

A Narrow Escape.

One day after dinner, while I was playing with Buster, the brindle pup, father came to the porch to get his saddle, and said:

'I'm going up the creek to look for cotton pickers. I can't get into the field this week; but if you boys want to start in, I'll give you six bits a hundred.'

We are living on a combined cattle-ranch and farm in northern Texas. I was eleven years old, could pick a hundred pounds of cotton a day and was eager to earn money. My brother Charley, five years younger, readily consented to help me.

In those days baskets were used for picking cotton. Father had made several during the summer, and when Charley and I started to the field we each took a new one.

These baskets were round flat bottomed, without handles, the same size all the way up, and as high as my arms. Their weight and size made them awkward to carry. Charley had so much trouble with his that I pushed it into mine, the two being a tight fit, and rolled them. When we came to a high, steep hill overlooking a valley at the farther side of which was the farm, I let them go. Down they rushed, with Buster in wild pursuit. Half way down he, too, took to rolling, and rolled to the bottom.

On overtaking the baskets I gave them a push, and kept them rolling through high grass till we came to the field-gate. While I was getting them apart, the pup was biting at my legs. I dropped him into the smaller basket, then inverted the larger one and slipped it down over the smaller one, shutting him in. Now we kept still, and he howled dismally at being deserted, as he supposed. Finally we rolled the baskets around till he was in a rage; and then we let the pup out and took turns at being shut in ourselves and rolled about over the grass.

When at last we went to work, the larger basket was left near the gate, to empty into. The other one we set between our rows to pick into. The cotton here was as high as the basket; and out toward the creek, which bordered the field on the north, it was much higher.

When we had picked about seventy-five yards, I heard Charley exclaim: 'What big dog-tracks!'

Parting the cotton, I looked over between his rows. 'Guess they're panther tracks,' I remarked.

Beyond the creek was a tree covered hill. Under its rocks and ledges wolves and wildcats had their dens, and panthers had often been seen over there. A creepy sensation ran over me. In the dry soil, I could not tell whether these tracks that I saw had been made a week or an hour before; and the cotton was so thick that we couldn't see far.

'What would we do if a panther was to come?' Charley asked in awed tones.

'We'd—we'd—I don't know,' I answered tiptoeing and looking around cautiously.

Buster had left us. Soon we heard a frightened yelp, and he came rushing back. This was startling. Although only a little fellow and part hound, Buster was also part bulldog, and usually brave to recklessness. I was alarmed. The cotton was as high as my head, and I laid the basket on its side and stood upon it, holding to the stalks. Now I could see over the cotton, but not down into it.

Finally I jumped down. While I was stooping to pick up some spilt cotton, Charley startled me: 'I saw something!'

'Where? what?' I straightened up instantly. We were but little boys, with good reason to fear attack if a panther were near. The creature is bold against children.

Charley pointed toward the creek. He had caught a glimpse of some grayish animal as it crossed the cotton-rows, only a few yards away.

'It might have been a coyote,' I remarked as carelessly as I could. 'We'll go and empty now, and then we'll go up to the spring.' I was glad of an excuse to get away.

Throwing the spilt cotton in, trash and all, I seized the basket, which contained twenty or thirty pounds, and started toward the gate. I had reached the larger basket, which stood in the edge of the cotton, and was about to empty the other into it when the pup yelped behind me, and before I could turn Charley uttered a frightened cry.

Looking up the fence, I saw, hardly a dozen yards away, a large animal, not quite grey, emerging from between two cotton-rows. Its head was turned toward us, and its attitude reminded me of a cat stealing upon a lizard.

Charley was crying and the pup whining. I was too badly scared to cry. After a few moments of helpless terror, I caught Charley by the hand and started to run.

But at the first step I stopped suddenly; for on the other side, and a little nearer, was a still larger beast!

The panthers were stealing upon us from opposite sides. Both had stopped, and stood watching us. I glanced around. My first impulse was to climb the fence; but instantly I recalled what I had heard many times; that if you turned your back to a panther it would leap upon you. To get away from one, you should walk backward, looking the animal in the eye.

What you should do when there was one panther in front of you and another behind you, I had never heard anybody say. But a plan, suggested by our playing, flashed into my mind. I grasped it eagerly, as the only chance of escaping from our terrible situation.

