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IN THE "LION'S" DEN.

"Come, hurry up, Joe," said Tom Bentley to his younger brother. "The sun's most an hour high, and we've got to go over the divide before we'll find any game. It's all been scoured away from this side."

"All right, Tom; I'm just putting up some lunch. We'll likely want it before we get back," replied Joe.

The two boys, aged respectively 17 and 15, were the sons of John Bentley, the "working boss" of my gang of miners, whose boarding cabin was situated well up in the Rocky Mountains, about three miles above Georgetown, Col. They were going out for a day's hunting, and as both were fairly good shots, they expected to bag an elk or a black-tailed deer, or perhaps, better still, one of those exceedingly wary creatures, the mountain sheep.

For hours the hardy young fellows toiled steadily on and up, over or around rocky bluffs and through intervening gulches, until at last, far above the timber line, they reached the summit of the "divide" and began to tread ravines and climb over the billowy hills of the Pacific slope, but as yet without seeing a sign of game.

By noon they had got once more below the region of eternal snow, and among a scattered but gradually thickening growth of pine, spruce, hemlock and poplar, while on every sheltered spot between the giant bowlders were luxuriant patches of grass and blooming flowers.

"We'd better take dinner now," observed Tom, as they seated themselves by a bubbling spring. We'll find game before long and we won't want to stop then."

Each of the boys carried a good Winchester rifle and a hunting knife. They were tolerably expert in the use of both, and with the daring impetuosity of youth, neither would have hesitated to attack anything in the shape of a wild beast.

Now one who knows nothing of mountains is apt to think that the sides of such are continuous ascents or descents, but this is far from being the case; the traveller, whether going up or down, is at one moment winding through a ravine and the next climbing a corresponding declivity, or, perhaps, walking over a stretch of level tableland, being at times, except from the nature of the ever-changing flora, quite unable to tell whether he is ascending or descending.

As our young hunters were silently eating Joe happened to glance at a perpendicular cliff, which rose abruptly from the little valley to a height of 300 feet or so, its base being at least 250 yards from where the boys sat.

At this moment a mountain sheep, a big male, with a prodigious pair of curling horns, showed out against the sky on the very edge of the cliff and stood surveying the country below, as is the habit of this animal. Doubtless he saw plainly the two youths, but considered himself perfectly safe.

"Let's take a crack at him," whispered Joe. "He's got the biggest pair of horns I ever saw."

In that wonderfully clear air the keen-eyed boy could, as he said, almost count the wrinkles on the horns.

"It's a mighty long shot, well, out to 300 yards, counting the rise," replied Tom; "but put up your back sight to that notch and we'll try our luck. Fire at the word 'three.'"

Each boy now knelt behind a sapling, to the side of which his unobscured left hand firmly held the rifle, while his eye ranged along the sights. "One, two, three," softly cried Tom, and the two reports rang out as one.

"Hoover!" "Hoover!" We've got him!" Joe yelled, as, after reeling for an instant, the great man pitched headlong down the precipice.

"I'm afraid he smashed all to smithereens," said Tom. "But we'll get what's left of him, anyhow. Come on," and the excited marksmen dashed down through the increasing thickets to inspect their prize.

"Why, he's hardly smashed a bit! My, ain't those little horns, though!" exclaimed Joe. "But it'll be a tough job to get them and the hindquarters back to camp."

The wretched man killed a mountain sheep whose head and horns without a particle of skin, weighed 40 pounds.

"Well, we've got to do it," responded Tom, "for I don't believe even father himself has ever seen such a head as this."

But say, Joe, we needn't go back to-day unless we like. We've got lots of meat now, so we can hunt all the afternoon and sleep in this cave at night," pointing to a low, dark opening at the foot of the rocks.

"Yes, it looks warm and dry in there," assented Joe. We'll see what kind of a place it is after we've skinned the sheep and hung up the head and saddle. If we want to eat any mutton here we can take some off the forequarters."

It took the lads nearly an hour, however, to remove the heavy hide and properly dress the carcass by removing such parts as were badly bruised. Then, leaving the meat meantime piled up on the skin, Joe said: "I'm going in now to look at our bedroom, Tom. There can't be any living thing in there, for I don't see a single track about," both boys totally ignoring the fact that hundreds of animals might have passed over the rocky ground without leaving a mark.

