



# Red Hamblin

## Entertains

by Raymond S. Spears

ONE day, while the Black Creek gang of loggers were skidding on the Cotton Lake Ridge, Mr. Vroon, the owner of the paper mill to which the spruce was bound, arrived at the camp and immediately accompanied Foreman Bigger up into the chopping to see the men at work.

They followed the footpath up to the back of the ridge behind the camp and then along the crest to the top of the new chopping which had been made during the summer months. Within three hundred yards of the camp a regular old rocking-chair buck stepped out of a clump of pole spruces, stared at the two men for five seconds with startled brown eyes, and then bucked sideways, turned and bumped down the far side of the ridge.

"Many deer around?" Mr. Vroon asked.

"Quite a lot—yes. None of the boys hunt any."

"Um-m," the capitalist nodded.

They had gone nearly half a mile when there was a sudden flurry in some witch-hopples, and into the pathway ahead of them

bounded a bale of black, which seemed to roll and tumble along, and finally scurried into the woods out of sight.

"Wasn't that a bear?" Mr. Vroon asked mildly.

"Sure as you're born, sir!" Bigger replied.

"Lots of game around here, it seems to me?"

"Lots of it—I see a deer every day or two."

"How do you account for it?"

"No one hunts here. Too far to hunt in one day, and too near to camp out."

"Lots of room in camp?"

"We've some extra cots, usually."

"Well, perhaps a man will come here hunting toward the end of the season," Mr. Vroon suggested.

"Friend of yours—glad to have him!"

"Oh, yes, one of those—um-m—well, he's always looking for a chance to go hunting, or fishing, or like that. Perhaps I'll dump him onto you?"

"I can stand it if he can," Bigger

grinned.

“Oh, you must be real nice to him!”

“I’d certainly be!” Bigger declared, looking around sharply, and then he added: “But I’ve some very rough men around camp, here—Red Hamblin—”

“Red? Say, now, you know, I can’t get that man here too quick. His name is Pelyon—D. Cuecy Pelyon. You’ve probably read about him?”

“Not since I was a boy,” Jim shook his head and Mr. Vroon chuckled.

When they arrived at the scene of the skidding operations, Red Hamblin had just become provoked at a spruce stick ten inches in diameter and twelve feet long. This stick had been hooked at the end of a string of five logs, which a horse was towing down a gutter on the rough hillside, and a little crook in the log made it corkscrew into every root, stump, and tree, and fall over every rock and wedge in.

Red seized a bar and pried the dog out of the log and yelled for the horse to go on its way. The horse took the logs down alone without difficulty, now that the spite-log had been cut out. The man picked the stick up by one end, wrapped both arms around it, and began to pull and growl and worry it, suggesting nothing else so much as a puppy eating a rubber boot.

Of course, Red’s voice could be heard half a mile. He carried the log down to the skids, and threw it at the two men who were skidding the timber. Then he jumped on the horse and rode it backward up the side hill, swearing at the scenery and his mates.

“Yes,” Mr. Vroon continued, “I think I’ll surely have to send Cuecy up here. Red’ll do him good!”

Cuecy arrived ten days later. The leaves had all been whipped down from the witch-hopples by a heavy autumn rain-storm. The woods were gray, wet, and soggy. A chill, suggestive of frost, was in the air. Cuecy had

paid Lafay, the liveryman, twenty dollars, which was double rates, to bring him in to the Black Creek log camp, where he arrived on Saturday afternoon.

Four suit-cases, three gun-cases, and two or three wooden boxes comprised his baggage, and he had Lafay put them all in the lobby. There they remained until the log crew returned from the chopping, tired, sweaty, and yet with threats of chills and incipient colds.

Cuecy had taken one of his guns and gone hunting. Mr. C. Vroon had told him about the path along the back of the ridge behind the camp, and he must immediately go up and try to see the big buck, or perhaps the bear.

Red Hamblin walked into the camp, with his red-bearded face turned over his shoulder to tell Ross Comply that if he despised anything in all the world, it was Saturday night, after four days’ rain, and when everybody was tired out and there wasn’t anything—

Red stepped against a suit-case, and to save himself, he jumped ahead and over, landing upon another suit-case which was leaning against a small, wooden box, and though Red was agile, and reached in all the directions, the hay-wire overhead, on which were numerous shirts, socks, and other things drying, proved too weak to give him the support he most needed. He fell upon the floor, with the drying-line full upon him, and numerous ribs bumped by corners of leather and wood.

Red fought the pile of baggage in the dim light, not sure that some of it was not alive. When a light was struck, and a lamp lit, Red was on his feet, prepared for any needful action. The logger looked around at the suit-cases, boxes, and gun-cases.

