

## A PIONEER STORY.

The little drama herein related was enacted a long time ago, when I was a boy seven years of age; but as I knew the actors well, and grew up almost side by side with them, I am in a position to vouch for the entire accuracy of the tale. The scene of which was a partially cleared farm, not far from the one on which I myself was born.

This farm was owned and occupied by a man named George Morgan, who, three years before the date of my story, had removed, with his wife and two children from the State of Ohio, and bought the then wild tract, put up a log-house and barn, and gone to work with the indomitable energy of a backwoods pioneer to make himself a home.

All went well with the sturdy settler; he now had thirty acres of fertile land cleared and partly under crop; his son, Robert, at this time fourteen years of age, was becoming more helpful; while "Baby" Madge, four year old, was the delight and pet of the household.

By the middle of August in this year (1831), all the produce of the little fields, except Indian corn, late oats and potatoes, had been safely harvested, and very early on a certain morning the thrifty farmer set out with his ox-team and wooden-wheeled vehicle in the neighborhood, to convey to a small grist-mill, ten miles distant, a few bushels of new wheat, in order to provide the family with enough to last until the early snows should come.

This precious grain had been laboriously threshed out by means of the ancient hand-flail, and winnowed in nature's fanning mill, the free winds of heaven; and it is not surprising that bread made from it should seem to taste (as old-timers strenuously insist) far sweeter than any which can be produced from our modern, double-refined, patent-process flour, out of which, in truth, the life is too often ground.

As Mr. Morgan would have to "wait his turn" at the primitive water-power mill, he was not expected to return until late at night, perhaps not before next day, and his wife was thus left with only Rob and little Madge for company. But, so far as she knew, there was nothing to be afraid of; the few Indians still remaining in the country being all friendly, and none of the wild animals, then abounding in the woods, being at all likely, she thought, to make a descent upon the "clearings" at this season. Besides, Rob was in himself a strong tower of defense, not many growing men excelling the stout, active lad in woodcraft or address in the use of firearms.

He had been all day engaged in a field close at hand, binding up into sheaves a quantity of oats previously "cradled" by his father; but about five o'clock in the afternoon he broke off for the purpose of hunting up and bringing home the three milch cows, which were allowed to roam the woods at will.

Before starting on this errand, however, he turned into the house for a drink, and was taken quite aback when his mother said:

"What, all alone, Rob? What have you done with little sister?"

"I have seen nothing of baby since dinner time, mother. Is she not here?" replied the boy.

"Not seen Madge? Why, Rob, she went out nearly an hour ago to 'help poor brudder work,' as she said. She must have lain down somewhere and dropped off to sleep."

Supposing that they would find the child taking a nap, as she had once or twice before done, under the shade of some hazel bushes growing between the house and barn, mother and son strolled leisurely out to bring her in; but to their great surprise, she was not to be found, nor did repeated calls elicit any reply.

"The little mischief must be fast asleep on the hay-mow," hopefully observed Mrs. Morgan, walking on toward the barn.

But neither here was any sign of the wanderer to be seen; and now really alarmed, the searchers separated, and took different directions, the mother going down the bank of the creek, and Rob along a rail fence leading to the edge of the woods, about one-fourth of a mile away; while from both reiterated, but alas! all unanswered shouts of: "Madge! Madge! Baby! Baby!" broke in upon the peaceful hush of the quiet summer eve.

Now at many places, in the corners of the "snake" fence mentioned, there had sprung up clumps of wild raspberry and blackberry bushes, and, as many of the latter were still laden with wild fruit, Rob expected every moment to come upon the missing innocent, her little hands and mouth stained with the red juice, lying asleep after having eaten her fill. Thoroughly exploring, as he went, every patch of these vines and bushes, the boy finally arrived at the unbroken forest without having seen a trace of his sister, and, greatly puzzled, set down on a big log at the margin of a black-ash swamp to think the matter over.

Although far from imagining that any real harm had befallen the child, he naturally felt extremely anxious as he thoughtfully scanned the ground on all sides.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry of horror, for there, not two yards from his seat, were deeply impressed in the moist marsh soil the huge footprints of an evidently enormous bear, and close beside the tracks lay a tiny bit of blue ribbon with which he had seen Madge playing at noon. Poor Rob could hardly refrain from shrieking aloud at these ominous signs met his eyes; but he was not one to give way to despair so long as anything remained to be done, and on carefully examining the foot-marks, he was somewhat relieved to find that they did not penetrate into the swamp at all, but were presently lost on the hard, dry trail which led, by a greatly circuitous route, to an almost inaccessible rocky fastness in the hills, where several bears had long been supposed to harbor. Nor could he detect a single drop of blood anywhere about, and with the discovery of this fact was born in a wild hope that possibly his little sister might be carried off unharmed, at least until the monster reached his cave—and this the gallant boy determined he should never do. For Rob to resolve was to act, and now he turned and ran with all his might back to the house, fervently praying at every stride that his mother might not have returned—as, indeed, she had not.

