

"1915"--AN ODD TALE OF AN ODD EXPERIENCE

A Reporter Meets Strange People in Unusual Places, But the Blase Scribe Who Fared Forth on a Dreary Errand Was Startled By An Uncanny Character Who Insisted on "Giving Out a Statement to the Newspapers"

By Jack Lait.

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Go out," said the city editor, "and ask some of the leading ministers what they are going to do about the all-night drinking next New Year's eve." "Somewhat early, isn't it?" asked the reporter. "It's not even December." "It oftentimes takes your kind of a reporter two months to get a story," said the city editor. "Furthermore, since when are you given to editing my editing? I wish to know in November what the clergy is going to do late in December." "Would you like to know who will win the pennant next spring?" asked the reporter. "No," said the city editor, "but I should like to know where you are going to get a job if you don't get on your way." "May I stop and have my dinner first?" asked the reporter. "You may not," said the city editor. So the reporter went to dinner.

He made straight for the little German place around the corner where he could shake the telegraph editor for the steak, and usually win. But his adversary was not on hand, so the reporter dined alone. The noodle soup was divine. The noodles were long and as pliable as rubber, yet as melting as nougat. Fie upon a chef who makes noodles short—by heavens, it is like cutting spaghetti with a fork.

Then came there a steak. Sizzling on a platter, its crust as brown and brittle as a macaroon, a monitor in a navigable sea of gravy, it was borne triumphantly before the conquering epicure by the bowlegged waiter. The reporter stabbed it to its heart, cut it to thick and sapid ribbons and turned a perfect steak into a perfect memory.

Then came the waiter with the strudel. Strudel is not for profane hands to touch or describe. It is the apotheosis of dough, rolled and stretched until it has the fragile texture of a cobweb, filled in interlarded layer rolls with nuts and apples gently tickled with cinnamon.

And with the strudel came the purring, winking coffee, black as the depths of a houri's eyes, hot as the breath of her lover's vows. Some coffee! And, after it, a cigar—the cigar—from which he sucked the lethargic languor of its tropic home. The clouds rose thick and deep, dull gray. Then they faded and grew misty. The reporter's head listed onto his shoulder and a snore as low and gentle as the cooing of frightened turkey made known that he had surrendered to the most potent man-conceived opiate—a good dinner.

The waiter presented the check, but the reporter knew nothing. The waiter went to the proprietor and pointed back with thumb over shoulder, saying: "Das reporter feller, he snores again." "Let him alone," said the proprietor. "Poor boy—what with filling columns all

day and filling flushes all night, he has a hard time of it." So the reporter slept on.

And as he slept there entered through the door a tottering old man of evil visage. From his chin hung whiskers to his knees, gnarled, brambled whiskers of the gray of auto tires. He limped on a devilish bludgeon and his toothless jaws rattled one against the other with decrepitude. The ancient duffer crossed the room and sat him on the other chair at the reporter's table.

"So, hissed he, as though one could hiss though toothless. "So—you are worrying about New Year's eve, are you?"

"Who are you, you broken-down old undertakers' delight?" barked the reporter. "I am 1915," said the old geezer.

"Oh, you are? Well, I wouldn't brag about it. Thanks to the good old calendar, which keeps on working slowly but with daily precision, you will soon be in the hellbox with the rest of the pied type of the long ago."

"Don't get fresh," said 1915. "I am a baby scarce 300 days old. But I have lived 500,000,000 lives, and when I go I will go where neither you nor the piffing twaddle that you write will ever enter."

"And where is that, old Hasbeen?" "Into history," said 1915, stroking his whiskers.

"You bet you will," said the reporter. "You'll go into history the most hated year since the crucifixion. The story of your life will be the blackest leaf in the diary of civilized mankind. What have you given us? War, disasters, failure, rotten weather, a pennant for Boston and the insufferable hyphen."

"Have I?" said 1915. "I have brought a world to a realization of the horrors of strife. I have kept this country at peace—yes, even more, I have given it peaceful victory. I have brought your president a bride, I have put Geraldine Farrar into motion pictures and I have closed the saloons of Chicago on Sundays."

"Another year of such benefits and the country will need a benefit," said the reporter. "You have been a rotten year and I'm glad you're trembling at your doddering knees and I will drink your swan song with wine, no matter how much it costs my girl's father."

"Wait a minute," said the poor old year. "Let's be reasonable. I see just how I stand with you, but let me point out a few more things. You wished me in with just the same amount of eclat and abandon with which you will float out to meet my baby brother, 1916, didn't you? You thought my older brother, 1914—may his soul rest in peace if possible—was a bad boy, and you kissed my baby forehead and said now everything would be different. Isn't it a sort of a fact that one of our family is no sooner in office than, before the popping of the inaugural ceremonies has died out of

the echoes, you are already crying for the next crown prince? Isn't it the same old 'drink in the new, souze out the old' system every winter?"

