



GETTING CHRISTMAS DINNER ON A RANCH

By THEODORE ROOSEVELT

ONE DECEMBER, while I was out on my ranch, so much work had to be done that it was within a week of Christmas before we were able to take any thought for the Christmas dinner. The winter set in late that year, and there had been comparatively little cold weather, but one day the ice on the river had been sufficiently strong to enable us to haul up a wagonload of flour, with enough salt pork to last through the winter, and a very few tins of canned goods, to be used at special feasts. We had some bushels of potatoes, the heroic victors of a struggle for existence in which the rest of our garden vegetables had succumbed to drought, frost and grasshoppers; and we also had some wild plums and dried elk venison. But we had no fresh meat, and so one day my foreman and I agreed to make a hunt on the morrow.

Accordingly one of the cowboys rode out in the frosty afternoon to fetch in the saddleband from the plateau three miles off, where they were grazing. It was after sunset when he returned.

It was necessary to get to the hunting grounds by sunrise, and it still lacked a couple of hours of dawn when the foreman wakened me as I lay asleep beneath the buffalo robes. Dressing hurriedly and breakfasting on a cup of coffee and some mouthfuls of bread and jerked elk meat, we slipped out to the barn, threw the saddles on the horses, and were off.

The air was bitterly chill; the cold had been severe for two days, so that the river ice would again bear horses. Beneath the light covering of powdery snow we could feel the rough ground like wrinkled iron under the horses' hoofs. There was no moon, but the stars shone beautifully down through the cold, clear air, and our willing horses galloped swiftly across the long bottom on which the ranch house stood, threading their way deftly among the clumps of sagebrush.

A mile off we crossed the river, the ice cracking with noises like pistol shots as our horses picked their way gingerly over it. On the opposite side was a dense jungle of bull-berry bushes, and on breaking through this we found ourselves galloping up a long, winding valley, which led back many miles into the hills. The crannies and little side ravines were filled with brushwood and groves of stunted ash. By this time there was a faint flush of gray in the east, and as we rode silently along we could make out dimly the tracks made by the wild animals as they had passed and re-passed in the snow. Several times we dismounted to examine them. A



We Dismounted to Examine Them.

couple of coyotes, possibly frightened by our approach, had trotted and loped up the valley ahead of us, leaving a trail like that of two dogs; the sharper, more delicate footprints of a fox crossed our path; and outside one long patch of brushwood a series of round imprints in the snow betrayed where a bob-cat—as plainsmen term the small lynx—had been lurking around to try to pick up a rabbit or a prairie fox.

As the dawn reddened, and it became light enough to see objects some little way off, we began to sit erect in our saddles and to scan the hillsides sharply for sight of feeding deer. Eitherto we had seen no deer tracks save inside the bullberry bushes by the river, and we knew that the deer that lived in that impenetrable jungle were cunning whitetails which in such a place could be hunted only by aid of a hound. But just before sunrise we came on three lines of heart-

shaped footmarks in the snow, which showed where as many deer had just crossed a little plain ahead of us. They were walking leisurely, and from the lay of the land we believed that we should find them over the ridge, where there was a brush coulee.

Riding to one side of the trail, we topped the little ridge just as the sun flamed up, a burning ball of crimson, beyond the snowy waste at our backs. Almost immediately afterwards my companion leaped from his horse and



Turning to Go Into the Log House.

raised his rifle, and as he pulled the trigger I saw through the twigs of a brush patch on our left the erect, darted head of a young black-tailed doe as she turned to look at us, her great mule-like ears thrown forward. The ball broke her neck, and she turned a complete somersault downhill, while a sudden smashing of underbrush told of the flight of her terrified companions.

We both laughed and called out "dinner" as we sprang down toward her, and in a few minutes she was dressed and hung up by the hind legs on a small ash tree. The entrails and viscera we threw off to one side, after carefully poisoning them from a little bottle of strychnine which I had in my pocket. Almost every cattleman carries poison and neglects no chance of leaving out wolf bait, for the wolves are sources of serious loss to the unfenced and unhusked flocks and herds. In this instance we felt particularly revenged because it was but a few days since we had lost a fine yearling heifer. The tracks on the hillside where the carcass lay when we found it told the story plainly. The wolves, two in number, had crept up close before being discovered, and had then raced down on the astounded heifer almost before she could get fairly started. One brute had hamstringed her with a snap of his vise-like jaws, and once down, she was torn open in a twinkling.

