



HER LAST SHOT—AN UP COUNTRY STORY.

BY ETHEL WILLIAMSON, JOCELYN, ALGOMA.

I've often heard told of a bear hunt as being the cause of a death, but I don't know fancy as how one often leads to a marriage; but as this one did, and as it wuz my own marriage into the bargain, I guess I might as well tell how it came about.

Well, in the first place, bears wuz mighty thick around us that fall, and, in the second place, we had just got a teacher for the new school up on the hill. It's curious how them two things should be any ways connected; and its more curious still to see how threads cross each other, and how the most opposite ends very often meet; and it's a mighty good thing for people when they happen to be the right ones.

Well, as I said before, there wuz a new school up on the hill; it had been a considerable while agettin' built, fur we didn't go in much fur eddication in those days, and the teacher (as pretty a lass as ever I seen) had begun to knock the A B C inter harder heads than ever she had ter deal with afore, I'll be bound.

Though just a slip of a gal, she wuz wonderful clever, and knew a powerful lot; and the boys and gals took ter her right away. The parson had got her up from down country somewhere, but she had none of them airs and graces like some of the city folk has that comes our way nowadays. "Tourists," they calls 'emselves,—"Lazy Creatures" I calls 'em, though I know it ain't charitable.

Well, all our folks, both big and little, thought the world of her. And who could help it, with her sweet, pale face and winsome smile agettin' up her dark, serious eyes, that always seemed ter find out all the good things in a person; makin' the bad feelin's want ter hide up quick out of sight, as if they wuz ashamed of being seen by anything so pure and sweet as that Mountain Lilly.

I always called her that, in my mind, ever since I first seen her in her white dress at the meetin' house, a singin' away fur all the world like them white robed angels the parson tells about; she only wanted the wings, but I'm glad she hadn't got 'em, else she might er flown right off. I know the golden gates would er been opened wide fur her; she looked ter be a deal nearer them than earth, which ain't such a very good sort of a place, though she has taught me ter find considerable beauty in it that I never could see afore her sweet help made my eyesight clearer, and I won't say I ain't the better fur it.

Afore she had been with us some little time, I noticed that Tom Hall (the son of old Sam Hall, who wuz a great man around our way and owned considerable property, and had a pot of money put away in the savin's bank, they said) wuz beginnin' ter take up with the little schoolmarm. She boarded down ter his mother's, so, perhaps, it wuz only natural that he should fetch her round some; still, I didn't like the feller, with his high and mighty ways; though I guess I shouldn't say so, and I couldn't bear ter see my Mountain Lilly a ridin' beside him, which wuz only natural, too, I guess.

I didn't call her mine in any disrespectful kind of a way, but just because she seemed somehow to belong ter me.

The boys wuz all ready ter worship her if they only could git a chance, but Tom, with his grand airs and fine horses, always managed ter git his own way; and whenever ther wuz a quiltin' or a corn-huskin', with a little hop for the young folks at night, it wuz Tom that always took the little schoolmarm.

Most of us thought ourselves pretty lucky in those days if we owned a team of oxen to plow with, let alone horses, and I tell yer we didn't feel much like askin' such dainty blossoms as that ter jolt along in an old farm wagon, though I noticed she would often come and ride a piece with me if I happened ter be comin' along when she wuz a leavin' school, and somehow I often wuz—it's surprisin' what a deal I had ter do along that road in those times, although she knew that Tom would soon be along fur her. And how he would scowl when he seen us! though he would off with his hat as polite as ever, but there wuz an ugly look in his eyes, though I didn't think she ever seen it. She would more likely be a watchin' fur the first red leaves, or a lookin' at the squirrels a friskin' among the branches, or the rabbits a jumpin' over the fallen logs; them wuz the things she liked, and a deal of pleasure our old woods gave her. Although she looked so delicate-like she wuz quite strong and healthy, and had lots of pluck. The boys taught her how ter shoot; and though at first she wuz kind of startled, she soon got inter the way of it. All our gals can handle a gun; it's a good thing to know in these parts, even if yer are a woman. She used to carry a little pistol—"just ter keep off the bears," she said, but would never kill anything for sport. She wouldn't have hurt a rabbit or a partridge ter save her life; she said it wuz cruel, and maybe she wasn't fur wrong.