"Well, the wine agents must live," said the reporter.

"Too true. But why not toast a two-fisted, upstanding year like me in July—or in October—or now? Why don't you buy me a drink now? I have a fine chance. You toasted me in bubbles and sucker-water when I was a baby and needed a nursing bottle. But now that my bones are aged and my appetite sharp and educated, you wouldn't offer me a bum martini. Why was I such a hit with you and the rest of the humans before I had made good? And, now that I have yearned around about as well and decently as most years, the printers are breaking their brains trying to devise new and gaudy designs for the menu cards of the good night of my funeral."

"Say," said the reporter. "Don't take on so. Many a champ has taken the count before a younger and better man."

"That's just it—will he be a better man? Of course, to a small extent every year grows better. But that's evolution, not succession. Take it by and large, I've been a pretty good fellow. I haven't been so worse to you, have I?"

"No," said the reporter.

"No, of course not. Think back. I've been pretty sweet to you. You still have your health; you have a job; a regular newspaper lets you write in it; your wife and kiddies are all right, and from the looks of the wreck-strewn platters about you, I note that you still dine kind of well. Now, how about it? Have I been on the level with you or haven't I?"

"It might have been worse," admitted the reporter.

"Of course. I know it hasn't been gravy every minute. There never was a year like that. But I've been as good to you as any. And now I'll tell you what I want and why I came here."

"Speak," said the reporter. "You're a frowsy old cuss, but I'm beginning to like you in spite of your frozen mug and your Ostermoor curtains."

"It's this way," said 1915, leaning forward. "Now, I like the things you write and the way you write them. And I want you to write my obituary. Now, you know the theory of an obit—it starts by saying he was born of poor but honest parents and finishes by saying 'Here was a man; I shall not look upon his like again.'"

"Impossible, old nineteen-fif," said the reporter. "The paper would never stand for it. It's not done. Whoever heard of blessing the old year out? You remember how it was with you—why, we jeered at the dying old god, 1914, kicked him in the coffin and danced on his grave."

The old man lit up for a moment at the recollection; then his spent eyes went down

again to blank and again he milked his beard.

"It's got to be done," he said, thumping his bludgeon upon the floor. "I'm not through yet. I still have some days in office, and in those days I can raise—well, I can do many things. I don't say that I will, can I mind you, but I can. You know, there are many who are anticipating the coming of 1916 who will never see him; there are many who scorn me that would kiss the meanest hair of my old head if they knew now what I had done for them and what my successors await them with; a hundred million babies owe me their existence; a



"Who Are You, Old Undertaker's Delight?" Barked the Reporter

hundred million happy brides and grooms owe me each other; a hundred million—say, I'm some peanuts, when it's looked at the right way. Come now—how about the obit?"

"I'll do it the best I know how if the city editor will stand for it," responded the reporter. "You don't know that man. When he gets a notion—"

"Pish, tush," said 1915. "Why, I'm the best copy in the world, until Jan. 1, anyway. My name has appeared on every page of every issue of your paper since I was born. I have had more publicity than Teddy Roosevelt, Kaiser Bill and Charlie Chaplin put together."

"Well, maybe," began the reporter.

"Certainly," said the fading year. "Now, you go in and write one of those 'A place is vacant in our home' things for your old Uncle Dudley, and some time when you're broke you'll find a silver dollar with my print on it and maybe you'll bless my old memory."

"What do you want me to say?" asked the reporter.

"Say I was born at an early age and that my arrival was celebrated with the customary foolishness. Father Time and Mother Earth, who gave me birth, were congratulated on having delivered such a healthy and stout young offspring. I started in from the barrier to show speed. I looked all the world over and picked America for my home. And I was loyal. When the rest of the world was scrapping and bleeding I stuck to the U. S. and never stumbled over a hyphen or made you violate brotherhood and neutrality. For your country I never struck a blow, yet I was the most potent factor for civilization on the globe. I made your nation the white sheep of a nasty flock."

"Tell them that I inherited from my older brother, 1914, war and hard times. Tell them that I battled to improve the sad conditions that were handed down to me, and that by my lights and within my strength I did so. Tell them that I give with my annual crown and bequest to my young and fiery successor a breath toward universal peace, a gleam of prosperity upon the horizon, a wave toward righteousness, freedom and power for women, an awakened national consciousness and an awakening international conscience. Tell them, my young friend, tell them I—I wasn't such a bad sort, after all, won't you, old man," and the blithering old codger began to whimper and a tear rolled down his months-beaten nose and shed off into the muff.

The reporter was affected himself. He reached across the table to grip the superannuated cove's withering hand, when—hello! He was gone. He had vanished. The reporter rubbed his eyes.

