge over a deep canyon. Text: Puffing her way along the tumbling Fraser canyon through roaring trestles and through cavernous tunnels, the "Royal Scot" is shown here as she approaches North Bend, B.C., at the start of her crossing of the Canadian Rockies over the scenic main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The London, Midland & Fraser River rushing through its rocky caverns to the Pacific, shows the kind of country this famous British train conquered on her history-making trip over the Canadian Pacific. Canadians continued to give the Royal Scot a warm-hearted welcome. Western Canadian cities turned out almost en masse to cheer and examine the visitor from the Mother Land.

Buck That Cough or Cold With Buckley's. It costs only a few cents to knock out a cough or cold with BUCKLEY'S MIXTURE, because Buckley's is so supremely good that only a few doses are needed to subdue the toughest cough or cold. And Buckley's can be diluted with three times its volume of water making it go still further. Will not upset your stomach. Just safe, sure, pleasant. Play safe. Refuse substitutes. Buckley's is sold everywhere.