

THE HAPPY WINTER OF 1882

The winter of 1882 was a very happy one in old Transalpine. Mr. Benjamin Soul came from the west to visit for the winter. Florentine Fiske, who will be remembered as "Tine", came from Oregon to spend the winter in Transalpine. She brought with her, daughter Gusta and son Frank.

The school was taught that winter by Miss Nellie Farrar. Miss Farrar was very attractive and loved by all. She had brown eyes and hair as black as the raven's wing, which she wore down her back in thick braids tied with bright red ribbons.

There was a Christmas Tree and entertainment held that year at the school house. The tree was decorated with cotton batting, cranberries and ornaments made by hand in the school room. Before the presents were called, a play was given on a stage which had been previously erected for the occasion. Miss Georgie Clay, daughter of Daniel and Helen Page Clay had the leading part in the play and greatly impressed the audience with her remarkable talent and fitness for her part. It has been said that Georgie displayed considerable dramatic talent and would doubtless have been successful in the theatrical world had she pursued this field of endeavor.

Allie Messer was present as the guest of Certie Fiske. Olive Clay drew a negro Dinnah off the tree and was greatly displeased and disgusted. There were no real worth-while presents. Most of the packages contained articles which had been made at home and placed on the tree for a joke and a jolly good time.

There was a quartet in Transalpine this year which was made up as follows:

Luther Clay, who sang bass, Edward Yelland, who sang tenor, Gertie Fiske, who sang soprano and Nellie Ferrar who sang alto.

During this particular winter, Fred Cummings worked his board at the home of William Gowen. One Saturday afternoon, two fun loving boys - Dan Ripley and Sam Kneeland - got Fred into a barn, held him and with a sharp razor they shaved off his thick, dark eyebrows. The following Monday morning Fred was late, as usual, getting to school. He was a strange looking spectacle as he appeared at the school door and made his way to his seat. There were many snickers and muffled laughs behind the large geographies but Miss Ferrar appeared not to notice the great transformation in the countenance of her unfortunate pupil. She continued conducting her lessons in the same quiet, easy manner.

1882 was the year of the great Comet. Those who saw it will never forget it. It frightened some people while others believed it to be some kind of a warning of approaching danger, war or other disaster. I quote as follows from Chambers STORY OF THE COMETS:

"The Comet of 1882 (iii) was in some respects one of the greatest and most remarkable seen by the present generation of astronomers. It was conspicuously visible to the naked eye for several weeks in September, and altogether remained in sight for the long period of 9 months. The peculiarities differentiating this Comet from all others were, that the head underwent changes in the nature of disruptions; that the tail may have been tubular; that the extremity of the tail was not only split, but that it was entirely unsymmetrical, considered in relation to the greater part of the tail; and that on one occasion the Comet seems to have thrown off a mass of matter which became, and for several days was observed as, a distinct comet. Since 1882 there has been no real "great"

OLD TIME BEES AND PARTIES

There never was a community more interested in one another's welfare than old Transalpine. The inhabitants were always kind to new families coming there to settle and it was customary then, to take new people into their homes, help them clear their land and erect a place to live in.

One day Robert Whitney invited the entire neighborhood to assist him in raising his barn. People came willingly and wholeheartedly. They arrived early in the morning and stayed until evening. Then they strung up lanterns in the old barn, opened wide the doors, cleared the floor and had a barn dance. It was a jolly time for men, women and children. An old fellow played the fiddle while a younger fellow played lively on the fife. There was joy and fun and laughter. Everybody was happy and everybody had a good time.

Husking bees were very popular in olden days. After the corn in the field was cut it was brought to the barn and piled in a huge heap upon the barn floor. From twenty to thirty men and boys gathered around the heap, sitting in old chairs and on milking stools or on bunches of corn fodder. When it became dark old-fashioned lanterns with one tallow candle inside, were hung by a ring to the long handle of a pitchfork stuck horizontally into the side of the hay mow next to the corn to be husked. By the feeble light the workers busily stripped the corn, while they told stories, cracked jokes or sang songs. Occasionally some of them would go out of the barn for a short time to straighten out their benumbed and cramped limbs and to look up with wonder to the sparkling stars through the cool, clear atmosphere and pick out from among them the Great Bear and North Star.

After the husking was finished the men generally partook of a big supper prepared by the women folk and then there would be merriment in the evening.

Chopping bees were held frequently in the south part of the town. It was surprising the amount of work that could be accomplished in one day. Everybody had so much fun that they forgot they were working at all.

Quilting parties and apple paring bees were very popular among the women. The neighbors were always delighted when they received word that they were invited to the home of Mrs. William Gowen. They liked to go other places also but it seemed to them that they had an especially good time at the Gowen home. Mrs. Gowen made the most delicious pumpkin pies and everything always tasted so good. After the apples had been pared and the supper over, they would all go into the parlor for an evening of games and singing. Of course the men folk would be there too to share in the fun. They enjoyed the old fashioned kissing games "Pop Goes The Weasel", "Ring Round Rosey," "London Bridge is Falling Down," "The Needle's Eye" and "On The Green Carpet."

