

## Christmas Dinner by Toboggan Express

By  
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Donald Saunders had his first great adventure up in the Long's Peak country, a region famous throughout Colorado for heavy snows and avalanches. Donald came over from Denver, after graduating from high school, to spend the summer with Sumpter Saunders, his father's youngest brother. Sumpter was a very young uncle, indeed, being but 27 and not very long out of college, while Donald was 19. "Uncle Sump" was a big-boned, strapping fellow who had played center in his college football team, a man with laughing blue eyes and "teasing" ways but entertaining serious dreams of owning a great mine, if strength and pluck and persistence would bring one to light. He was running a tunnel on what he believed to be an excellent gold-bearing prospect, up in the Long's Peak country. Donald went out to help him. The tall boy had notions of becoming a mining engineer, and here was experience that might prove of value when he should be ready to enter a technical school.

The world is very much in confusion up in that country, the earth having been flung about at all sorts of angles, heaped and ragged and tumbled. Streams sprawl in foamy



Donald's Gray Eyes Dilated with Sudden Fear and Horror.

abandon through the canyons and the clumps of pines on the soaring steep slopes cheerily in the wind and sun. Donald found it all quite magical.

He had purposed returning home to Denver in the autumn, but Sumpter having offered him an interest in the mine, should they succeed in striking quartz, he concluded to remain at least until Christmas. Donald's father, knowing the value of practical experience, thought it quite as well that his son should stay and rough it for awhile.

There were deer and bear and mountain grouse in that lifted, broken region, but the two young fellows had little time for hunting them, being intent on driving the tunnel as rapidly and with as little delay and expense as possible. Sumpter had built a cabin close against the base of a perpendicular wall of rock at the side of the canyon in which his claim lay. In this cabin they lived very snugly, going down to Ward occasionally to bring up supplies. Donald had come up to that country over a little railroad that runs from Boulder to Ward, a bit of track upon which the snow rotary plows are busy most of the winter.

Towards Christmas the young miners began to grow a bit lonesome and restless; they especially grew weary of ham and tinned meats and longed for venison, bear, beef, or almost any sort of flesh food that was fresh. Snow was heavy on the mountains and they could get about but little save upon snowshoes. Donald wished very ardently that he might go home for Christmas but made up his mind that to leave Sumpter in that white, lonely world would be selfish and cowardly, so he remained.

Christmas morning Donald put on his snowshoes and, flinging Sumpter's rifle across his shoulder, he declared he was going to look for fresh meat.

His uncle laughed at him but the hardy Scotch youth was resolute.

"An old hunter," he said, "told me at the hotel down in Ward, the last time I was down, that a lot of deer wintered in the big thickets just back of us here; he said they were hard to get at but he'd found them there twice. I'm going up to see." Sumpter assented reluctantly, cautioning his nephew not to go too far away.

The day was soft and mild, the white world all agleam with sunshine. Donald put on a pair of smoked glasses and started up the canyon. A half mile away he found a little "draw," up the slope of which he climbed until he came out upon the gleaming side of the mountain; thence he made his way slowly westward, passing around upheaving masses of dark stone, across slopes that were smooth as white satin, and still further up the mountain side, found little hollows, evidently laced with brush but now filled with snow, simply big, glistening dimples in the mountain's fat face; but he saw no deer.

Finally, being weary of laboring through what was very much like an infinite bed of glittering down, he reached a point on the steep slope apparently a quarter of a mile or so directly north of the cabin. As he stood there debating if he should return to the "draw" or attempt to find a more direct route to the floor of the gulch, he suddenly felt himself moving. His first thought was that an earthquake was swaying the mountain or that he himself had been seized with vertigo. Then with a wild thrill he perceived that a strip of snow 200 feet wide and perhaps 500 feet in length was moving down the mountain side!

Donald's gray eyes dilated with sudden fear and horror. He was thrown headlong in the snow, hearing as he fell the crunch of stones that were being ripped out of their beds and the crash and rending of stumps and roots as they parted from their sockets in the earth. With every pulse leaping in alarm he got to his feet, toppling and reeling and shouting for aid as he glanced about him. The next instant he was again thrown headlong. He was upon the back of a steed beside which the fabled Horse of Death was as an insect. Something went through his brain like a sheet of flame, in it a picture of Sumpter sitting by the open fire of pine logs down in the cabin, a book in his hand, undreaming of this ruthless monster rushing down to crush him.