So, taking only his knife with him, the rash youth crept into the hole while Tom sat down to rest. In a few seconds he heard his brother utter a joyous shout and this was immediately followed by a series of angry kitten-like mewings and a slight scuffling noise.

Tom was alert enough now, and seizing his rifle, he sprang to his feet, anxiously awaiting developments.

Presently Joe, chuckling with delight, scrambled awkwardly out, having much ado to retain his hold upon three beautifully striped and spotted little creatures which he bore in his hands.

"What in the world can these be, Tom?" he asked. They're not rabbits nor squirrels, sure. They look like kittens of some kind of wildcat; but who ever saw even a tame cat with such lovely fur as this? They're not much bigger than rats, but just see what teeth and claws they've got!"

Tom could not answer as he curiously examined the soft, fluffy things which bit, scratched and resisted handling with all their little might.

"I can't imagine what they are," he said at last. "If I didn't know that the jaguar—called a tiger down south—never comes so far north as this, I might think they were cubs of that kind. I give it up, but let's leave the mutton till to-morrow and take the pretty little things to camp. Maybe some of the old hunters there will know what they are."

The mystery was not to remain so long unsolved, however. With some trouble and amid much puerile scratching and mewings the boys managed to tie the legs of two of the pugnacious younglings, which now lay helpless on the ground, while they were occupied with the third, when close at hand, between the thicket and the cliff, resounded a harsh, screaming cry of rage and before either of the startled youths could grasp his gun, a great, tawny gray body shot through the air, and knocked them both down, as if felled by a lightning stroke. Then, providentially not stopping to dispatch the despoilers, a full-grown female puma picked up one of the recumbent cubs and darted into the cave.

"Quick, Joe! Quick, for your life! It's a mountain lion!" shouted Tom, staggering to his feet.

How 'twas done they could never tell, but both the partially stunned boys managed to seize their rifles before the enraged beast reappeared; and when, terrifiedly snarling, she bounded toward them, both fired; and both, tremulous with fright, scored a clean miss.

Yet the mother instinct was so strong in the furious creature that she merely caught up another cub in her mouth and again glided into the den.

"Steady, brother, steady!" gasped Tom. "Shoot while the brute is crawling out of the hole. It's a case of life or death with us now."

By a mighty effort of will, forcing their trembling nerves into quietude, the impatient lads stood shoulder to shoulder, with rifles pointed straight for the cave's mouth and the instant they caught the gleam of the puma's blazing eyes, both again fired together, this time with true aim; for, at the crack of the gun, the fearful beast, worthy under other circumstances of a better fate, stretched quivering out in death, both bullets having pierced her brain.

Weak as infants, now that the danger was past, the brothers sank half fainting to the ground; and then for the first time Tom noticed that a stream of blood, running down inside his coat sleeve, was pouring over his left hand. On further examination it was found that his shoulder had been rather severely lacerated by a passing stroke of the puma's claw, when she first charged. But the young fellow felt too thankful for his own and Joe's escape to heed the somewhat serious wound and by the time it was bound up both boys were themselves again.

Dragging the great carcass out to the open, they stripped off the valuable pelt as quickly as possible; and then, after hanging the remains of the mountain sheep on a limb beyond the reach of possibly prowling grizzlies, they set out for camp, one carrying the puma's skin and the other the orphaned cubs.

I had come up from Georgetown that afternoon to inspect the mine and was in the cabin when the boys arrived shortly after dark. The youngsters were greatly elated over their good luck and their father seemed proud of them if they had discovered a bonanza.

As the only one present who had ever seen puma kittens, I was obliged to give a little lecture on natural history, which I concluded by saying: "If those cubs live, boys, you'll see them turn the color of their mother before winter comes. The creature that you call mountain lion is the puma or cougar. Many people in the Eastern States and Canada call it 'panther,' or vulgarly 'painter.' But there is no panther in America. That is a spotted beast, much resembling the leopard and is found only in Africa, Asia and the East Indian Archipelago."