The needle's eye, it does comply,
 A thread that runs so true.
 It has caught many a smiling youth
 And now it has caught you.
 It has caught one, it has caught two,
 It has caught many a smiling youth
 And now it has caught you.

She dresses so neat,
 She does look so sweet,
 Before we end, we do intend
 To see this couple meet.

On the green carpet here we stand,
 Take your true love by the hand.

Take the one that you love best,
Before you close your eyes to rest.
Oh what a terrible choice you made.
Since you can no longer stay
Give her a kiss and send her away.
And tell her to come back some other day.

"Choosing A Wife In The Dark" was another old time favorite
and a fellow was apt to get a better wife those days by
choosing her in the dark than he is today by choosing her
in the light.



Addie and Dan Clay

The boys and girls of Lincoln had but few amusements, seventy-five years ago, in comparison with the children of modern times. The most of the boys and girls were employed at an early age in useful labor upon the farm and were allowed but little time to amuse themselves, except during the recesses at school. There were no walking and talking china dolls. Little girls were content with rag babies with heads stuffed with cotton or rye bran, with a few rude, black marks upon one side to indicate the face, eyes, nose and mouth. Some mothers made potato dolls for their children.

Boys usually made their own toys. They made fine whistles out of a willow sapling or a branch of elder. Some boys made very good bow and arrows with which they could hit a bird or a striped squirrel. Kites were quite a fad in early days. These were constructed in the home from paper and would often fly four or five hundred feet.

The sports of the boys at school consisted in playing ball, wrestling bouts, foot racing, snow balling and sliding and skating during the winter months. Sliding down a long hill upon single hand sleds or upon two sleds connected together by a board six or seven feet long, upon a bright frosty moonlight night was a favorite pastime with the boys and girls.

During the winter, the children often met at different farm houses and played 'Blind-men's Buff' "Hunt the Slipper" "Ring around a Rosy" "Drop the handkerchief" "Button" "Hiding the Thimble" and many other old time games. Paying forfeits was also a great favorite among the children. Playing cards were considered as sinful, seventy-five years ago, but the game of "Fox and Geese" was played without rebuke from anybody.

DAN'S PLACE

How pleasant are the memories of Dan Clay's old farm with the rustic sign over the door - DAN'S PLACE. A comfortable home in the village, near his marble works, was not sufficient to content Dan. He wanted to raise his own crops, to be able to enjoy the great outdoors, and have a place for himself and his wife to entertain their friends.

Dan always had a great deal of company at his farm, especially during the summer months. Everyone liked to go to Dan's because they were sure of a hearty welcome whether they had been invited or not. If Dan were inside, when guests arrived, he usually met them wearing an apron and holding a frying pan in one hand and a butcher knife in the other. Dan was as handy as any woman around the kitchen. He could make bread, cook fish and meat and prepare a meal fit for a king in no time at all.

Oftentimes, Dan would invite guests for a whole week-end and he and his wife would do everything possible to give them a good time. Usually, one made his own good time. During the day, the guests would roam about the fields and woods, fish the Narrows for White Perch, go for a swim in Cold Stream Pond or just idle " Neath the Shade of the Old Apple Tree!"

Dan's contagious laughter and good natured humor could be heard from first one place, then another, as the day progressed. Frequently he would burst out singing his old favorite song:

"Everybody knows, when the rooster crows,
That there'll be eggs for breakfast
In the morning."

There were also many happy winter gatherings at Dan's. Sometimes there would be several sleighs leave the village late

in the afternoon en route to Dan's for an Oyster Stew or Baked Bean Supper. As the merry crowd rode along o'er the hills of Transalpine the woods would ring with laughter which would be interrupted now and then by occasional songs. Many people will only have to close their eyes to see it all before them again: A beautiful, moonlight, winter's night, a ground completely covered with snow, a long, narrow country road bordered with fragrant trees and loads of happy people jogging along, with sleigh bells ringing and the woods echoing with -

"Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way,
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh."

When the guests arrived at Dan's they found cheerful lights, warm fires and plenty of old fashioned hospitality. In the evening, someone would play the organ and all would gather around to sing. Soon the rafters would ring with first one song and then another but the following was heard most frequently;

"In the sky the bright stars glittered,
On the banks the pale moon shone,
And 'twas from aunt Dinah's quilting party,
I was seeing Nellie home."

Then Dan would call for "Darling Nellie Gray" and Asa would call for "Go Tell Rhodie The Old Gray Goose Is Dead." Some of the other favorites were, "There Is A Tavern In The Town," "Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet," "In The Good Old Summer Time," "Little Annie Rooney", "A Bicycle Built For Two," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "He Won't Amount To Anything Because He's Joined The Grange," "Sweet Alice Ben Bolt," and "Solomon Levi."

Although Dan's farmhouse has been destroyed by fire and

a new one erected by his son, who now resides there with his family, the original building will never be forgotten. It will be remembered, not for its grandeur of structure, but for the rustic old sign over the door - DAN'S PLACE, and for Dan's jolly song:

"Everybody knows, when the rooster crows,
That there'll be eggs for breakfast
In the morning."
