

**OUT-OF-DOORS STUFF**

By Lana Lenore

Each Christmas issue of The Sentinel I have given you a little Christmas story and so here's another I have written for you. Trust you will enjoy it. I wish also to take this occasion to thank the readers who have contributed bits of news and stories to my column in the past and to wish you all a merry Christmas.

**FORTY TIMES FORTY**

His name appeared on the county records as Daniel Sherman—this latest arrival at the poor farm. His old cronies would never recognize this name nor associate it with Old Otter Dan, as he was familiarly known to hundreds. His possessions consisted of a flour sack containing a suit of underwear, a pair of socks, a pair of run-over shoes and a gunny sack of steel traps. Otter Dan had insisted upon bringing the latter along. Practically all his life, ever since he had been big enough to set a trap, he had trapped for fur.

He knew no other trade and was an expert in his line of work. In fact he had acquired his monicker years before by making a record catch of otter.

But old age had claimed him and he was no longer able to buck the elements and go far into jungles in pursuit of fur. But despite these facts, Otter Dan was still able to make a perfectly good living with his steel traps, closer in to civilization, until the advent of the sheepmen.

With the coming of the latter and their flocks, poison bait was strung about the countryside, for the purpose of killing predatory animals that preyed upon the sheep. The result of this practice was appalling. The fur-bearing animals which had provided a living for Otter Dan, were practically exterminated.

Otter Dan and several more members of his profession, appealed to sportsmen's organizations and commercial club, seeking to stop the wanton destruction, but to no avail.

The sheep industry must stay. What did a few ignorant trappers' opinions amount to? In vain, Otter Dan and his associates sought to impress upon them the fact that the predators could be trapped and that poison need not be resorted to; that the poison was destroying harmless birds and animals, as well as valuable fur-bearers. But a deaf ear was turned upon them.

Sadly, Otter Dan watched the terrible work of the poison slingers. The day he found the mother coon and her two half grown ones lying along

a game trail, where poison had been used, his indignation knew no bounds. He leached his withered hands and blinding tears came to his old eyes. Tears of rage, of pure helplessness.

The second year after poison had been resorted to Otter Dan's total fur catch for the winter amounted to twenty-seven dollars. The old man skimped. He cut down on his food and even on his beloved cut-plug. But it was no use. There was no work to be had and even though there had been, Otter Dan was too feeble for most any sort of manual labor.

It was bitter to have to acknowledge defeat; to give up the little shack that he had called home for so many years and become an inmate of the county poor farm. But he couldn't leave his traps behind. They were a part of his life. It would do him good to have them near him; to fool with them; test their strength and imagine that he was once again about to sally forth into the woods in pursuit of furbearers.

Otter Dan was proud and his entrance to the poor farm was hard to bear. His old back seemed to bend a trifle more and his old cheery smile was seldom seen. For hours he would sit upon the veranda of the big white building and dream of the years gone by. He knew he hadn't much longer on this earth and his proud old spirit revolted at the idea of dying a pauper. But what was there to do? Nothing. So with a sigh the old man would load up his pipe and leaning back in his chair, would dream some more of those golden days, that had passed him by.

Fall rolled 'round. It was only a few scant days to the opening of trapping season and, as usual, at this time of year, Otter Dan began receiving mail. True it was only circulars—fur circulars—but they meant a lot to the old fellow. Sitting upon the porch in his favorite chair, he went over them one by one. Furs were sure high this season. If it hadn't been for that poison bait, he would have made good money. Yes, plenty of it. Why, look at this! Otter up as high as fifty dollars! Regular war time prices! A paragraph at the bottom of the circular caught and held the aged eyes. It read: "To be assured of a good Christmas stake, ship all your furs to us. We pay more." It went on to state how to ship, etc., but Otter Dan's aged eyes had stopped upon that one word that stood out so distinctly from the others, that word which had leaped at him from the other print, but was now seen only dimly through the mist that filled his eyes—CHRISTMAS.

Old Dan swallowed hard, seeking to dislodge the lump that had risen in his throat. He brushed a gnarled hand across his eyes and blew his nose violently. Leaning back in his chair he fished his pipe from his pocket and carefully stoked it and as he lit up he mused to himself, "Wish they hadn't sent me that price list—drat it all anyway."

That one word Christmas had brought back a rush of memories. The old shack which had been home to Dan for so many years was visioned again through the tobacco smoke. Each article in the little cabin stood forth distinctly—the three old dining room chairs, the old rocker, the faded carpet and in the corner the squat little stove—the stove with an oven just large enough to admit the old blackened roaster with two plump ducks nicely stuffed with dressing. Never had Otter Dan failed to have two ducks for Christmas dinner. He would always take time off from his trap line a few days before Christmas and with his old muzzle loader, which he had hung to down through the years, slung across his shoulder, he would set forth for the little pond which nestled in a clump of willows far from the beaten path of the city gunners.