“Jee—gosh—some dangwhanged party of sports—”

“On, ho!” Jim Bigger hastened to correct a misapprehension. “There’s only

one—Mr. D. Cuecy Pelyon's his name—”

“What—one?” Red demanded. “But there's—one, two-three, four, all them suitcases and the boxes, 'sides the guns!”

“Only one,” Jim shook his head. “Mr. D. Cuecy Pelyon—”

“Cussy Pell which?” Red demanded.

“D. Cuecy Pelyon,” Foreman Bigger repeated again gravely.

“Well, by—um-m—D. Cussy Hellion! Ain't that a name—friend of yours, Jim?” Red asked quickly.

“No; Mr. Vroon sent him up here.”

“Must of wanted to get rid of him!” Red snorted.

“Yes, very, likely,” Jim admitted. “Mr. Pelyon had been pestering Mr. Vroon a long time, for a chance to enjoy sport from one of his log camps. Mr. Vroon hated to let him in any of them. You see, Mr. D. Cuecy Pelyon might accidentally—”

“Mistake somebody for a deer?” Red demanded. “And Mr. Vroon asked him to this camp? Why, the dod-blasted—”

“Oh—Mr. Vroon asked if a tough old fellow he used to know was here—man name of Red Hamblin. Then he said perhaps we'd have a visitor—”

“Eh—what? The old boy said that? He seen me fight, wunst, to Forestport—time I took Old Barney, the Black River canaler, and painted his boat with him, an' a barrel of tar fer paint! Yes, sir! By Jee! An' he said—he said?”

“He didn't say anything, Red,” Jim exclaimed sternly. “Mr. D. Cuecy Pelyon is—er—the guest of the camp. We must entertain him!”

“We'll do it!” Red declared vehemently. “What the—”

All stopped to listen. Up on the ridge a few hundred feet they heard a firing and a shooting of many cartridges in swift succession. The shots ceased after a time. A few minutes later, Mr. D. Cuecy Pelyon

arrived in the camp lobby.

“Oh, Mr. Bigger!” he shouted. “I heard a deer, and I don't know if I hit 'im or not, but if he was there anywhere, I hit him! I certainly did!”

“You shot exactly where you heard him?” Foreman Bigger asked softly.

“You bet I did! My! He made an awful racket!”

“You must have done'a lot of huntin' in your day,” Red Hamblin exclaimed, with admiration, “knowing a deer by the sound of his jump!”

“Oh, I've hunted!” the young man beamed. “I never hunted deer before, but I've hunted foxes on horseback—”

“You're qualified!” Red shook his head violently. “Yes, sir! Now I expect we're going to have a lot of venison to eat in this camp—”

“Oh—I—you see, I'm going to carry the deer home with me,” the hunter declared. “Really, you know, you must have lots to eat here. You couldn't afford to eat venison—it's very expensive, you know!”

“Oh, that's all right!” Red hastened. “Come on in and set up! Supper's ready—come on, old boy! We've took a shine to you. Stick that gun up in the corner—the damned thing's loaded?”

“Why—”

D. Cuecy started to hand the weapon to Red, but it slipped, and the butt fell to the floor. At that there was a roar, and every man yelled. The rifle had been cocked, and the jar had pulled the trigger. The bullet, happily, went straight up, through a beam, then the floor, then a rafter, and out of the roof. That far the loggers traced its course.

From all sides there ensued low and profane swearing, but Red Hamblin laughed aloud.

“That's all right, old sport!” he said to the blue-lipped young man. “Accidents will happen, y' know. Two, three years ago I killed

a feller myself, kind of accidentally.”

“You did?” the youth asked breathlessly. “How did that happen?”

“Why, all there was to it, I picked up a gun like this, and I poked it against his ribs that way”—Red poked the young man just above the belt with the rifle muzzle—”and I was kind of fooling with the trigger—like that, you see! And the danged thing went off!”

“Oh—yes!” the sport gasped, side-stepping the muzzle quickly, exclaiming: “Look out—that might—”

“Oh, no! This ain’t loaded!” Red shook his head. “I just seen it go off! I tell you, since I killed po’r ole Pete, I be’n awful careful. I never seen a man bleed the way he done! Well, come on to supper!”

Red and the rest of the crew went in to eat. D. Cuecy wanted to wash. When he finally looked into the dining-room, Red spied him on the instant.

“Right here, old sport!” he shouted. “Saved a place here for ye!”

D. Cuecy walked along doubtfully, and when he saw that he must step over the long bench to take his place, he hesitated just long enough to show that the bench was not to his exact liking. Moreover, piled on his place, ready for him, were four potatoes, three great greasy slabs of fried pork, beginning to grow cold, and nearly a cup full of good old pork grease—the kind that makes the hair grow on a man’s chest! as Red told him.