No sooner was the sun up than a warm west wind began to blow in our faces. The weather had suddenly changed, and within an hour the snow was beginning to thaw and to leave patches of bare ground on the hillsides. We left our coats, with our horses and struck off on foot for a group of high buttes cut up by the cedar canyons and gorges, in which we knew the old bucks loved to lie. It was noon before we saw anything more. We lunched at a clear spring—not needing much time, for all we had to do was to drink a draught of icy water and munch a strip of dried venison. Shortly afterward, as we were moving along a hillside with silent caution, we came to a sheer canyon of which the opposite face was broken by little ledges grown up with wind-beaten cedars. As we peeped over the edge, my companion touched my arm and pointed silently to one of the ledges, and instantly I caught the glint of a buck's horns as he lay half behind an old tree trunk. A slight shift of position gave me a fair shot slanting down between his shoulders, and though he struggled to his feet he did not go 50 yards after receiving the bullet.

This was all we could carry. Leading the horses around we packed the buck behind my companion's saddle, and then rode back for the doe, which I put behind mine. But we were not destined to reach home without a slight adventure. When we got to the river we rode boldly on the ice, heedless of the thaw; and about mid-way there was a sudden, tremendous crash, and men, horses and deer were scrambling together in the water amid slabs of floating ice. However, it was shallow and no worse results followed than some hard work and a chilly bath. But what cared we? We were returning triumphant with our Christmas dinner.

Death and Life

A Vision at Christmas

By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

IN THE early days of men the Lord sent two powers on earth to have dominion over them. One of these was Death—the other Life.

The stern front of Life showed what he really was: unmerciful, exacting, swift to demand obedience to a thousand laws, swift to punish with the keen sword of pain when those laws were broken.

His eyes were the eyes of a war-lord; his hand as cold as iron—and as strong.

The tasks he set were many. Few of these were to the liking of the children of men, though some thinkers perceived that out of these heavy tasks came strength, also that if one wrestled with them stoutly one might even master Life himself and compel him to graciousness.

Now the other power—Death—was a woman.

Tall she was, but so perfectly formed that her height was no blemish. Sleepy-eyed she was, but her slow, sweet smile was so infinitely tender and lovely that in the midst of their tasks men stopped to gaze on her as she passed.

At last one of the young men followed her. She spoke to him—her voice being that unspeakable music which not even a violin can outsing—and the young man returned into the fields of Life no more.

Then a little child, weary of flower-gathering, pulled at her garment's hem, and all the workers held their breath, waiting to see what Death would do; for Life had painted her in very evil colors.

But Death lifted the child and laid her on her own deep bosom and sang to her.

As she sang the child slept, and an exquisite smile lingered on its lips, as though its visions were very fair.

Then Death held out the child that the workers might see, and cried:

"Oh, ye who labor, beset with unending toil, see ye how I have blessed the child? Never more shall the heat of summer vex her, nor the cold of winter! I have made her deaf to sorrow and unmoved by the vibrations ye call joy. Forever shall her brow go unwrinkled, and because she hath chosen me I will give her the key to Heaven's immortal gates."

And a worker cried:

"Ye have blessed the child because she was your chosen one?"

The cry was a question.

Said Death dreamily:

"As I gave the child peace, so would I give it to all who come to me—trusting me wholly!"

Looking out across the blazing fields she stretched her rounded arms and cried: "Ye are all mine! Lover of souls am I!"

And with one accord they threw down their tools and followed her into a far land, beyond the domain of Life.

Now Life was vexed exceedingly by the unfinished task. He went straight-

way to the Lord and complained how Death had led away part of his workers.

And the Lord sent a great white angel unto the remainder and forbade them, through the angel, to hearken unto Death until they could serve Life no longer.

For the Lord knew that the stern dominion of Life must be, for the sake of the men he hoped to complete.

But only a few, a very few, of the children of men obeyed the angel. Let Death but pass the toilers, and her beauty was so great they continued to desert their posts and follow after her.

Then Life cried unto the Lord with a great voice:

"Death seduces my servants!"

And the Lord said:

"Deal with Death as thou wilt."

Therefore Life seized on Death and cut away her perfumed locks, and put on her a painted mask, most hideous to behold. And he sealed the lips of Death, saying, "Be thou dumb, and be thou no longer known as a woman." With this he cast over Death's wonderful form a black mantle, like a pall, and on it Life painted:

"This is the King of Terrors."

Then he sent Death forth, and thereafter whenever she came near the workers they fled from her and cried aloud unto Life:

"Matters not how hard thy tasks, oh dear Life, if thou wilt but save us from this frightful Death!"

And Life said unto the Lord:

"Have I not done well?"

And he answered in exceeding sorrow:

"Needs must thy work on Death stand. And this because of the weakness of men who were seduced by her beauty and who heeded not my angel's voice. Yet very differently had I planned for my people. For in the beginning I set the loveliness of Death plainly before them, that they might endure their tasks happily, knowing how sweet the end would be. But they have defeated my wisdom. On their own heads be it!"