The next moment Donald was again upon his feet, pitching and clutching at the air and shouting. In that moment he saw a very amazing thing, though everything was both amazing and not amazing as in some sort of indescribable dream. A hundred feet to the rear of him, almost at the upper tip of the avalanche, he saw a bear rolling and tossing on the huriling mass. Thrown out of its hibernating bed among the rocks or decaying tree-roots, the animal was pitching about, now upon its feet then upon its back, helpless as a fly upon an ocean surge. Donald never knew why, but

he shouted at the bear, and he never could recall afterwards exactly what it was he shouted. He says now that he thinks he commanded the bear not to roll down upon him, which was certainly absurd.

In his mind were many glancing thoughts. In such moments the mentality of man sometimes seems as a diamond with many facets. He thought of the Christmas tree to be lighted in the parlor at home in Denver, of how tired he was of corned beef, of where they would bury him when they took him crushed and dead from the snow at the bottom of the gulch, whether or not his school fellows if they now saw him would shout "Slide, Donald, slide!" as they used to when he was running the bases when playing ball, and many other things, all, seemingly, in a single moment.

It must have been a very short period in which he was leaping and tumbling and whirling about on the mighty toboggan, for the avalanche ran down the mountain side like a swiftly hurrying snake, save that its undulations were up and down instead of sidewise as with a serpent. It seemed to Donald he had scarcely drawn six breaths before the snowslide shot from the precipice above the cabin. Swift as was his flight he was conscious that the slide had leaped from the canyon wall, for throughout a few seconds there was no noise and he seemed being borne upon a bed of feathers through space, then there was a roar as of muffled thunder and he was wallowing deep in snow.

The mental picture that had flashed through Donald's mind of his young uncle sitting by the fire engrossed in a printed romance, had been true to the fact. Sumpter had awakened to the coming of the avalanche only when it neared the brink of the wall, 70 feet above the cabin. His book dropped from his hand and he made a leap for the door. The next moment a bear crashed through the roof and smote the floor in front of the fire, leaving the luckless animal lifeless. Sumpter's face blanched as he stared at the strange object, then he thought of Donald and hurriedly pushed his way out of the door. The snow about the cabin was up to his neck and the roof was piled deep with it, but the bulk of the slide had leaped clear over the little house, heaping the bottom of the gulch to the opposite wall, some 600 feet away. The bear had dropped from the tail of this rushing mass directly upon the cabin.

When Sumpter had got his frightened nephew out of the smothered stuff in which he was floundering, the two young fellows stood with pale faces staring at each other for a little space, then both, seeing what they had escaped, laughed joyously.

"Come into the cabin," said Sumpter, "we will have broiled bear steak for Christmas dinner! Too many snowslides around here now; to-morrow we will pull out for Denver. In the spring we will come back and tunnel until we strike the vein." All of which came true.

## HIS CHRISTMAS SCHEME

Deep-Laid Plot That Resulted in a Fine Dinner.

"Mrs. Skinem," he timidly began as the landlady of the boarding house came to her door in answer to his knock, "I—I called to see you just a moment regarding the Christmas dinner."

"Well," she asked with a scowl that made him wish he was a thousand miles away.

"You see," he went on, "we—we were talking it over just now, and we decided that it would be best not to have turkey or plum pudding or ice cream on Christmas, as—"

"Stop right where you are, sir—stop right where you are!" cut in the landlady, angrily. "Who do you think is running this boarding house, anyway?"

"Why, you, of course, ma'am."

"Who provides the meals here at great trouble and expense?"

"You do, my dear Mrs. Skinem."

"Who sees that the people of this house always get what's best for them to eat?"

"You—you do, Mrs. Skinem."

"Am I a woman, do you think, who is capable of running a first-class boarding house as one should be run?" she demanded to know as she looked him up and down in a way to make his hair curl with fear.

"You—you certainly are," he promptly replied.

"Well, then," she said, "you may go down and tell the other boarders that, just as long as I am at the head of this place and pay the rent and buy the provisions I propose to do as I see fit, and I will take no orders, sir, regarding the meals."

just wishing that some one would make a complaint about it.

But there were no complaints. There were only chuckles and smiles and whispers over the little game that had been played so neatly on Mrs. Skinem, and sometimes a shiver as some of the more timid thought of what would happen if the husky landlady ever learned of it.

### Hard Life of an Informer.

The visit of George Nasztics—now famous for his "disclosures" concerning a Slav conspiracy in Croatia—to Delmatia and Montenegro, was not an unqualified success. The hand of every Slav patriot is raised against him and his life is always in danger.

At Kastelnova when he walked on the ship he was met with a shower of rotten eggs. At Ragusa he fared little better, for news of his arrival attracted crowds to the landing place, and the leading inhabitants informed the police that Nasztics would be thrown into the Adriatic if he attempted to land. Nasztics was seen to run away and hide himself on receipt of this information. Even at Mostar railway station he was seriously threatened, but the police saved him. While in Cetinje he found it impossible to avoid threats and scowls, and so left immediately. The life of an informer is hard.—Budapest correspondence Pall Mall Gazette.

