

Life in a Lumber Camp

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Letter from The Chippewa Herald, 1882

“He Didn't Like It.”

A son of a Madison clergyman concluded that he had stayed around home enough, and went to one of the logging camps up river. His experience there will make the old woods' veterans "smile out loud." Below is what he wrote home to his brother.

I have just written to pa, and will try and write you a short letter, although I am about half asleep, I was glad to get your letter, and glad to hear that you are doing so well.

All I can say is stick to it. I have had one of the hardest jobs in the woods so far, but think I will change off to-morrow and go at something else.

I have been working on the landing. We have to get up at about 2:30, get breakfast at three, and then walk four miles to work and take a cold dinner with us, and get back to the shanty all the way from seven to nine o'clock. So you see we have pretty long days in the woods.

Two suppers in one night; that is more than you can get in a civilized community.

And then after supper we roll into our soft, downy couch of lousy blankets, and lay and listen to the mocking bird, with music by the entire band, and snoring in seven different languages, mostly imported--professional snorers from Germany and Norway, warranted never to miss a note, and to keep in any climate, and while the beautiful odor of wet socks and foot rags is heard in the near distance, and finally fall sleep to slow music, only to be awakened in a few minutes by the melodious voice of the cook, singing, "roll out your dead bodies, daylight in the swamp," etc.

Then we get up and go to our beautiful and sumptuous repast of fricasseed pork and beans on the half shell, with a basin of reduced ice water, flavored with copperas, and called, by the low and uneducated, "tea."

Such is life in the woods, but as for me, give me six months, twice a year for two years, in Waupun, or some other place of enjoyment.

Well, Ralph, I hope you will learn some useful trade or usefulness, that will keep you from ever having to go to the woods. If I get out this time I will stay out, and don't forget to recollect to remember it.

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