

Old Jo

Old Jo was known to everybody in the community, both old and young. He was not distinguished for his cleanliness, neither for his wealth. He was known far and wide because of his trips around the country trading in old clothes, old and new silver and gold ornaments, wool and hides.

He was a very heavy built fellow with a good-natured face, and he still showed, at his old age, excellent health and vigor. In his younger days, they told me, he had been a great fighter. He dressed in the ancient costumes that the people of that Valley in the southern part of Norway had used for hundreds of years back.

The pants were made somewhat like the modern overalls with leather bottoms and a great patch of sheepskin leather on the seat. Undoubtedly this was put there to reinforce the place that was most worn. These pants were made of very heavy homewoven fabrics. His shirt was white, of imported cotton fabric, and extremely short. It was fastened in front with silver buttons of very fine design. On the outside he wore a short coat, of the same material as the pants, that scarcely reached down to the hips. On the cuffs were silver inlaid embroidery and the front was open except for four silver chains that held the coat together. The collar was stiff and reached about two-thirds around the neck, something like you have seen on military coats. On his head sat a broadbrimmed, black felt hat that he had worn for years.

Munter, his wolfhound, and a sack on his back in which he carried his merchandise, were his constant companions.

Old Jo did not have very good manners at the table, or away from it. He did not hesitate to dig in with his fingers in the gravy and pick out the meat even if a fork were beside his plate. He also took plenty of food to feed Munter while the food supplies were in his hands.

He was a great smoker, and after a meal he would fill and light his long pipe and sit and smoke and talk and spit. He was a real nuisance with his spitting. He never saw a spittoon. One of the neighbors told me that once when Jo was there the neighbor's wife put newspapers all around Jo so his spit would land on them, no

matter to what side he turned himself. But she was mistaken. Jo put an extra effort in, and the brown charge landed on the floor far outside the newspapers.

Jo was a great carrier of news. If there was something you wanted to know about in the neighborhood you had only to give Jo a drink of "brennevin" (whisky) or a cup of strong black coffee and he was ready to tell you anything.

He frequently was mentioned in the news items of the newspaper. On one occasion he got especially large publicity. This was the time he sold the silver drinking cup to the German emperor.

Before the World war the German emperor used to visit the western coast of Norway every summer. On these occasions the recreational and national centers were visited by him. One summer he visited a fair where all national costumes, plays and dances were shown. Old Jo was also there and when the emperor saw this quaint peddler with the sack on his shoulder and Munter trotting behind, he went over and shook hands with him and talked for a while with him. The emperor was familiar with the Scandinavian language so they got along easily. Later Jo visited the warship where the emperor was staying and on that occasion he sold one old silver drinking cup made in 1642 for an enormous price.

After this occasion both his and the emperor's pictures were printed in all newspapers.

Jo was always a great German sympathizer after this, and during the war he got into many a heated argument with his fellow citizens.

One of the greatest sorrows that came to Jo was the death of his faithful companion, Munter. The dog was getting old and blind, and did not want to eat. So one day, while Jo was traveling through a wood, Munter lay down and would go no further. So Jo had to kill him with a wooden stick.

Jo will always stay in my memory as a typical example of an age that has gone and will never come back.

TORLIEF BOE.

First award—Senior Class.

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