On the wall of the kitchen hung his father's old flint-lock rifle—always loaded

—and to secure this, with the powder-horn and bullet-pouch, was the work of an instant.

Then away across the diameter of the great bend sped the young hunter. Every inch of the surrounding country was familiar to him, and he knew enough of lazy bear-nature to feel sure that the animal now, as he believed, bearing Madge away, would, if not disturbed or alarmed, keep to a quiet walk along the easy path rather than break a harder and shorter one for himself and his somewhat unwieldy burden through the thick underbrush.

Thus the bear, in order to reach his cave, would have to travel fully two miles, while Rob, following an intersecting cow-path, could, by fast running, intercept him, provided he had not gained too great a start; and for the rest he would trust to Providence and his own nerve. (A year or two after this event, when I myself had become old enough to put such a question, I once asked Rob what his thoughts were as he ran his desperate race against death, and his reply was in strict keeping with his noble character. "I hardly know," said he, "whether I thought at all. I just prayed, prayed, that I might be in time.")

And now the resolute boy, panting from violent exertion, came out upon the trail leading to the hills, and which at this spot was slightly covered by dust. Almost fainting with anxiety, he stooped over close to the surface of the ground, dreading to find evidence that the bear had already passed. But no; not a track was to be seen; and, with a great sigh of relief, he stationed himself behind a large linden-tree on the edge of the path. The time of suspense which followed seemed hours long to him, but it was really a few minutes only before his sharp young ears caught a gentle rustling sound, as if of some moving body softly brushing against the thick bushes bordering the trail on either side.

Whatever might be coming seemed to be as yet fifty yards away, around a curve in the path, and Rob noiselessly opened the pan of his gun-lock, shook out the priming, and, replacing it with fresh powder, stood waiting, without a thought of fear for himself, but with a heart so loudly beating that it seemed like to burst. A moment more, and a gray squirrel, frisking about the ground some rods away, uttered a quick chatter of alarm, and scurrying along the path, scampered swiftly up the trunk of a neighboring tree. Apprised by this timely warning that the crisis was at hand, Rob peered cautiously from behind his shelter, and hardly suppressed a yell of rage as, coming slowly along the trail, he saw an immense, overgrown black bear walking with head held high and carrying in his jaws the limp form of baby Madge.

In the fleeting glimpse the boy ventured to take, he saw that the child was held crosswise, face downward, in the brute's mouth, and as the latter shambled carelessly along, her little hands and feet occasionally touched the ground; but still he saw no stains of blood, and a thrill of renewed hope ran through his nerves—now braced and steady as steel. Nevertheless, as he afterward explained, the situation was a terrible one. He could easily shoot the animal through the body as it passed, but he was well aware that an old bear, black as well as grizzly, will often, even after the heart itself is pierced by a bullet, work deadly havoc; and the sound of his shot, so fired, would simply be his sister's death-knell—presuming that she yet lived. No! if he would save the child, his first shot must either penetrate the brute's brain or sever the spinal-cord, so that death or loss of motion should be instantaneous; and yet he dare not fire from one side at the bear's head, lest by possible mishap he might strike the little girl; hence he resolved upon the desperate risk to himself of squarely facing the brute in open fight.

And now the supreme moment had come! What slight breeze there was blew directly across the path toward the hunter, and thus no betraying scent was wafted to the bear, which, totally unaware of danger, had arrived within three feet of the tree hiding his watchful enemy, when with a sharp "Hello!" the latter sprang out and blocked his way.

So sudden was the apparition and so commanding the young hero's mien, the astounded animal came to a full stop, dropped his prey, and wavered for a breath or two in a kind of stupid indecision as to whether he should attack or fly. The instant's hesitation sealed his fate; for Rob, throwing the rifle to his shoulder with an inward prayer that the flint might not miss fire, placed the muzzle within six inches of the brute's forehead and pulled the trigger.

The heavy bullet, striking just above the line of the eyes, crashed through the brain, and the black monster sank dead to the ground with scarcely the quiver of a hair.

Then the brave boy, trembling like a leaf, now that the fearful tension was relaxed, knelt by the side of his sister and examined the motionless form as best he could. To his unspeakable joy no trace of a wound could be seen, nor were the child's garments torn, except slightly at the back of the strong waistband, by which the bear had evidently carried her, but, apparently, without once touching her tender flesh with his teeth.