II.

Well, as I said before, bears was mighty plentiful around us just then, and wuz doing considerable damage among the sheep. We had some good sport a huntin' them, and one day, killin' a couple of big fellows not far away, we brought 'em home in triumph fur the folks ter see. They wuz fierce-lookin' brutes although they wuz dead, and the sight of 'em made the little teacher look pretty scared. I wuz glad of it—not cause I liked ter see her frightened—not a bit of it—but because she slipped up close beside me, as if for protection like; and I knowin' she was kind of timid, not being used ter sich sights, took hold of her little hand and held it in mine, just ter encourage her, though I knew Tom didn't like it. But I didn't care fur Tom or anything else, just then, fur my heart wuz a beatin' like a sledge-hammer, and I felt like standin' there for ever and her right there beside me, with her golden head a shinin' in the sun making her look more like an angel than ever.

A few days after this, when I wuz a crossin' the lower fields a carryin' my gun, I seen a big bear a crouchin' down in the grass a eatin' away at a sheep it had just been worritin'. Gitin' mad—fur I knew it wuz one of my best Shropshires—I let fly at him, and maybe it wuz because I wuz in too much of a hurry that I didn't kill the brute, only wounded him; and with an ugly growl, he made off inter the brush in the edge of the hill road. I followed, with my heart in my mouth, fur I knew it wuz about time fur her to be a comin' home—perhaps that wuz the reason I happened to be a goin' across the fields in that direction—I won't say as how it wasn't, and Tom wuz away just then a huntin' timber or somethin'.

Well, I tracked him pretty close for some time, but the brush kept a gettin' thicker, and at last I couldn't see him at all, but could tell by the crashin' of the brush about how fur off he wuz. We kept on in this way fur some distance, when the brush gettin' a bit thinner again, I got another glimpse of him, and he seemed ter be a gettin' pretty well tucked out. But he still kept on as hard as he could go and me after him, fur I calculated that by this time he couldn't be very fur from the road.

We couldn't er gone more than half a mile altogether, but wuz a comin' up from the back of the hill like, which sloped down pretty steep on that side, and it was a tough climb through all that underbrush and heavy timber, and it seemed about an age afore we reached the top.

Just as we wuz nearly on level ground again, and I wuz a gainin' on him every step, all of a sudden he seemed ter vanish and disappeared completely out of sight. I listened, but couldn't hear a sound, exceptin' for the rustlin' of the leaves stirred by the wind and the faint ringin' of a cow-bell in the fields below; everything wuz silent as the grave.

There wuz a half-fallen tree, a leanin', not many rods from where I wuz, and I thought the best thing I could do wuz ter climb up a piece and take a look round, fur I knew he might be a hidin' somewhere pretty close. Bears is mighty cunning creatures, and there's no gettin' ter the bottom of their tricks; and when they gets desperate, there's no tellin' what they'll do next.

Well, up I went, a holdin' my gun—which I had loaded again afore startin'—carefully under my left arm. But I hadn't got very far, when, just as I wuz a catchin' hold of a limb ter steady myself, it snapped off short, and, losin' my balance, over I went backwards, fallin' about six feet, right inter the middle of a brush-tangle, which isn't a very pleasant place ter fall in, I can tell yer. There wuz a loud crack like thundersome-where near my ear, and a sharp, tinglin' pain in my left arm; I knew I had shot myself pretty bad, but didn't care much about that, although it wuz a hurtin' considerable. What I did care fur wuz the thought of that infuriated beast a prowlin' 'round, and me a layin' there as helpless as a babe.