"Where's the—," he began.

"Right here," said the waiter, offering the check.

The reporter looked around him, shook himself, paid the bill, picked himself up, looked at the clock, took his hat and went out.

"Well?" said the city editor. "Did you get that New Year's story?"

"Sure," said the reporter. "Ministers will make the usual protest and sensible folks will get lushed the same as usual, ushering in 1916, kicking out 1915."

Lost In the Mountains



William Morgan, Brownsville hunter, who disappeared three years ago (at right) and his son-in-law, Carson Kendig.

By Everett Earle Stanard.

BBROWNSVILLE, Or.—During the last week in October a party left Brownsville and ascended the swift-flowing Calapooia river into the Cascade mountains to make one last search for William Morgan, who, three years ago, was swallowed up by the mighty Cascades, and has never been heard of since this search, as others which have preceded it, was fruitless and snowfall compelled the abandonment of the hunt.

In October, 1912, Morgan, who lived at Brownsville, went into the foothills of the Cascades for a deer hunt. He was accompanied by his son-in-law, Carson Kendig, and the latter's son George. All three were native hunters and experienced mountaineers, Morgan being a sturdy woodsman of the pioneer type. The party proceeded to Barrett's cabin upon the upper Calapooia, and there made camp.

During the first two or three days the hunters kept together; but as Morgan preferred to hunt by himself, one morning the party divided. The pioneer proceeded to hunt the south or Mohawk ridge of a spur of the mountains. His fellows advanced eastward, parallel along the north or Calapooia side of the ridge. The understanding was that at nightfall the three should meet on the crest of this ridge at a spot selected. Mr. Kendig and son arrived at this place a good while before dark. They waited and

waited, but no one appeared. This did not alarm them, however, as Morgan frequently spent the night away from camp. He had always before shown that he was quite able to take care of himself.

"He will come in tomorrow," said the elder Kendig to the son. But with the morning no belated hunter arrived. The snow began to fall thickly, and the two watchers became alarmed. They went into the hills and began to search for clues and traces of the missing man. This was the first of a long search which was continued off and on up to the present day.

Other men and parties of men have been lost for days and weeks in the wild canyons and ridges of these Cascade slopes; but in the majority of cases, sooner or later, the mysteries of those disappearances have been cleared up. Joseph Crabtree, old hunter and mountaineer, was twice lost and given up for dead, but each time, more dead than alive, he staggered back to civilization.

Carl Brown and Ed Garoutte, two hunters from Brownsville, also became lost upon the slopes of the Upper Calapooia mountains. After days of wandering, they came out at Mable, a little town situated miles and miles away from the Calapooia basin upon the Mohawk or opposite side of the ridge. One, Buckman of Harrisburg, a number of years ago became separated from his hunting companion in the region of Lost Lake and, like William Morgan, was never heard of again.

Huge Mushroom In Beaumont Basement

Shaggy Mane of Unusual Size Is Found

THE months of October and November constitute the open season for mushrooms in Portland. No mushroom hunters are more ardent in their quest than those of Rossmere, Beaumont and contiguous subdivisions of the city. The edible varieties are becoming more abundant year by year and are spreading to new ground.

They are found in parkings, in vacant lots and even in lawns. Many a stock of domestically preserved stores has been enriched this year with mushrooms, jars of which stand aristocratically beside those filled with ordinary things that grow on mere trees and vines. The housewives of those delightful residence districts are very discriminating, and no toadstool masquerading as a safe and sane sort of Agaricus campestris need apply. However, of the four or five varieties harvested, it seldom happens that any given harvester ventures to use more than two. All depends upon what vouchers the users are able to assemble.

But, whatever dubiety may exist as to other forms, one and all without question pluck up and eat the "shaggy mane," which comes up out of the earth looking like a turkey egg, and at maturity is seen in the likeness of a folded umbrella, its stem, of a silvery whiteness, corresponding to the umbrella's handle. The "shaggy mane" of Rossmere and Beaumont seldom attains a height in excess of six inches. The majority of them are even less. So that the mushroom shown in the accompanying illustration is to be considered exceedingly remarkable, its height being 15 inches, diameter of top two and one-half inches and of stem at base one and three-fourths inches. Quite as extraordinary is the fact that it grew, self-sown, in the basement of a house, the residence of George Boring, at 553 East Thirty-ninth street north, in what is locally called "Lower Beaumont."

At a certain point the thin cement floor of the basement had been shattered, and there, amid the fragments, sufficient organic matter had lodged to give the mushroom its necessary food. With this monster grew 17 others, some of them of the ordinary size, but from that down to the size of a marble. The child in the picture is Mr. Boring's daughter Janet, 5 years old.



Janet Boring, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Boring, with "shaggy mane" mushroom, found in basement of home.