The next morning Joe went out with one of the men and a burro and brought in the dead sheep, with skin and horns complete. All hands, in consequence, feasted for several days upon wild mutton, in this case rather fat meat, but when taken from a young and fat animal it is far superior, in my estimation, to that of either the elk or buffalo.

The cubs were nourished for a while by the milk of two goats kept in camp; and two of them, before they were sold six months afterward, had become tame and playful as domestic cats, but the other was killed by a savage dog in less than a week after its capture.—Chicago News.

WELL SATISFIED.

Folks living under the shadow of the Mountain are Pleased.

HAMILTON, Sept. 9.—A very large increase has lately taken place in the sale of the specific remedy for complaints of the liver, and Doid's Kidney Pills are in great demand. There are no complaints either from druggists or the public. The druggists being so near Toronto the head-quarters for distributing are never in any danger of running out of the medicine for long no matter how large the demand may be, and the public has long been thoroughly satisfied as to the valuable qualities of the pills, and the manner in which they invariably effect a cure.

Stain by Bonaparte.

The National Zeitung relates a story about Napoleon I, which is vouched for by an old citizen of Erfurt, who in 1812 was present when the incident occurred, being then a member of the Guard of Honor, escorting Napoleon while in the city. He states that Napoleon, while in a fit of temper stabbed and killed one of his staff officers on the parade ground. The old man says: "Great masses of troops on the march to Russia came in every day. The contributions and requisitions became heavier every day, and the suffering of the inhabitants of Erfurt had reached a point that seemed intolerable, and a further increase could hardly have been possible. All private houses were over-ridden by soldiers and the ordinary necessities of life rose in price to an extent heretofore unknown; all commerce and ordinary traffic was stopped. The French officers dominated the local authorities and the inhabitants were restricted in their movements to the most narrow limits. Finally Napoleon himself arrived and a great review was arranged for in the vicinity of the town. During this parade a careful inspection of every regiment was ordered by the Emperor, who himself assisted in the work. At one regiment of artillery the Emperor halted, dismounted from his charger and carefully inquired into the condition of the regiment, personally inspecting the equipments of the artillerymen, and, in some cases, demanding of the men to take off their clothes so that they might be more carefully inspected. It was rumored that a complaint had been made to the Emperor by some men from that regiment that the money that had been provided for new equipment had only partially been used for the purpose, the greater part of it having found its way into the pockets of the Colonel; also that the rations were rather scant and felder scarce and of bad quality. During this inspection the commander of the regiment remained at the side of the Emperor; their conversation being carried on in a low tone, no one could understand what they were speaking about; the Emperor seemed very much dissatisfied. Suddenly the Emperor drew his sword and made a lunge with it at the Colonel, who fell back with a deep wound in his breast. Immediately the Imperial suite made a circle around the two, shutting out all the rest of the proceedings from the view of others present. Napoleon returned to the city on horseback shortly after the occurrence, and the Colonel, who died shortly after he was wounded, was carried to his quarters on a litter and buried the next day. No paper dared to mention the affair, and word was given out to those present that they should not dare speak of what they had seen, or they would be held responsible for the consequences; the Emperor's spies being known to circulate freely in Erfurt at the time, good care was taken not to speak of the matter. Thus it was that the murderous deed of the quick-tempered Corsican was not mentioned in historical works, although tradition has continued it to our days."

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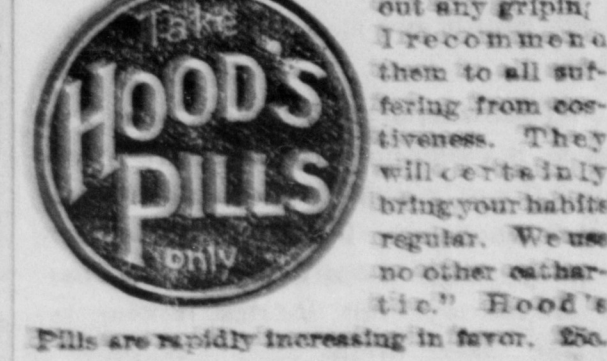
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ESTABLISHED 1889.

The Review,

RICHIBUCTO, NEW BRUNSWICK.

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