Yes, there I wuz, a jammed up in a brush-tangle, my head somewhat lower than my feet, and one arm lyin' helpless by my side; not a very comfortable position, you bet, at any time, and especially just then; while ter make matters worse, I could hear somethin' a stirrin' about among the bushes again, and I knew that creature wuzn't very far away. I tried hard ter git up, but the more I tried the further I seemed to be a slippin'. A person that has never fell inter a brush-tangle can't have much of an idea of what it feels like. But imagine yerself a fly caught in a big spider web, with plenty of thorns and prickles ter scratch yer, and yer won't be far wrong.

The next thing I seen made me feel more uncomfortable than ever, for there just above me, right on that old tree trunk from which I had just come such a cropper, was that old bear a lookin' at me with snarl'n teeth, and his little red eyes full of pain and fury; I won't say as how I didn't feel squeamish, because I did. He give two or three ugly growls and came a bit nearer. Another second, and I guess he would er sprung at me, when somethin' came whizzin' through the air just over my head, and the next minute he wuz a lyin' almost on top of me with a bullet through his brain, dead as a stone.

I guess I must er lost my senses fur a while after that, fur the next thing I knew, some one wuz a pourin' water all over my face and neck—and mighty cold it wuz, too!—and there wuz the little schoolmarm, a cryin' as hard as she could and a shakin' like a leaf. She had wandered off the road inter the woods a huntin' leaves, and the crack of my gun had nearly frightened her out of her wits. Guessin' somethin' was wrong, she had made her way ter the place the sound came from, and got there just in time ter save me from a fearful death, fur I had a foe ter deal with that would er shown me mighty little mercy. I can tell yer, Plucky! I should say so; her little pistol did a good deed that day, but she has never used it since, the very sight of firearms always made her shudder after that.

And how the boys did cheer, and the women folk they didn't seem as how they could make enough of her. Not till long afterwards, when my arm wuz well and the winder had come and gone, and all the woods wuz green and sweet with the scent of the spring flowers. Then, one evenin', when the sun wuz a goin' down behind the hill in a golden-crimson glory, and the whip-poor-wills wuz a singin' away off in the poplar groves, I told her, and she didn't seem vexed. No, a light came into her sweet eyes that wasn't the reflection of the sunset, although it looked like it, and a restful smile broke over her winsome face, and I knew I wuz alright.

That wuz years ago, and bears ain't so plentiful around our way in these days; there's many changes since then in our little village. Tom's married ter the parson's daughter, and they live on the farm where the old folks used ter be.

There's shreds of gray in my darlin's golden hair, and I have ter take a stick now when I want ter climb the old hill with her, as we often do, ter watch the sunset, fur our hearts is young yet in spite of years; and we like to recall the time, now so long ago, when my Lilly, ter save me from a deathful death, so bravely fired "Her Last Shot."

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER.

A prize will be given in January for the best short original fairy tale. The writer must not be more than sixteen years of age. Send the stories, with name, age, and address of writer, to Cousin Dorothy, FARMER'S ADVOCATE, London, Ont.

A "Proverb-Hunt" will now begin this column. A prize is offered for correct solutions of the first three pictures. Only children of subscribers may compete, and competitors must be under sixteen years of age. Answers should be sent in for each group, e.g., 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, etc. A prize is offered for each group of three pictures, and a better one at the end of the year for the largest number of correct answers. Letters marked "Proverb-Hunt" will not be opened until ten days after the third picture of each group is issued. The first letter opened, containing correct answers, will be prize winner; all others will receive honorable mention. Address your letters to Cousin Dorothy, as above, and mark them "Proverb-Hunt"—outside the envelope.



HIDDEN PROVERB—NO. 1.

I have received two letters from little Attfield Dennin, Brooklyn, N. Y. She is only seven years old and her letters are very neatly printed in capital letters. If you can answer the third Proverb correctly, Attfield, you may get a prize, but don't set your heart on it too much, my dear. I am always glad to hear from you children, but cannot always answer the letters separately.

COUSIN DOROTHY.

A Hasty Judgment.

It was holiday time, and the Ayling family were all at the seaside. A merry party they were—three girls, two boys, and all on excellent terms with each other, and wanting no other society but

their own. So that they were not over pleased when one morning their mother read out from a letter just received from their aunt, a request that they would call on a lady and a little girl who lived at No. 10 on their terrace.