Lifting Charley, I dropped him into the smaller basket, on the cotton. Then, laying the other basket, down, I stepped upon it and over into the basket that Charley was in. Now I seized the larger basket,

and raising it, was about to let it down over us, when Buster's piteous whining caught my attention.

Terrified at being deserted, he was reaching up his paws, while his mouth, eyes and ears were working in such expressive entreaty that I could almost hear him say: 'For mercy's sake, don't leave your poor little puppy out here for the panthers to eat!'

Catching him by the paw, I jerked him up and inside. Then I hastily pulled the upper basket down over the lower one. I could get a pretty good hold with fingers and hands pressing and clutching at opposite sides. But about half way down it stuck fast.

While still pulling at it, I heard a sniffling against the basket, and then a growl which froze my blood. Charley began to whimper, and I dropped down by him. There was just room for us.

'Hush!' I whispered. 'Maybe they'll go away.' After that he was very quiet.

The panther waded round the baskets several times, smelling and growling. Then he began to utter peculiar sounds, somewhat like purring. Perhaps he was saying to his mate, in the panther language: 'My dear, just come and see what a nice mess of boys and pups we've found for dinner! All so young and tender, too! My, don't they smell good!' and he began to sniff around the baskets again.

Presently we heard the female panther smelling and growling. My heart was beating so loudly that it seemed the animals must hear it. They evidently had no intention of going away.

Soon there was smelling and growling overhead. The male panther—I could distinguish his hoarser tones—had put his paws on the upper basket. Suddenly it slipped down under their weight, scaring us, and starting him till he leaped away. That was just what I wanted. The upper basket now completely covered the lower one, the two being practically one basket, with double sides and both ends closed.

My courage revived. These baskets were heavy and strong, for they were made of the toughest oak, which had since become well seasoned. The splits running round them were as thick as they could be to bend, and those running up and down were still thicker; and all were so woven that they could be torn apart only by tearing the whole basket to pieces. But how long would they withstand teeth and claws?

Tied to the rim of the inner basket were two buckskin strings, to be hooked on the steelyards in weighing. One string I slipped under several splits in the bottom of the outer basket, where all the up and down splits crossed, and then I tied the two strings together. Now the baskets could not come apart by mere shaking or rolling, and I felt still more hopeful.

Finding no opening in the baskets, one panther leaped upon them. After smelling and scratching a little the animal jumped down.

Charley was keeping as still as a young partridge under a leaf, but Buster soon grew restless. Feeling safe between us he growled; and when I put my hand on him he barked loudly.

Irritated by the barking, the big panther leaped at the baskets, and over we all went. Frightened yelps and angry growls filled the baskets, as boys, cotton and pup rolled over and over together. The bound part of Buster was yelping and the bulldog part growling, I suppose.

When the bumping and rolling ceased, I was lying on my back, with Charley and the pup and most of the cotton on me. By hard squirming I got the cotton under us, Charley at my side and Buster at our feet. I was surprised to find myself alive and unharmed.

Fearing another attack, I made the pup keep still. I was afraid the panthers would try to tear open the baskets; but there was something else they preferred to do first. And now began for us such an experience as two boys and a pup probably never underwent before.

The panthers would leap upon the baskets, setting them to rolling and then they would leap off. Hardly could we adjust ourselves to one position before we would find ourselves in another. Buster, at our feet, had a worse time than we did.

'What are they doing?' whispered Charley.

'I don't know.'

Being unable to see through both baskets, I put my eye to the end of one, and peeped out between the splits.

The moment I saw the panthers I understood their performance. Having discovered that the baskets would roll, and being in a playful mood, they were amusing themselves rolling us about as a kitten rolls a ball of yarn. This ball had three mice in it, which the big cats doubtless believed they could secure easily whenever they were ready to eat us. As the sequel proved, it wasn't so easy, after all.

While we were being rolled about, like three unhatched chickens in one shell, the baskets rolled against the gate, which, being fastened with a piece of rotten rope, broke loose and swung open. I was glad when I heard it creak, and I myself kept the baskets rolling till they were out on the grass. Cowboys passed through the valley frequently, and they would be more likely to see us here.

The big cats went on playing. Charley and I bore our rolling and tumbling stoically at first. The cotton protected us somewhat from the rough splits, but in spite of that we had a hard time.