Old Dan knew just how to approach that particular pond which was always certain to hold a flock of feeding mallards. He would make a cautious approach and presently the booming voice of the old gun would shatter the silence, the dense smoke of the black powder would spurge forth in a great cloud and the two birds that Dan had signaled from the flock lay quietly upon the water, while with quacks of alarm the rest of the flock took wing. Upon arriving from the old trapper carefully plucked and dressed the birds and hung them in the frosty night air until Christmas morning.

It wouldn't be Christmas without roast duck and old Pete Anthony to share them with him, as he did each Christmas. No, it wouldn't be Christmas without sitting down to a meal in that little shack. True, he was treated well at the farm, but it was far from being like home, and—the dinner gong sounding broke into the old man's reflections and with a weary sigh he arose, stuffed the fur circulars in his pocket and made his way slowly toward the dining room.

The opening day of trapping season rolled 'round. It found Otter Dan seated in his favorite chair, his sack of treasured traps at his feet. He had brought them from his room, dumped them upon the porch and carefully gone over each of them. When questioned as to what he was

doing by the superintendent of the farm, Dan replied, "Never have missed the first day of trappin' season since I was knee high to a grass-hopper—that is, 'ceptin' this one. I was just sorta lookin' the old steel over." Something like a sob sounded in the withered throat as he added, "Just for old times' sake, you know."

The superintendent was a kindly soul and was touched deeply by the old trapper's apparent sorrow. He gazed at the old fellow for several seconds. Suddenly he brightened. "Say," he said, "I saw an otter track down on the bank of the stream last week. He indicated the stream which ran through the borders of the farm. It was the old man's turn to brighten. "You don't say!"

"I was just thinking you might set a trap or two for him. There might be more than one. I don't know much about them myself." But his voice was drowned by the rattle of trap chains as the old trapper again dumped his treasures upon the porch.

A few moments later, Otter Dan, a dozen traps in one hand, a hatchet and several yards of wire in the other, was making his way across fields to the distant stream. It appeared that his step was quicker, that his stooped shoulders had strengthened a trifle and there was no mistaking the gleeful light which danced in his eyes. The first day of trapping season and as in the days of yore he was on his way to make his sets the first morning! These thoughts brought once again that cheery smile to Otter Dan's lips.

Arriving at the bank of the stream his eyes travelled expertly along the soft mud at the water's edge looking for sign. "Ah!" The breath fairly whistled from his lips as his gaze came to rest upon a portion of the bank on the opposite side of the stream. It was worn smooth as glass and a trail led from the surface of the water to the very top of the worn spot. An otter slide.

Dan's heart was thumping against his ribs with excitement as he found a foot log and crossed the stream. The wire was unstrung, a trap taken from the string, a long stake cut and he was ready to make his set. And what a set it was! He was not nicknamed Otter Dan for nothing. Standing back several yards the old man regarded the set intently, nodded his head in evident satisfaction and made his way on up the stream. When he returned that evening, in spite of a strenuous day, his step was still springy and a score of years seemed to have slipped from his shoulders. It is just one week until Christmas. It is evening. The superintendent of the poor farm and Otter Dan are seated in the former's office. The superintendent has just completed a long distant phone call. The old man is leaning expectantly forward in his chair.

"Well, Dan that house offers you forty dollars straight through on good grades of otter pelts."

Old Dan strikes a match, applies it to his ancient briar, blows a ring of smoke ceilingward before replying.

Then—"ain't much on figures, mister, so would you mind tellin' me what forty times forty makes? And say, Mister, wonder if you'd do me a little favor. I ain't much on writin' and spellin' and I was wondering if you'd drop old Pete Anthony a Christmas card for me and tell the old son-of-a-gun to meet me at my shack three days from now and bring my old gun along that I left in his care, and tell him we're going to eat duck together again this Christmas."

**His Humble Opinion**

Motorist (inquiring his way)—Boy, am I all right for the zoo?  
Bright Lad—As far as I know you are, mister, but I'm not running the zoo.—Montreal Gazette.

**Sex You!**

"After all," says a politician, "Great Britain and America speak the same language."  
"Oh, yeah?"—The Humorist Magazine.

**UNANIMOUS**



"What sort of fellow is Jones?"  
"Well, he means well."  
"So you think him a nuisance, too."

**Imagination**

She—Do you remember where you were first struck by my beauty?  
He—Yes, dearest. It was at a masked ball.—Boston Transcript.

**No Stopping It**

Teacher—Willie, what is an adult?  
Willie—An adult is one that has stopped growing except in the middle.—Kansas City Star.

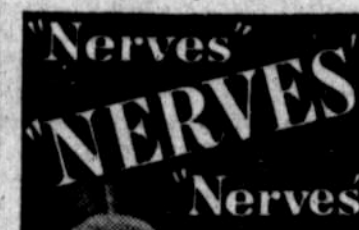
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Some penal institutions which have adopted modern prison architecture are the new federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pa.; the New York State Medium Security prison at Walkkill, the Massachusetts State prison colony at Norfolk, the New Jersey reformatory at Anandale, the Maryland State penal farm at Roxbury and the new intermediate reformatory at Jeffersonville, Mo.

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