"No. 10!" exclaimed Lucy. "Why, that's where the girl we call 'Grumps' lives—you know Grumps, Bernard? That stupid girl who is always shrimping all by herself, and who looks so sulky and stupid."

"Know Grumps!" shouted Bernard, excitedly; "of course we do. You are not going to call and ask her to be with us, Mother? She'll spoil all our fun, she is such a stupid girl. Don't call on No. 10, please, Mother. You won't, will you?"

Mother laughed. "No, no, Master Bernard; I am not going to let you settle my visiting list. I shall certainly call on Mrs. Gerrard this very day. And, children, don't be selfish just because you are all so happy together. I shall ask Rhoda Gerrard to come to see us this afternoon, and I put you children on your honor to be very good to her."

"Well, Mother, we will," said Bernard, slowly; "but it will be just to please you, for I never shall fancy Grumps, I know that."

The day was not over before Bernard had to change his opinion.

Rhoda Gerrard was an only child, and painfully shy, and when she joined the family that afternoon she felt and looked as miserable and unhappy as a child could look. Bernard, however, meant to keep his word, so he bravely went up to poor "Grumps" with his puppy in his arms, and shaking hands with her, he said pleasantly, "Do you care for dogs?"

"Yes," said Rhoda, in a very unpromising voice; but she stretched out her hand to stroke the puppy's fluffy head.

"We want to get him photographed," Bernard went on, trying to keep up the conversation.

"If you can keep him quiet," said Rhoda, still in the same low voice, "I will take him for you; I have my camera here!"

"Do you photograph?" said Bernard, now really interested. "Oh, do let me see you do it; I do so want to know how to photograph! Lucy and I are saving up for a camera, but we haven't got near enough money yet."

"I'll teach you all I know," said Rhoda, "and you may use my camera as much as you like," and this time she actually lifted up her eyes and smiled at Bernard.

"Oh, it's awfully good of you," said Bernard, and before that day was over he and Rhoda and Lucy were the firmest of friends, and the rest of their visit to the sea was either spent at No. 10, where Rhoda had a dark-room, or else with Rhoda and the camera on the shore, photographing any likely "bits" that came in their way.

"Those old copy-books really tell the truth sometimes," Bernard admitted when they had just returned from a very pleasant evening spent with Rhoda at No. 10: "Beware of forming hasty judgments." I wrote that copy last term, but I never thought of it when I took that dislike to Rhoda—and she was only shy, not a bit stupid."

"No, indeed," said Lucy, indignantly, and Mrs. Ayling smiled as she said quietly, "A hasty judgment is generally a wrong one."

E. A. B.

—From Sunday Reading for the Young.

Baby's Logic.

To-day I asked my mama if I could whittle,
Yes I did.

"Oh, no, my girly," said she, "you're too little,"
So she did.

But when Tom stepped so hard right on my toe,
(I cried, I did.)

She said, "Oh, you're too big a girl to cry out so,"
That's what she did.

Why can't I cry if I am little?
Or, if I'm big why can't I whittle?

THE QUIET HOUR.

School Life.

I sat in the school of sorrow,
The Master was teaching there;
But my eyes were dim with weeping,
And my heart was full of care.

Instead of looking upward,
And seeing His face divine,
So full of the tenderest pity
For weary hearts like mine,—

I only thought of the burden,
The cross that before me lay;
So hard and heavy to carry,
That it darkened the light of day.

So I could not learn my lesson,
And say, "Thy will be done!"
And the Master came not near me
As the weary hours went on.

At last, in my heavy sorrow,
I looked from the cross, above,
And I saw the Master watching
With a glance of tender love.

He turned to the cross before me,
And I thought I heard Him say,
"My child, thou must bear thy burden,
And learn thy task to-day."

"I may not tell the reason,
'Tis enough for thee to know
That I, the Master, am teaching,
And give this cup of woe."

So I stooped to that weary sorrow;
One look at that Face Divine
Had given me power to trust Him,
And say, "Thy will, not mine."