“Get around it!” Red exclaimed. “Here’s the butter. Pass that bread, you blue-eyed sow-belly! This gen’leman’s been huntin’, an’ he’s hongry! Say, mister—d’ye eat cake er bread with yer taters?”

“Why—I—usually—” D. Cuecy was nearly speechless.

He made a stagger at eating, and the flavor was not really bad. It was good; besides, he was hungry, as Red had said, and Red stood by and with the most friendly solicitation in the world, heaped more and

more things to eat on the big plate, till there was an outlying ridge of fried cakes, bread, meat, potatoes, and other things which had fallen off the plate, or which the guest had succeeded in pushing away, as Red’s big hands tried to press it upon him.

Commonly, the log crew ate its fill in twenty to twenty-five minutes, but this night it took them nearly forty minutes to dine. Some of them ate twice as much as usual, just to have an excuse to remain. The cook brought two cups, one for coffee and one for tea—and while D. Cuecy was putting one down, Red would be lifting the other to his lips.

Probably D. Cuecy never had another meal like that. His woods hosts could not do enough for him. One even brought a ham from the shed and asked if he would have a slice. With some relief he escaped for a moment to the lobby, but there all hands turned too, to make him comfortable, and Red and Ross Comply tried to pull him to the log-end chairs which each provided for him.

Red proceeded to clean the rifle, which had been discharged that afternoon. It was a beautiful octagon barrel, with engraved breech and carved stock. Red brought out a long piece of hay wire, and wrapped a piece of red flannel around the end. Then he swabbed the flannel in stove ashes and proceeded to draw it through the barrel.

D. Cuecy could hear the wire scratching through the barrel, and he began to worry—he tried to explain that he had a real cleaner, real gun oil, and real linen rags.

“Them fancy things ain’t no good!” Red declared. “Takes good wood ashes to have a bite to clean a gun barr’l out!”

D. Cuecy protested, but in vain. In the mean while each of the others took out his other weapons and looked at them—a beautiful double-barrel shotgun, and a little twenty-two repeater. One fired the shot-gun at the chinkings of the logs; another emptied the “twenty-two” at an imaginary moose in one

corner—it was the toe of an old rubber boot.

“To-morrer!” Red Hamblin declared, “we’ll all go huntin’!”

D. Cuecy and his belongings were taken up into the dormitory, and he was shown to a cot beside the aisle, about midway between the ladder and the office, in which Foreman Bigger slept. His suit-cases and boxes were piled around him, and the loggers went to their own places.

Long after the loggers were in bunk, D. Cuecy was feeling around among his possessions, by the dim lantern light, trying to dispose of his things. He had never seen a log camp before!

During the night the loggers were restless. First one, then another would go ambling around. Red wanted his chewing tobacco; Ross Compty was trying to find his old pipe—not the new one! Slip Wanda pretended to be a somnambulist, and fell over D. Cuecy’s cot, and then it required five or six loggers to carry him back to his own cot and put him to bed.

At dawn D. Cuecy was heavy-eyed for want of sleep. The loggers stirring out for the day, however, boasted what a good night’s rest they had had, and Red remarked that he had never seen the boys so quiet as that night.

“Quiet! Quiet!” D. Cuecy repeated wonderingly.

“We got to get an early start this morning,” Red declared. “Them deers’ll be all over the ridges, a purty morning like this. Mebby we’ll get that old bear an’ her cubs started, too—the ones Mr. Vroon saw!”

They hurried down to the lobby, and by the time they were washed the cook called them to breakfast. D. Cuecy, hopeful of escaping to another seat than the one next to Red, failed. He discovered that once a man claims a seat at the table, it is his for the duration of his stay.

If he feared a repetition of the previous night’s overliberal helping, he was

disappointed. Red urged him to hurry with his eating, so they wouldn’t be late. Gulping down the hash, bread, hot coffee, and other things, Red urged his seat-mate to do likewise, and D. Cuecy, modest, embarrassed, and in strange quarters, was dragged away from the table before he had fairly tasted his breakfast.

Early as he was, however, he found that his woodsmen friends had prepared for the hunt. Slip Wanda had his big rifle, Red had his shotgun, and Ross Compty had his “twenty-two.” His nine-inch blade hunting-knife was flourishing in the hands of Peter Lansley.

“Come on, boys!” Red shouted, and led the way up the ridge.