And Life went his way, satisfied. Thereafter, when a child or man became useless to him he cast it into the arms of Death, because its task was finished.

And the soul of Death sang to the soul of the mortal given her, though her lips were dumb, and she blessed it with an infinite blessing and bore it away.

But the toilers mourned greatly that Death should have dominion over one of their number, and they turned the more desperately to Life, who smiled sternly and was content.

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A Christmas Hymn.

O Christ, upon whose natal morn
Rejoicing angels sang,
When o'er the blue Judean hills
Their heavenly anthems rang!

O Christ, to whom with gifts from far
Came shepherd, sage and king,
Our choicest gifts on this glad morn,
Our hearts, we humbly bring!

Grant us to follow Thee in love,
Nor from Thy path to stray,
Thy blessed feet have gone before
And glorified the way.

We join the angel choirs that sing
This happy morn again,
"Glory to God, the Lord Most High,
God-will and peace to men!"
—Martha C. Howe.



IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN W.D. WEBB

Tis the night before Christmas, and all through the house
Not a creature is stirring—not even a mouse.

Old Santa comes driving his reindeer, whose hoofs
Go clinkety-clack as they race on the roofs.

His sleigh is heaped high with the wonderful toys
He brings for the good little girls and the boys.

He stops at a chimney and takes up his pack,
And sings as he swings it high up to his back.

But just as he starts to go, suddenly down
A stranger steps up with a villain's frown.

And ere good old Santa the chimney can vault
The stranger lifts up his gloved hand and says: "Halt!"

"These toys you are bringing into our fair land
Are wholly illegal. Do you understand?"

The laws we've enacted must all be obeyed,
And you can't go on till the duty is paid.

Don't try to evade it, or soon, truth to tell,
A smuggler you'll be in a gloomy old cell.

Poor Santa was taken aback by this news
And trembled with wrath from his cap to his shoes.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "Can I trust my own ears?
I've been doing this for these hundreds of years.

I've been bringing gladness to girls and to boys—
Stand back. I must make them their dolls and their toys."

Alas! In a moment a squad of police
Seized Santa, and ere he started struggles could cease.

They gazed at him and gazed at him and took him away—
And that is the reason why the Christmas day

The stockings all empty and mournfully layed
Because the new tariff had never been paid.

A CHRISTMAS ACROSTIC.

CHRISTMAS is not only a mile mark of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination; it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavors is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well he should be condemned to the fashion of the smiling face.—Robert Louis Stevenson.

HOW many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does the Christmas time awaken! Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveler thousands of miles away, back to his own fireside and his quiet home. Fill your glass again, with a merry face and contented heart. Our life on it, but your Christmas shall be merry and your New Year a happy one.—Charles Dickens.

REMEMBER that as surely as in that baby life at Bethlehem there lay the power which has run through all the world; the power which makes Judea burn like a star forever; the power which has transfused history; the power which has made millions of men its joyous servants; the power of the millennium yet to be, so surely in the humblest soul's humble certainty that it does love Christ, there lies enfolded all the possibility of the most perfect sainthood.—Phillips Brooks.

IT IS a good thing to observe Christmas Day. The mere marking of times and seasons, when men agree to stop work and make merry together, is a wise and wholesome custom. It helps one to feel the supremacy of the common life over the individual life. It reminds a man to set his own little watch, now and then, by the great clock of humanity, which runs on sun time.—Henry Van Dyke.

SUPPOSE a note came on Christmas Day saying not, "I send my love and best wishes with this post-box," but, "I want you to know that your patience, or courage, or tenderness, during this last year, will help me to live more bravely and courageously this year." What a Christmas present the receipt of such a letter would be to any one of us. What a gift for any one of us to send to the human heart that has given us courage for the burden and heat of the day.—Margaret Deland.

THE season of regenerated feeling—the season of kindling, not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart. He who can turn churlishly away from contemplating the felicity of his fellow beings, and can sit down darkling and repining in his loneliness when all around is joyful, may have his moments of selfish gratification, but he wants the genial and social sympathies which constitute the charm of a Merry Christmas.—Washington Irving.

MY CHRISTMAS wish for all is that they may taste the sweetness of love, enter into the joys of friendship, and know the divine beneficence of helping someone at present less fortunate than themselves. In these words are we to find the living spirit of the human and eternal Christmas. The universal gladness of Christmas is proportioned to the extent of its selfishness. People are happy, not in what they get so much as in what they give.—Minot J. Savage.

AND there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory