

TWO LOGGING-CAMP BOYS

"That other water-packer stood around like a bump on a log. He wasn't worth a cent," asserted Hob.

Hob was a very important man in a logging camp, the most important man of all excepting the cook. Hob was the teamster who drove twelve oxen, and who had better wages than any chopper or sawyer or chain-tender. But the boy that Hob addressed did not seem to be abashed. Fred was determined to try.

"I won't stand 'around,'" he promised smiling.

Hob looked gravely at him. The foreman of the logging crew had hired Fred as "water-packer" in place of the despised individual that formerly occupied that position, and as the relations between the teamster and the water-packer of a logging camp are necessarily very close, Hob was anxious to make some estimate of the character of his future assistant.

"Do you know," questioned Hob, "that when you and I start with a load of logs, if you don't keep up with the team, and have the road wet enough, and do everything in a rush, that like's not the logs will shoot sudden and come down on top the team? Or, if you don't have water enough on hand, some hard pull the load'll hang up, 'n the men will have to come with their jack-screws to get the logs started again? That last water-packer did that thing more'n six times! He was more trouble 'n good, 'n one time he took a false step 'n come near being thrown in front of the logs 'n run over himself. It just wore on me watching him. Why, the lives of the oxen 'n the teamster 'n his own, too, 's in the hands of a water-packer sometimes. You've got to be lively, always!"

Hob looked impressively at Fred. The boy smiled again, and then nodded his head gravely. Hob watched him as he ate the last remnants of his piece of beef.

"We'll see," meditated Hob, "we'll see."

But notwithstanding Hob's distrust of his new helper, the first trip down from the logging camp was satisfactory. Fred found that there were tanks of water along the logging road way, and scattered by the roadsides here and there and everywhere were five-fallon coal-oil cans that had stout wooden handles fastened to them. The cans were full of water, having been filled when the team came back before.

"You'll have to fill every one of them when we come up again," said Hob.

But things, going down, were done with a rush, as Hob had prophesied. Fred flew from one can to another, dashing the water before the logs to keep them moving along smoothly without straining the team too much. Hob shouted and gesticulated and flew from the "off" side of the oxen to the "nigh" and back again. Fred would have marvelled at Hob's agility had there been time. The dust rose in clouds in spite of the water, the seven tremendous logs, some of which being more than six feet through, had been split by blasting-powder before the load was made up to haul, slipped onward. Hob brandished his goad stick, and with cracks and scuffling, outcries and excitement, the heavy load went down the grades. Fred dashed about, dreading lest he should stumble or spill a can of water just as the team came to a steep grade.

But no such accident occurred. At the end of the pilgrimage, when the logs were being loaded on a car that would carry them away to the mill, Fred could perceive that he had risen in Hob's estimation. This was worth working for, even if Fred did feel almost exhausted with the hurried, exciting work he had done. Hob had risen in Fred's estimation, too, for had the boy not seen the teamster take those twelve down a grade so steep that the team kept on a jump to be out of the way of the logs, and Hob, being crowded just then by the team in a narrow place against the wall, and being in danger of being crushed, making a jump to the back of one ox, running on top of the animals as if they were so many planks, and springing down in safety on the other side of his rushing team? After that sight, Fred understood why Hob received better pay than any of the other members of the logging crew. The boy felt a sort of contempt for the former "water-packer" who would not energetically help such a worker as Hob.

"It's dangerous, that work of his," said Fred to the head chain-tender, afterwards, "I wouldn't want to do it for Hob's wages."

The "head chain-tender," who came fourth in importance in the logging camp, being excelled by only the teamster, the foreman, and the cook, smiled a little grimly as he looked after the rigging that he and his two assistants used in hauling the logs together and making up the load. "You'll see plenty dangerous things here, youngster," he returned. "Just you tend to your water-packing, and keep your feet lively. That's the only way any of us stay out of harm. Hob knows what he's about."

Fred became used to it after awhile. The tremendous redwood logs fastened together by "dogs," the rigging and blocks, the donkey engines, the hazardous escapes of the days, by and by became customary things, and he learned to take the necessary hardships and risks as a matter of course, and grumble, as the other men did, at only minor matters, such as the bringing into camp of a keg of poor butter, or the failure of some of the cook's experiments.

The sub screws that worked "swamping out" with the donkey engines were kind-hearted, rough fellows, and there was another lad, a "spool-tender" named Mac, with whom Fred struck up quite a friendship in the short intervals they had for seeing each other. Mac informed Fred that he did not believe that Hob ever drove the brad of his goad-stick into the hide of any ox of his team, and Fred, after watching, became convinced that Hob's kind-heartedness made the brad a useless thing, although Hercules, the lazy ox of the team, certainly deserved a prick sometimes. Hob seemed to rely on his own extraordinary shouts and gesticulations, and on the willingness of the strong leaders of the team, rather than on the brad of his hickory stick.

One of Mac's further confidences was the revelation that he had a mother and a mortgage, the latter of which he was working to pay off for the comfort of the former. Fred rewarded this revelation by telling Mac that he possessed a mother and a little sister, named Minnie, who called herself "Ginnie," being yet unable to quite cope

with some words, and who could not remember the letter D, although she recollected A, B, and C perfectly. Fred was very fond of Ginnie. Sometimes the thought of her made him a little homesick in the logging camp.

But it was not often that the two boys had much time for talking. One day, however, a glorious thing happened. Hob was compelled to put off a trip down the mountain because two of the oxen gave out, one of the leaders being sick. By what seemed to the boys the greatest good fortune, something ailed the donkey engine that Mac "swamped out" with, and that day Mac was not needed as "spooler," so he came back to camp. The two boys, after helping the other men half a day, were allowed a half-holiday, the first they had had since coming to the logging camp. In their delight the boys agreed to go hunting. Mac possessed a rifle that was quite ancient and somewhat untrustworthy, but Fred's weapon was better.

"Now, maybe you'll get a fox or a ground-squirrel, but you just keep clear of wild-cats, youngsters," commanded Hob, with a little anxiety in his tones, "wild-cats and panthers. I don't reckon on your seeing any 'round now, but you be careful. I ain't got no time to tend to chewed-up persons."

"Is Hercules one of the oxen that's sick?" inquired Mac, making ready to go. "Hercules!" returned Hob with a snuff of disdain, "that ox—he's as lazy—as lazy—well, I don't how how lazy he aint. He's too lazy to get sick."

The boys plunged off through the trees. It was delightful. No rushing at break-neck speed for cans of water, no clouds of dust, no "spooling."

"Let's go clear over to the end of the claim," suggested Fred. "I've never been so far."

"Neither've I," responded Mac. "None of the donkey engines have swamped out there yet. There're some of the choppers somewhere there, I guess, though."

They tramped on. Here and there in the distance they heard sounds of men at work, but at last the boys seemed to go beyond the vicinity of such sounds or heard them less frequently. At last Mac thought he saw a deer. They were both sure. They ran forward and the creature, whatever it was, disappeared among the trees. On run both boys. They hurried down a little ravine, jumped across a small brook, and ran up the mountain side again. They reached a point where a canyon invaded a spur of the mountain. There was a growth of timber through which the boys crawled.

"I thought some of the wood-sawyers were camped out somewhere here," whispered Mac, "but I don't hear them."

"There's something alive over yonder! I saw that bush move," whispered back Fred. "Maybe that's our deer."

The boys crawled through the timber and ran softly on. The mass of the forest was being left behind them. The trees were becoming quite scattered. The boys ran through some bushes, and there before them were two bears. One rose instantly on her haunches, glaring at the boys fiercely. The other, a small bear, eyed the new-comers in an undecided manner.

The boys stopped, struck with fright. They had known that bears were on the mountains sometimes, but they had not counted on meeting any. Mac, frightened at the looks of the larger bear, retreated into the brush, but Fred, before he fairly comprehended the danger of so doing, fired at her.

The larger bear fell, biting and tearing at the ground as though mortally wounded. "I've got her, Mac!" cried Fred, joyfully, but the smaller bear, roused from indecision by the shot, sprang toward Fred.

"Run, Mac, run!" screamed Fred. Fred himself ran. There were not many trees near, but one, a small buckeye, caught his eye, and he hurried to it and climbed. The smaller bear had followed, and Fred used his gun to beat her off as she attacked the tree.

You think you'll shake me down, don't you?" questioned Fred, as he leaned over, striking at the bear on this side and then on that.

"Fred! Fred! The other one's coming! She's coming!" yelled Mac, and Fred, hastily glancing in his direction, saw the bear he had wounded rushing furiously toward the tree he occupied. In Fred's excitement at the new enemy, he struck too wildly at his present one, and the gun flew from his hands. He gave a cry of despair as he saw his weapon fall at the feet of the bear below.

"Don't be scared, Fred. I'll shoot," he heard Mac call, but the smaller bear, now reinforced, sprang at that first spring of the larger bear, and down Fred went into what seemed to him the jaws of certain destruction. The two bears jumped forward, and the boy with a shriek of terror tore himself from the broken branches, and, not daring to stop for his gun, shot down the declivity, both bears following him. A ball from Mac's rifle sped after them and hit the bear that had been wounded before. With a scream of pain the animal ran faster after the fleeing Fred, evidently laying all the blame on him.

The little tree toward which Fred ran was about a dozen yards away on the side of the mountain. Could he reach it? Oh, the wounded bear at his heels! Faster ran the boy and the animal. The tree was gained. The bear was just behind! Fred caught the tree and swung himself around.

"I can't ram the ball down on the powder," he faintly heard Mac cry.

Fred had swung himself one side in time to give the wounded bear room enough to pass him, and in her blind rage she plunged under and passed headlong down the mountain-side a number of yards before she could recover herself. Fred felt his strength failing. He made a desperate effort to swing himself into the tree, but before he could do so, the smaller bear sprang and caught him by the ankle. With a scream of pain the boy lost hold of the tree, and fell to the ground. By a mighty effort he controlled himself and lay motionless.

"I mustn't move," he thought. "The other bear's coming." He could hear the wounded bear crash-

ing her way back through the underbrush. With a roar of fury she rushed upon him, but he lay motionless, breathless. The small bear still held to his ankle. The large, wounded bear stood over him, her breath hot in his face, waiting for the slightest sign of life. She waited till it seemed to Fred that he must move. He was possessed with a wild longing to struggle, to strike this awful beast above him.

The smaller bear released the hold on Fred's ankle. There was a sharp, beating pain there that made the boy feel faint. The wounded bear above him put her head down again and sniffed his face once more. Then she lifted up her head and screamed so suddenly and awfully that Fred almost betrayed himself by a jump. A scream after scream came from the bear's throat.

"She's triumphing to think I'm dead," thought Fred.

The bear put her head down and grasped his shoulder. She shook him a little. He lay still. He knew how those fierce eyes were watching. It was agony to lie this way. Oh, if Mac could only help! But he must not come near.

"I can't have him killed for me," thought Fred. "His poor mother and the mortgage."

It seemed to him he thought of everything, lying there. It seemed so long, so terribly long, with that hot breath in his face, those great claws ready to clutch him. Where was the smaller bear? Why were there no sounds from her? The painful moments went by.

The larger bear lifted her head again and broke out into screams once more. Her screeching echoed down the mountain side, echoed and re-echoed till the air seemed full of screams. There were footsteps in the underbrush. Was Mac coming? It would be dangerous for him to come near. Had that old rifle of his given out entirely? It would not be safe for him to come near enough to get Fred's rifle under the broken tree-boughs, only a dozen yards off. What would Mac do? Were those steps Mac's?

Fred dared slightly lift one eyelid while the bear standing across him screamed. He understood now. The steps were those of the smaller bear. He saw that deluded creature calmly trotting away to the canyon. Evidently that bear thought the fight was over.

"That bear wasn't wounded. That's the reason she give up so easily," thought the boy. "I'm afraid this one'll bite my head off before she's through."

He was growing dizzy. An old remembrance came to him of a game Ginnie and he used to play, in which she repeated after him, or he after her, the words separated into groups of three or four. "A black bear—to bite you—on the leg—and kill you—and get well Saturdays."

It seems to him in his faintness that he heard her now. He half tried to say the words, but his strength was going. He heard Ginnie laugh.

"A black bear—to get well Saturdays," his half-conscious brain said over and over to him.

"To get well Saturdays—to get well Saturdays,"

Ginnie's piping, sweet little voice seemed to mingle with the bear's screams. He must save her from the bear! No, she was not here. It was his foolish brain.

"To get well Saturdays. To get well Saturdays." The screaming bear above him shifted her heavy paw till it rested on his arm. She kept on screaming horrid, unearthly screams.

"I should think they could hear you away at the logging camps," inwardly commented Fred. "Oh, my ankle, my ankle!"

The bear had clumsily stepped on that injured member. A great faintness came over him. Even the bear's horrid outcries seemed afar off. A half-conscious prayer for help rose to his lips, and then he swept away farther into the regions of unconsciousness than he had ever gone in his life.

By and by there was a dim uncertain lifting of that veil that had seemed to fall between him and all earthly things. There was a voice crying in his ears, something heavy lying by his side, some one was trying to raise him.

"The bear thought you were dead, but I know you aint!" Fred heard an excited voice saying, and with a great effort the boy opened his eyes and saw Mac bending over him. Two men had hold of the bear and were dragging it one side.

"She's dead, dead as anything, don't you be afraid," hurriedly went on Mac.

"Oh, I didn't know what in the world to do! I couldn't ram that ball down on the powder anyway, and I didn't dare come close for your gun because I didn't know exactly where it was, and it was all covered up under that broken buckeye, anyhow, and I knew the bear would get me before I could get a thing. And I didn't know what on earth to do! I got down from that tree, and I rushed off screaming for help. I didn't know but some of the choppers or sawyers or somebody might be somewhere, and I heard that old bear screaming behind, and sometimes her screams sounded so human that I thought maybe it was you, and I knew if you stirred it was all up with you. Oh, I was just wild? It seemed as if that bear screeched loud enough for all creation to hear!"

"We heard her anyhow," put in one of the red-shirted men who was now engaged in handling the bear.

"Yes," went on Mac, "I saw those two wood-choppers running at last, and they were most as scared at the screams as I was. But one of them had a gun and killed the bear, though I guess she'd have died in time anyway from the shots she'd already got. And here you were lying, knowing nothing. But you do know something now, don't you?"

Mac peered anxiously in Fred's face? "—in the intelligent being I always was," answered Fred very faintly, trying to appear as if nothing had occurred. When they moved him, he fainted.

Mrs. Osborne and Her Toothbrush.

Mrs. Osborne is said to be giving her gaolers a good deal of trouble. Prison discipline proves very irksome to her, and it is reported that she has flatly declined to perform some of the offices which fall to the lot of a prisoner, carrying her refusal to a point at which it would have been dangerous to enforce obedience. Apart from this she has made demands which are seldom heard within the walls of a prison. For example (says a London correspondent), one of her requests was for a toothbrush, and on being informed that it was against the regulations to supply such articles she took the matter quite to heart. On this point she was, perhaps, after all, not so very unreasonable. The authorities insist most strongly on personal cleanliness of the body, and to leave out of consideration the care of the mouth, which is quite as important to the maintenance of good health, is surely illogical.

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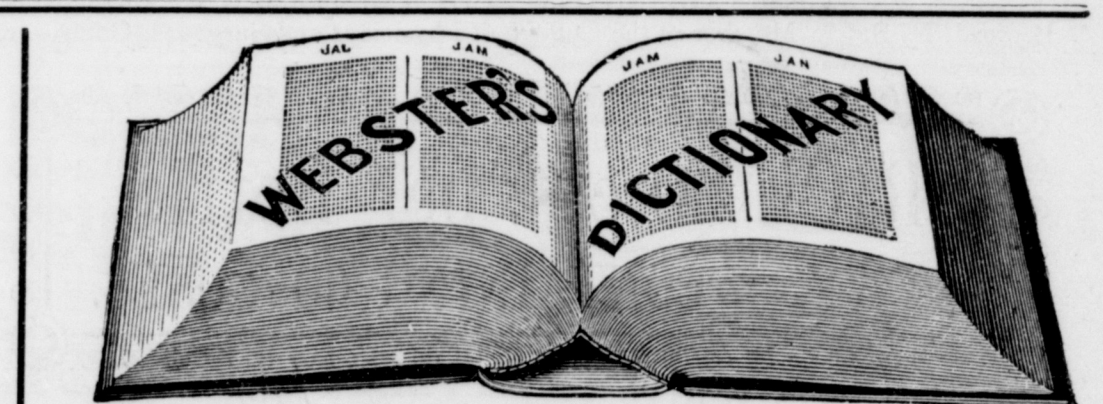
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