D. Cuecy, with nothing but his hunting-boots to carry, pressed up with the others. Every time he hinted gently, that he would just as soon carry his gun, the woodsmen poo-hoed the idea. Let a guest carry a gun! That’d never do in the world!

They hurried breathlessly to the ridge back, and along the top to Cotton Mountain, and down to Cotton Lake, through the balsam swamp and caribou moss to Pekan Rocks, and up over the broken stones to the foot of a high ledge, and around through gullies and over ledges—everywhere at top speed.

“Lot’s of bears in this country!” Red exclaimed, hauling up his gun and firing a charge of buckshot down the mountain.

Immediately the rifles opened up, and there was a fusillade.

“Wha—what you shooting at?” D. Cuecy exclaimed.

“Heard sunthin’!” Red exclaimed briefly. “Same’s you did last night! I didn’t hear nothin’ squeal, so I guess there wa’n’t nothin’ hit that time!”

In half an hour, D. Cuecy was breathless; in an hour he was steaming with sweat, and before mid-morning he was so tired he could hardly stagger along. Over and over again he had declared that he never had

hunted that way before—didn't know people ever hunted that way—always had supposed people must keep quiet when they hunted!

"This ain't still huntin'!" Red declared. "This is what we call drivin' 'em! You see, when you get 'em all stirred up an' runnin' all around, good, all you got to do is set down, an' purty soon the deers an' bears'll be runnin' right up to you, ker-slam! Got to keep yer eyes peeled, then, er they'll jump on you, like's not!"

"You bet!" Ross Comply exclaimed. "I'd ruther be gouged by a hemlock bark spud than git hit by one of them deer's dew claws!"

D. Cucey was staggering when Red stopped all hands with a yell. There are many tasks less exacting, less exhausting than following a score or so of loggers six or eight miles up and down mountains and through heavy Adirondack timber.

D. Cucey dropped upon a log and sat with lower jaw hanging, catching his breath. He was so tired that his face was streaky white and red, and his lips pinched out and bluish.

"Here's a good place to wait. We'll set D. Cussy here, and the rest of us'll scatter around—you set here!" Red ordered, and immediately the loggers started away on their made courses.

"Here's yer gun!" Red handed him the double-barreled shotgun. "Set here! Don't move! When ye see a big buck, er bear, er anything you want to kill, plug 'im! Then holler! We'll all be around here, settin', an' waitin' fer them deers to stir aroun' our way!"

Then Red hurried away at top speed, watching over his shoulder, for he was afraid that D. Cucey might begin to shoot before he was out of sight. A few minutes later Red joined the rest of the loggers a quarter of a mile away, in the direction of the log camp.

"Leave him any cartridges?" some one asked.

"You bet!" Red grinned. "'Bout a hundred. Come along toward night, and he'll

need some. That gun of his'n makes a good roar, an' we can hear him when he gets excited."

There was a laugh, and the crew walked slowly toward the camp, which was hardly a quarter of a mile farther on. They were jubilant. It had been a hot and breathless ramble through the woods, but they had had their reward in watching the "city feller" tripping and stumbling and staggering along.

"Mr. Vroon will certainly be pleased, greatly pleased, the way you boys have entertained D. Cucey!" Foreman Bigger grinned, when they had given him a minute description of the ridges they had gone over, of the swamps they had crossed, of the ledges they had climbed.

"The entertainment ain't only jes' begun!" Red declared. "Long about ten-eleven o'clock we'll have to go out 'n look for him! We kinda want to listen, so's he won't get too fur away!"

The camp guest was not at his place for the big Sunday dinner. But two or three hours later, after taking naps in the dormitory, shaving and washing, doing the various odd little jobs that fall to the Sundays in a log camp, Red and Slip Wanda went out to see if the hunter was still at his post.

They were half-way to the gap in the ridge where D. Cucey had been left when they heard the double-barreled gun roar twice.

"Shootin' at some noises!" Red spat in disgust. "Them kind ain't fit to go out without a chain an' collar on their necks! He'd probably kill us if he hearn us!"

"I ain't goin' clost to him!" Slip swore vehemently. "I never wanted to be took for no buck!"

From the top of the ridge they could look into the gap. There sat D. Cucey, with his shotgun ready for instant action, looking first one way and then another. His alertness was commendable. The woodsmen, after a few minutes, returned to the camp.

“He’s all right,” Red announced. “He ain’t learned much, yet!”

The day waned, and a little while before dark the boys heard more shooting—four quick shots—out toward the gap where D. Cuecy was sitting “hunting deer.”

“Whoee-e-e! He’s killed ’im now!” Red grinned, “and the boys all laughed. “By an’ by we’ll hear ’im tryin’ to come to camp with his meat!”