My nose was skinned, and the bumps on our heads would have startled a phrenologist. I set my teeth together hard every time those playful brutes started us to rolling.

'When pa gets home, he'll come down here and plug the nasty old panthers full of lead, won't he?' whimpered Charley, resentfully, after one of our worst experiences.

'Yes, he will that!' I answered heartily. 'And we'll skin 'em, and stretch their old skins up to dry, won't we?'

'Guess we will,' I answered, less heartily. It wasn't the skins of the panthers

that I was concerned about preserving just then.

After playing till they had worked up good appetites, the brutes were ready for a meal and began clawing at the baskets. But these rolled too easily to get a hold on, and I aided the rolling. The moving of the baskets seemed to enrage the hungry pair. The big panther sprang upon them savagely, and holding them with his claws, tried to tear them with his teeth. Although badly frightened, I knew that our lives depended upon keeping the animals off.

I was naturally timid, but even a mouse will fight when it can't do anything else. And besides, the head-bruising and nose-skinning had roused my temper. I took out my knife. It had only one blade, but that was strong, sharp edged and sharp pointed. The panther's paw was pressed against the end of the basket. I could see its outline. Putting the knife-point between the splits, I gave a vengeful thrust.

The panther growled and sprang away. Peeping out, I saw him licking the blood from his wounded paw.

Perhaps the taste of blood sharpened his appetite, for he was soon tearing at the baskets again. Both paws were on top now, and his body, although visible, was not in reach of my knife. I could hear him biting at the splits above us. But he soon moved back and put his mouth over where the bottom of the basket and the upper part joined, near our feet. I slid down and stuck my knife-blade between the splits into his open mouth.

What happened afterward is not very clear in my memory. There was a roar of rage, and a moment later an avalanche, or something equally big, seemed to have struck us. Over and over we tumbled. When the furious beast ceased venting his fury on the baskets, they were standing on end and Charley and I on our heads. The cotton was around us and on us. Up among our feet I could feel Buster squirming.

The cotton was about our faces, and aside from the discomfort of our inverted position, we were likely to smother. I struggled and kicked desperately, in an effort to throw the baskets over, but had it not been for Buster, we might have remained in our wretched position till we became unconscious.

The pup, squirming about, barked angrily. The already furious panther sprang at the baskets again, throwing them on their sides; and when the animal finally desisted from the attack we were more comfortable.

Buster kept quiet, and for some minutes the panthers did not trouble us. Peeping out, I saw the big panther lying down, watching the baskets, and his mate standing near. She was waiting for him to open the baskets and get out the dinner; but he was reluctant to attack that round thing which stung furiously whenever he touched it.

Soon the she panther, becoming impatient, started to open the dinner-basket for herself. I had just found my knife under the cotton,—it had been lost while we were tumbling about,—and when she came smelling close to my head, I jabbed her nose. She drew back, but stood snarling. Seeing me through the splits, she sprang at the end of the basket. Although badly frightened, I slipped my knife blade through o meet her.

She must have hurt herself biting or clawing at the sharp steel, for she suddenly sprang upon the baskets, growling and biting at them. The under part of her body was against the end of the basket, and I stuck her severely before she could get away.

When I peeped out she had gone back to her mate, to whom she whined complainingly while licking her wounds. He purred around her sympathetically, then started, growling, toward the baskets. But prudent overcame his anger, and he went back.

After this the panthers lay near the baskets, watching them as a cat watches a mouse-hole. I peeped out frequently, but they showed no signs of going away.

Only some cattle appeared, grazing down the valley. I watched eagerly to see if they would turn up along the fence. There is no beast of prey that Texas long-horns hesitate to attack.

But they grazed toward the hill. I was much disappointed, for there was no telling how soon hunger might drive the panthers to make a more determined attack upon us.

But presently it occurred to me that we could easily roll to where the cattle would pass. They were grazing slowly.

After explaining my plan to Charley, I worked the baskets around till they would roll in the right direction. The panthers growled, and when we began to roll they growled louder and came nearer.

We kept rolling slowly. First Charley went over me, and then I over him. It was rather hard on the little fellow, but he bore it without complaining. Not so Buster. Only by vigorous kicks could we keep him quiet.

The panthers walked near the baskets, sometimes circling round them. Now and then one would spring upon the baskets savagely, hold them a few moments, and then leap away. I managed to give each of the animals a cut, which made them more cautious.

I could not see where we were going, but we kept rolling through grass. To where the cattle would pass was about three hundred yards, but I was sure we should only have to get near enough to attract their attention.

At last both panthers began to growl. 'The cattle are coming!' I exclaimed.

Soon we heard tramping and bellowing. Peeping out I saw the panthers making off. Buster saw them too, and barked with all his might. We were frightened as the cattle went plunging by; but they shied away from the baskets, and kept on after the panthers.

When they had passed, I untied the strings and worked the baskets apart. Crawling out, we looked round cautiously. Buster ran off a few yards and barked

loudly, then came back, evidently proud of what he had done. The cattle now far up the valley, had gone to grazing again. The panthers were not to be seen; but there were thickets between us and the hill and we were afraid they might be hiding somewhere.

Emptying the cotton on the grass, we started to the house, each of us rolling a basket. We went at a trot, and kept away from the tickets and out of the highest grass.

But we saw nothing dangerous. The pup trotted before us, with his head held high and his tail sticking up proudly. I have no doubt that the last day of his life Buster believed that his barking had frightened the panthers away, and that if we hadn't kept him still he could have frightened them away sooner.

Father was unsaddling his horse when we rolled our baskets to the house. He saw from our excited manner that something had happened, but was almost incredulous when we breathlessly described the frightful experience we had been through. But when we showed him holes clawed or bitten in the outer basket, and bloody prints which the big panther's wounded paw had left on it, he hung another six-shooter on his belt, caught up his gun and hurried away to the field. We boys went as far as the hill, to look down.

Father found the tracks made by the panthers when they had stolen up on us, but I regret to say that his hunt for the animal's was vain.

The preacher's theme was 'Daniel.' After the benediction one of the strangers in the congregation asked an usher what the pastor's name was.

'His name is King,' said the usher. 'Will you introduce me to him?'

'With pleasure. What is your name?'

'Daniel.'

The usher introduced him. 'I am glad to meet you, Mr. King,' said the stranger. 'I'm your subject.'

They claim that women are trying to dominate the entire species,' remarked Mr. Meekton.

'Well, femininity is becoming very aggressive.'

'It seems so. But when I am at home and Henrietta is out lecturing I get out my book of choice selections and read 'The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.' And then I feel perfectly content.'

'It seems to me,' remarked the observant man, 'that your church is losing ground. I notice you didn't enroll a single convert last month.'

'My friend,' replied the Mormon elder, who had received his own millinery bill that morning, 'it's almost impossible to get any man to join our church around Easter time.'

His grievance—Those outrageous trusts ought to be wiped out of existence if it takes every gun and every gallows in the land to do it.

Why, the scoundrels refused to buy up our plant!

Patience—Do you know when Will went to put the engagement ring on my finger, he really didn't know which finger it should go on.

Patrice—Well, he must have very poor memory.

Yellow will dye a splendid red. Try it with Magnetic Dyes—costs 10 cents a package and gives fine results.

BORN.

Tagwash, April 15, to the wife of S P Borden, a son.

Naplan, April 14, to the wife of Peter Gould, a son.

Shediac, April 16, to the wife of Albert Hebert, a son.

Windsor, April 6, to the wife of Rufus Curry, a son.

Mt Denson, April 14, to the wife of Oswald Lake, a son.

Windsor, April 10, to the wife of Brexton Marsters, a son.

Port George, April 6, to the wife of Frank Mosher, a son.

Hantsport, April 14, to the wife of Stockwell Alley, a son.

Moncton, April 21, to the wife of A J Cook, a daughter.

Boisstown, April 8, to the wife of Dr W H Irine, a daughter.

Truro, April 4, to the wife of John Kennedy, a daughter.

Truro, April 15, to the wife of Paul Peterson, a daughter.

Parrsboro, April 17, to the wife of W B Mahoney, a daughter.

Bridgetown, April 16, to the wife of O T Daniels, a daughter.

Amherst, April 14, to the wife of Aaron Palmer, a daughter.

Boston, April 10, to the wife of Clarence Cook, a daughter.

Riverside, N S April 10, to the wife of J E Roberts, a daughter.