### Suspicion, Not Surprise.

Mrs. Graneray—She must have been surprised when her husband gave such an expensive present for Christmas.

Mrs. Park—Not surprised, my dear, but suspicious.

### Extent of Their Friendship.

Dimpleton—Do you still keep up your friendship with the Caterhys?  
Hatterson—We see them very little, but we annoy each other with Christmas presents every year.

## SAM WAS CHANGED

GREAT LIGHT SUDDENLY DAWNED ON YOUNG MAN.

Brief Interview with Consumptive Peddler Turned His Thoughts Away from Foolish and Carnal Things.

"During the harvest time," said the old farmer who had brought a load of potatoes to market, "I hired on three extra men, and one of them turned out to be a boxer. He and my son Sam took to each other, and Sam bought a pair of boxing gloves and took about 20 lessons in what they call 'the art.' When harvest was over and he had got through he just flapped his wings and crowed and said he could lick anything that traveled our highway. I didn't say nothin' either way, but jest waited. When a young feller of 20 gets a chip on his shoulder somebody's purty sure to come along and knock it off. One day a tin peddler drove up, and I saw Sam steppin' high and spittin' over his shoulder. Bimeby he got up a row with the feller and knocked him out in one round. For two weeks after that it was brag from mornin' till night. He got sassy to me and to the neighbors, and one could see what he was achin' for. We was diggin' 'taters one day, when the same peddler's wagon drove up, and Sam turns to me and says:

"Dad, that peddler has come back after more. Come along and see me put him to sleep."

"We went up to the house to discover that it was the same boss and wagon, but a different man. He said he was a consumptive who was peddlin' for his health, and that he doesn't exert himself much for fear of a hemorrhage of the lungs. Sam was mightily disappointed and was going back to the 'taters when the stranger said somethin' about his bow legs. Purty soon they was passin' hot words, and I was tryin' to quiet 'em, when the stranger got up and called Sam a liar and jumped down from his wagon. Sam went for him and squared off and led with the left, and the next thing I saw was his heels in the air. He scrambled up and went down again, and the third time he went right to sleep and laid there. Then the stranger laughed and climbed on his wagon and drove away. It took me'n the old woman 30 minutes to revive Sam, and we found him a changed young man. He's read 40 chapters in the Bible in the last 30 nights, and has committed 12 hymns to memory, and when I ask him how he feels he rolls his eyes and answers: "I'm a-feeling, Dad, that I'm not long for this wicked world, and I'm a-hopin' that you and ma'am will so live that you kin jine me in that better land."

### Off and On.

In the smokeroom of the Mauretania the returning tourist talked of "pure-art dancing"—that is to say, the Salome dance, the Leda dance and those other dances which offer little if any encouragement to the clothing trade.

"Yes," said Austin W. Boyd, the well-known Toledo Assyriologist, "London is overrun with pure-art dancing now."

"I saw none of it," said a Chicagoan, hastily. "Describe it to me. What is it like?"

"Pure-art dancing," said Mr. Boyd, "is like this—the more you take off the more you 'get on.'"—Washington Star.

### The Law of Speculation.

Big men are given to taking profits, while smaller men are laying a basis for profits that may or may not be shown. The law of the fishes in the sea applies in speculation. The big and the little fish have their respective missions, and the small ones are safe when the large ones are not hungry.

### Pleasant Fiction.

"What are you reading?"  
"The story of Cinderella and the prince," answered Mr. Cumrox.  
"What nonsense!"  
"I know it's nonsense. But after reading the newspapers of late, it's a sort of a relief to come across a story of a nobleman who went ahead and eloped with the girl without stopping to discuss a marriage settlement."

### Clock Made of Straw.

A shoemaker named Wegner, living in Strasburg, has a clock of the grandfather shape, nearly six feet high, made entirely of straw. The wheels, pointers, case and every detail are exclusively of straw. Wegner has taken 15 years to construct this strange piece of mechanism. It keeps perfect time.

### Making of a Star.

"I can whistle through my teeth," pointed out the comedian.  
"And I made you a leading man on the strength of that," responded the eminent manager. "Now, if you'll learn to wiggle your ears I'll make you a star."—Kansas City Journal.

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Not She.

He—If I kissed you, would you give it away to your mother?

She—Oh, no. I don't think mamma would want it.

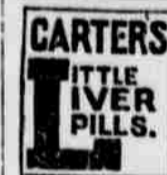
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It is a great blood medicine and one of the best for all stomach, kidney and bowel complaints.

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