

STEPHEN LEACOCK, native of England, earned international distinction in Canada as economist and teacher. Like Lewis Carroll, mathematician and educator, he is immortalized by his humorous writings—typified by this story obviously inspired by Charles Dickens' ghostly tale, "A Christmas Carol," as illustrated originally by John Leech in the style shown here. Leech's portrayals included the Ghost of Christmas Present, see drawing at upper left, and the ghost of Jacob Marley, right.

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groaned the ghost, "the head waiter came up to me and said that he didn't allow silent spectres in the dining room."

He groaned again. "You seem," I said, "rather down on your luck?"

"Can you wonder?" said the ghost, and another shiver rippled through him. "Talk of the unemployed—listen... let me tell you the story of my life—"

"Can you make it short?" I said.

"I'll try. A hundred years ago—"

"Oh, I say!" I protested. "I committed a terrible crime, a murder on the highway—"

"You'd get six months for that nowadays," I said. "I was never detected. An innocent man was hanged. I died but I couldn't rest. I haunted the house beside the highway where the murder had been done. It had happened on Christmas eve, and every year on that night—"

"I know," I interrupted, "you were heard dragging round a chain and moaning and that sort of thing; I've often read about it."

"Precisely," said the ghost, "and for about eighty years it worked out admirably. People became afraid, the house was deserted, trees and shrubs grew thick around it, the wind whistled through its empty chimneys and its broken windows, and at night the lonely wayfarer went shuddering past and heard with terror the sound of a cry scarce human, while a cold sweat—"

"Quite so," I said, "a cold sweat. And what next?"

"The days of the motor car came and they paved the highways and knocked down the house and built a big garage there, with electricity as bright as day. You can't haunt a garage, can you? I tried to stick on and do a little groaning, but nobody seemed to pay any attention; and anyway, I got nervous about the gasoline. I'm too immaterial to be round where there's gasoline. A fellow would blow up, wouldn't he?"

"He might," I said, "so what happened?"

"Well, one day somebody in the garage actually saw me and he threw a monkey wrench at me and told me to get to hell out of the garage. So I went."

"And after that?"

"I haunted round; I've kept on haunting round, but it's no good, there's nothing in it. Houses, hotels, I've

tried it all. Once I thought that if I couldn't make any other way, at least I could haunt children. You remember how little children used to be terrified of ghosts and them in the dark corners of their bedrooms? Well, I admit it was a low-down thing to do, but I tried that."

"And it didn't work?"

"Work! I should say so! I went one night to a bedroom where a couple of little boys were sleeping. I started in with a growl and then I materialized myself, so I could just see. One of the kids sat up in bed and nudged the other and said, 'I do believe there's a ghost in the room!' And the other said, 'Hold on, I'll scare him. Let's get the

bed as brisk as possible. One called downstairs, 'We've got a ghost up here. We don't know whether it's just an emanation or partially material. We're going to stick him with radio waves.' Believe me, I continued the ghost, 'I was all I wanted to do was to get the electricity just knocked edgewise.'"

He sulked. The went on.

"Well it's been like ever since—nowhere and nothing to haunt, tried everywhere."

"Well, then," I said, "why don't you just immaterial or dematerialize whatever you call it and keep so? Why not go wherever you belong, stay there?"

"That's the worst answer the ghost won't let us. They have learned the trick and they just summon any time they like. It's a fee for each materialization, but what can I get?"

The ghost paused a sort of spasm went through him. "God damn it," he exclaimed, "I'm now. There's a good fool somewhere round a table... call a ghost just for a damned poor notion of call it—I'd like to—"

But his voice trailed. He seemed to collapse and my dressing gown fell on the floor. At that moment I heard the ringing of the bell meant it was Christmas midnight, and I knew the poor fellow had dragged off to work.

Snow Fun? Yes!

Wintry months were hot times in Good Old Days

By HARGIS EARLYWINE

The Snowmobile that broadens over snowbanks, like the beachbuggy does sand dunes in summer, is just a contrivance to enable a softer, less adaptive modern generation to rediscover winter. Excitements and satisfactions as their long-gone great-grandparents (or much more remote ancestors) did. It may be surprising news to many, if not most, persons today that a majority of adults in northern parts of Europe and North America—also some corresponding geographical and climatical

Commerce, or any kind of transportation, was broadened and expedited in cold months, paradoxically. In all zones where freezing occurred, the sleigh or its diminutive, the sled, became a popular vehicle for travel or simple enjoyment as for adventurous pastime. For before the second half of the 19th century in general highways for public coaches or private carriages were too few, bone-shaking or slow for ordinary folks to enjoy. Whereas a sleigh or sled was a vehicle almost any farmer or woodsman could build and, assuming he had a horse, mule, or even ox or bullock, his family could travel as freely, comfortably, and as fast in winter as his most affluent neighbor. A sled for "coasting" fashioned by his father was many a boy's

favorite Christmas gift. (The "runners" were often hard oak, made glassily slick with rubbings of tallow.)

Emphatically, much passenger travel for a purpose other than pleasure and hauling of all sorts always was easier in back-country regions in the frigid months than in spring, summer and autumn, when trails or roads were flooded, muddy, rutted, jolty, tiresome to beast and traveler, blown suffocatingly with dust.

Come cold months and all the young in spirit had reason to sing joyously: Dashing thro' the snow In a one-horse open sleigh O'er the fields we go; Laughing all the way; Bells on bob-tail ring Making spirits bright What fun it is to ride and sing

A sleighing song tonight! This sentiment of James Pierpont in the 19th century, was matched by one on skating expressed by another youth of Puritan ancestry, Theodore Winthrop:

A bounding gallop is good Over wide plains; A wild free sail is good 'Mid gales and rains A dashing dance is good Broad halls along, Clapping and whirling on Through a gay throng. See Next Page



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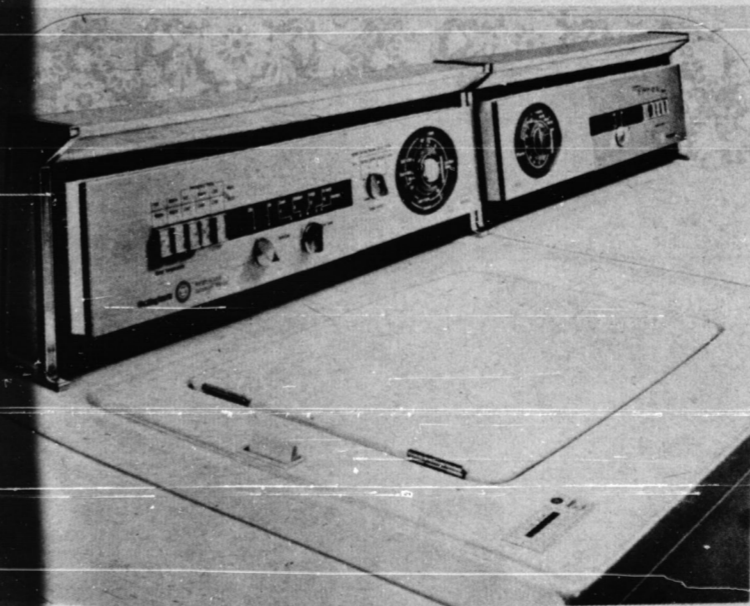
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