Hantsport, April 7, to the wife of James Faukner, a daughter.

Bridgewater, Apr 12, to the wife of Philip Rafuse, a daughter.

North Kingston, April 1, to the wife of Tom Freeman, a son.

Halifax, April 16, to the wife of Sergt G H Webster, a son.

Hantsport, April 10, to the wife of E Churchill Parker, a daughter.

Pugwash River, April 12, to the wife of Tremaine Black, a daughter.

Baker's Settlement, April 13, to the wife of Edward Meisner, a son.

Glace Bay, April 12, to the wife of Rev A J Archibald, a daughter.

Lower Sackville, N S April 15, to the wife of Rufus McPhee, a son.

Margaretville, April 8, to the wife of Blanchard Stronach, a daughter.

Conquer Bank, April 12, to the wife of Joseph Weagie, a daughter.

West Summerville, Mass April 5, to the wife of Emory L Simm, a son.

MARRIED.

Pictou, April 9, Daniel Rae, to Ida Jane Crow.

Halifax, April 16, John O'Toole, to Emma Cart.

Dartmouth, April 10, B. Bowser, to J. K. Andrews.

Halifax, April 17, M H Goudge, to Caroline Stimpson.

Moncton, April 20, Wm. H. Harris, to Mary E White.

Charlottetown, April 15, Patrick Blake, to Gertrude Quirk.

Pictou, April 10, John A. McEachern, to Georgina Fraser.

Wheatley River, April 10 Watson Smith, to Katie Macrae.

Brookfield, April 10, Malcolm Russell to Elizabeth Macdonell.

Albert Co., April 8, Stephen E. Morrel to Etta L. Osborne.

Amherst, April 16, Malcolm McKinnon, to Mary Gouchie.

Amherst, April 17, Wm. W. Walker to Miss Ida A. Shipley.

Charlottetown, April 10, Wm A. Johnson, to Alma M. Poole.

Boston, Mass., April 10, Robert Dervis, to Annie Stephens.

Milford, April 16, Alex Murphy, to Helen A. Ghe Roberts.

River John, April 17, George Jollymore to Jessie Carruthers.

Pe'thodiac, N. B., April 9, Nelson McKenzie, to Grace Keith.

Windsor, April 19, Rev Thomas Davies, to Madeleine Black.

Tatamagouche, April 18, Wm. C. Bonyman, to Mary Fair quinn.

Colchester Co., April 17, Alvin W. Ramsey, to Bella Ramsey.

DIED.

Digby, April 18, T C Shreve, 52.

Hope River April 13, John Reid.

Halifax, April 20, Mary E Clancy.

Halifax, April 15, John Barrett 19.

Elmdale, April 12, Alfred Garden.

Lockhartville, April 13, H H Reid.

Parrsboro, April 16, Ralph Clay, 8.

Amherst, April 15, Ress Landry, 49.

Halifax, March 70, Wm H Hunt, 44.

Cumberland, April 6, Mary Mills, 64.

Beverly, Mass., Frank K. Wyman, 51.

Gasperaux, April 7, Delma McNayr.

Halifax, April 15 John D Musgrave.

Yarmouth, April 7, Annie Baker, 59.

Truro, April 10, Richard Christie, 81.

Hants, April 3rd, Eunice Dimock, 72.

Hants, April 9th, Margaret Brown, 65.

Halifax, April 16, Janis M Clarke, 31.

Yarmouth, April 4, James F Scott, 63.

Yarmouth, April 14, Francis Stokes, 16.

Halifax, April 20 Joseph B Bennett, 74.

Minidie, April 17, Edward Seaman, 83.

Hants, April 15, Hannah McDonald, 73.

Melbourne, April 18, Israel Hersey, 63.

Colorado, April 16, W Clarence Dupehy.

Milton, April 17, Capt Hugh D Cann, 74.

Dorchester, April 14, Emily R Emerson.

New Jersey, April 16, James J Kehoe, 40.

Mount Stewart, April 10, Sarah Alice Jay.

Victoria, B C, April 6, Thomas Steele, 83.

Cumberland, April 15, Lola Thompson, 13.

Boston, Mass., April 13, Rev G F Currie, 42.

Summerside, April 13, Thomas Burrow, 80.

Guyssboro, April 9,