It even seemed to be almost miraculous,

but Rob, even in the midst of his boundless gratitude, remembered having read of a similar escape; and he now hopefully directed his efforts toward restoring poor little Madge to consciousness. The task, however, proved beyond his skill, and a great revulsion of feeling came over him as the fearful thought flashed through his mind that perhaps the fright alone had driven out the sweet young life.

"Oh, if mother were only here!" he cried aloud; and with the wish came prompt action.

Leaving his rifle lying across the bear's carcass, the athletic young fellow lifted the child in his strong arms, and with all possible speed made his way to the house, rather more than a half-mile distant.

So soon as he had emerged from the woods, and while yet several hundred yards from home, he saw his mother, after her own fruitless search, standing at the open door, and wringing her hands in impotent anguish. She caught sight of, and ran swiftly to meet the pair.

But so deep and deathlike was "baby's" swoon that even to her experienced eyes it seemed extremely doubtful whether life yet remained in the delicate form; and the poor woman broke into pitiful moans of grief, as, snatching the little one her bosom, she rushed frantically back to the house.

But pretty Madge was not dead, nor even hurt, and a few minutes of her mother's skillfully applied exertions sufficed to kindle once more to a healthful glow the flickering vital spark. Then, while encircling both children in her arms, the happy woman sobbed out her joy and thanksgiving, and the little innocent told how she had wandered off along the fence, picking berries, and when stooping down to rescue her dropped ribbon, had been caught up by "a great big black thing," and then—she knew nothing more.

When told what had carried her off, and how she had been rescued, the child, with that touching faith which little girls ever have in big brothers, artlessly exclaimed:

"Oh, brudder Wob can kill mos' anythin'. I s'pose the wicked bear would have eat me up for his supper, and then mudder would have no baby, and poor fadder would be awful sorry."

Mr. Morgan, having got an early "turn" at the mill, came home that same evening just before dark, and after having heard, with infinite horror, pride and joy, the wondrous tale, he and Rob went out with the sled before unhitching the oxen, to bring in the boy's prize, the hind quarters of which were quite valuable for food, though the pelt at that season was not of much account.

So far as the writer is aware, there are but two or three instances on record of children having been carried off by bears and rescued unhurt. One of the cases occurred in Switzerland in the year 1790 and the other in Western Canada in the early part of this century.

But it must be always borne in mind that the bear is not essentially, or purely, a carnivorous animal.

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TO THE PEOPLE.—Please notice that I have removed my Drug Store to the corner opposite the old stand on Charlotte and St. James streets, where I also reside now, and will be prepared to fill prescription orders all night and all day, giving the same my personal attention. Customers during the night will please note Electric Bell on shop door which communicates with my residence.

**JAME McKINNEY, Druggist.**

Office for Agriculture, Fredericton.

### Harry Wilkes,

1896.

THE Standard Bred Hambletonian Stallion HARRY WILKES, the property of the Government of New Brunswick, will make the

### Season of 1892 at St. John.

TERMS—\$35.00 for the season, to be paid at time of first service.

Harry Wilkes, 1896, is by George Wilkes, 519, dam Belle Rice by Whitehall.

He will stand at Ward's One Mile House on the Marsh Road.

The intention is to send the stallion down about the first of May. Should he be required before that time, arrangements may be made to send him down earlier by applying at this office.

March 30th, 1892.

JULIUS L. INCHES.

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## Assessors' Notice

THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS OF TAXES of the City of Saint John, in the present year hereby require all persons liable to be rated, forthwith to furnish to the Assessors

True Statements of all their Real Estate, Personal Estate and Income,

and hereby give notice that Blank Forms, on Which statements may be furnished under the City Assessment Law, can be obtained at the office of the Assessors, and that such statements must be perfected under oath, and filed in the office of the Assessors within THIRTY DAYS from the date of this notice.

Dated this first day of April, A. D. 1892.

WM. F. BUSTING, Chairman,  
JOHN WILSON, } Assessors  
URIAH DRAKE, }  
RICHARD FARMER, }

Extracts from "The St. John City Assessment Law, 1889."

SEC. 118.—"The Assessors shall ascertain, as nearly as possible, the particulars of the real estate, the personal estate and the income of any person who has not brought in a statement in accordance with this notice and as required by this Law, and shall make an estimate thereof, at the true value and amount to the best of their information and belief; and such estimate shall be conclusive upon all persons who have not filed their statements in due time, unless they can show a reasonable excuse for the omission."

SEC. 128.—"No person shall have an abatement unless he has filed with the Assessors the statement, under oath, within the time hereinbefore required; nor shall the Common Council in any such case sustain an appeal from the judgment of the Assessors unless they shall be satisfied that there was good cause why the statement was not filed in due time, as herein provided."

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