They had left D. Cuecy out on the ridge to “enjoy the night.” They knew that long since the tenderfoot had begun to grow hungry and that he was now expecting them to arrive any minute to lead him to the warm shanty of the log jobbers.

After supper, in the dark of the night, they went outside and listened. They had not long to wait. They heard a cry up on the mountain, a long, ascending wail. It was followed by the hollow thunder that a shotgun makes in the gloom. For answer, there was a hooting by a great white owl Somewhere down in the creek swamp. The woodsmen kept silent.

“We’ll go get him, after a time!” Red grinned. “Two—three hours up there’ll do ’im a lot of good!”

The woodsmen were restless, however, and an hour later they took lanterns and started out to find the man. They spread out on the ridge side, and they whooped and yelled at each other at the top of their voices. Sometimes they stopped to listen; when they listened they heard loud response to their cries, and they all laughed. D. Cuecy was waiting for them!

“I bet he won’t forget hisn’s fustest deer hunt!” Red laughed. “He’ll be that plumb wore out an’ hongry that he’ll never rest till he’s hit the trail fer home—and Old Vroon’ll send us a Thanksgivin’ dinner of thanks on his part, riddin’ him of that kind of a bug!”

“Look out the darned fool don’t shoot any of you!” Foreman Bigger warned. “Find

out where he is, and watch him! Probably he’s crazy, now!”

They hunted along the ridge back and called down into the gap from a safe distance.

“Hey-y! You there?” Red roared.

“You bet!” a shrill voice replied. “I can see your light—right down this way!”

“He don’t seem scairt up much,” Red turned to Bigger with disappointment. “Got a fire, too! See it! The son of a gun!”

Sure enough, D. Cuecy had built a little fire between a rock and a log, the sparks of which they could see flying up. They roared down the slope, talking, laughing and shouting for the hunter not to shoot.

“What luck’d you boys have?” D. Cuecy demanded the first thing. “See any deer or bears, or anything?”

“Only a few shots at ’em, here and there,” Red admitted. “I suppose you got a few?”

“You bet!” D. Cuecy exclaimed. “My! But game’s awful thick around these woods! Why, seems like there must be hundreds of deer and bears around—right over there. Come on, I’ll show you!”

Twenty yards away, lying sprawled in the gap runway was a two-hundred-pound buck, and then, part way up the side of the gap, opposite, D. Cuecy showed them two bears, an old mother and her yearling cub.

“Two got away!” the hunter exclaimed. “My! If only I’d had a repeater! I couldn’t shoot but two, and the others ran so fast—I’d been awful hungry, but I killed a rabbit and a partridge, and I ate them, and wasn’t it lucky I had one of those woods salt-cellars in my pocket? I’m going to take these right home to-morrow and then I’m coming back to hunt around here a month. I got some friends’ll be just wild to come! I just must tell Mr. Vroon how awful good you’ve been to me! And say, boys, I must do something for you, letting me have the best place to sit, the way you did! I’ll make it right, I certainly

shall!”

“I guess we’d better cut some poles to pack them—them games in,” Red turned to the speechless loggers. “I just knowed that feller’d plug’em. When’d the bears come along?”

“Just after I shot the rabbit for supper. I shot twice at the rabbit and then the bears came running—”

“They smelled the bloods—fresh blood!” Red explained.

D. Cuecy Pelyon talked to midnight, telling the boys what he had done and how he had done it. In the morning he saw his game loaded on the tote wagon on its way to the railroad. He departed with the wagon, but he left his luggage behind, except one suit case. He announced that he was going to return immediately. He was going to bring his friends, he said, and they’d all enjoy it so much, among such good fellows!

“Bring ’em on!” Foreman Bigger cried grinning. “We kin stand it, if you can!”

Out in the chopping the boys wondered how many of them would be

mistaken for deer, when the chappies were all there. No one could tell. Foreman Bigger announced that every man would have to wear a red shirt for safety’s sake.

Instead of D. Cuecy and his friends coming, however, Mr. Vroon arrived.

“Good evening, boys!” he greeted them at the supper table. “I thought I’d thank you for entertaining D. Cuecy so—so well. He wrote and told how you drove deer and bear to him in flocks. There’s a wagon load of stuff coming in, special, for your Thanksgiving dinner. But he couldn’t come up himself with his friends, not this year.”

“Well now, that’s too danged bad!” Red exploded.

“Yes—yes,” Mr. Vroon shook his head. “He specially said I should thank Mr. Hamblin. I thought at first I’d just send word—but, say, boys, what did you do to him? I couldn’t make out from what he said.”

“Nothin’!” Red exclaimed, grinning sheepishly. “It’s what he done to us what bothers me!”