

fallen asleep about noon and was to be alone in the woods all night.

Then the wind awoke, and made the most dismal of noises in the trees overhead, and it blew harder and harder, and once in a while it disturbed a bird who protested shrilly and with a suddenness that sent Jack's heart into his mouth. The wind stirred the leaves, and Jack recalled, with violent agitation, the fact that a panther had been seen in those very woods a few years before. He had heard that such animals were attracted by bright lights, so the reflection of fire on dewy leaves a little way off took, to Jack's eyes, the shape of the glaring eyes of a wild animal. He hastily separated the sticks on his fire, and beat down the coals, looking behind him several times a minute as he did so, for fear the animal might spring suddenly upon him. Would a mother's Bible arrest the jaws of a panther, he wondered, and if so, to what part of his person would it be advisable to tie the Holy Book?

Then the velocity of the wind increased, and, soon a drop of water struck Jack in the face. It must have been dew, shaken from the trees overhead? But no; another drop came, and then another, and then several at a time, and then too many to count. It was raining! Jack began to cry in good earnest, but something must be done, so he began to strip bark from the dead tree against which he had lain. It came off in very small pieces at first, but by careful handling, Jack managed to get several strips long enough to reach from the ground to the log as he lay under them. But even then things did not work as they should. Between each two pieces there was an aperture, so in a few moments the rain had marked out at least four vertical sections of Jack's clothing and made itself felt on his skin. A slight drawing up of the knees displaced one piece of bark, and the cautious twisting necessitated by the replacing of this piece, disarranged two others.

And this was the sort of thing which he would probably have to endure all night! Jack cried and shivered, and shivered and cried, until his coat sleeve was wet with tears, and his remaining garments were soaked with the rain which the continual displacement of the bark admitted. He thought of other lone wanderers—Robinson Crusoe, Reuben Davidger, the Prodigal Son, but all of these had lucky things happen to them. Even the last-named personage had something to eat, such as it was, while Jack now felt as he imagined Esau did when he traded off his birthright for a mess of pottage. He would certainly starve before daylight, in

spite of the money he had to buy food with.

Meanwhile his parents were as miserable as himself. The doctor spent the morning, between professional visits, in devising some new and effective punishment for the boy. But when he found Jack's room empty, and was unable to learn that the boy had been home at all, he forgot all about punishment, and started on horseback in search, with the fear that Jack's unsteady legs and light head had got him into trouble. He searched fence corners, wood-piles and barn-yards between his house and the place from which Jack had started, and he questioned, without success, everyone he met. Returning in real agitation through a fear that the boy might have fallen into a well in search of the water for which he must be constantly longing, the doctor retired to his own room for special prayer and supplication, when he found Jack's letter. With this he hurried to his wife, and so frightened the lady that the doctor attempted at first to make light of the matter, but his fears and his apprehensions were too much for him, so he sank listlessly into a chair and covered his eyes, while Mrs. Wittingham cried, and wrung her hands, and asked what was to be done.

'I don't know,' said the doctor, 'I know what should have been done long ago—I always do after trouble has come, and it's too late to remedy it. We should have made ourselves more companionable to Jack, but instead of that we've only tried to make him a person like ourselves. We're so bound up in our own round of daily affairs that we've never paid much attention to him except when he has got himself into mischief.'

'I'm sure I've always seen that he had food and clothing, and you have sent him to school, and given him everything he's asked for that was within reason.'

'Within our reason, yes,' said the doctor, 'but I remember to have had tastes different from my parents, when I was a boy, and they were not at all bad, either.'

'I've prayed for him, heaven knows how earnestly,' said Mrs. Wittingham.

'So have I,' said the doctor, 'but I don't cure my patients by prayer. And my own boy, my only son, who has more good qualities than all my patients put together, I've never paid special attention to, except when his ways were irregular. And I am the man whose address—"An Ounce of Prevention is worth a Pound of Cure,"—made me such a name when I read it before the State Medical Association! Oh, consistency!'

'But what are you going to do, doctor?' asked Mrs. Wittingham. 'There's no knowing where he may be, or what he will do—'