

PROGRESS, SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1894.

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Progress' Short Stories.

Sketches of Personal Adventure Submitted in Competition for a Prize of Five Dollars.

BOB PATTON.

On a cold stormy night in February, some years since, a number of travellers were sitting in the common room of a small inn on the banks of the upper St. John river. A roaring wood fire burned brightly in the wide old-fashioned fireplace; and the smoke from the fire was augmented in volume as it rolled up the chimney, by clouds from the pipes which the occupants of the room were enjoying. On a table in the centre of the room stood a huge pitcher of cider, the contents of which was fast disappearing under the ministry of the thirty souls gathered around.

Is there any more pleasing picture than this—the great uncarpeted room, the dancing of the firelight on the long black beams overhead, the good cheer and comfort within; and for a background the howling of the storm without.

Certainly I found it very pleasant after the thirty mile drive I had that day and a thirty mile drive in the heart of winter over a country road, with three great sample trunks pounding and swaying behind you, is more pleasant to reflect on than to experience.

But now, with my feet turned broadside toward the fire, with my pipe in my mouth and my glass at my elbow, the trials of the early part of the day made the evenings comfort all the sweeter.

Sitting, thus, thinking of nothing in particular, and indeed very content to let my thoughts loaf along in idleness, I was being gradually drifted into the land of Nod, when my pipe fell from my mouth and after liberally besprinkling me with ashes, dropped to the floor. This slight mishap of mine attracted the attention of the landlord who remarked to his companion, "That reminds me of the time that Bob Patton burnt the knees out of his trousers at the fire here. He was too full to wake up, and we had to throw a pail of water over him before we put him out."

This remark was followed by that mirthless laugh peculiar to dried up, middle-aged Americans; and drew my attention for a moment to the speaker. He had been a soldier in the American war, and like them all, "went in as a private, sub, and came out the Colonel of my regiment."

After the war, he had crossed the border from Maine into Canada; had beaten his sword into pewter mugs (presumably) and was now enjoying a peaceful old age in comparative affluence.

The one to whom he spoke was rather an unusual looking figure; and quite in contrast to the spare wasted little landlord. He would be a man of perhaps forty years; browned and reddened by the sun, and weighing close on to two hundred and fifty pounds. His somewhat severe face was brightened by exceedingly pleasant blue eyes, and he looked altogether like a lumberman of the sub-contractor class, employing perhaps, thirty or forty men of his own.

In the faint, reminiscent smile with which he acknowledged the remark of the landlord, there was something which led me to expect that a story was coming; and I was not mistaken in my surmise. "Poor Bob, he's almost forgotten now, ain't he? I suppose he stopped with you many a night, though."

"Yes," replied the host, "Bob always stopped with me. I always found him square as a die, but he swore terrible. Let me see; weren't you there when he went over? I think I heard at the time that you were."

The other, whom he addressed as "Mr.

Howe," said nothing for a minute; but gazed silently into the fire, as if seeing in the burning coals the whole of that tragic scene pictured there before him. "Yes," at length he replied, "I was there; and I came mighty near following poor Bob when he went down. Poor chap, he was rough, but he died like a man."

"We were lumbering on the Economy River that year; and let me tell you, that's a mighty hard place to work on. Not much like it is on this river, where you don't have to blast rocks out of the way before you can slide your logs into the stream. The drive was a big one that spring, and we had perhaps as much as seven million feet of all kinds. I wasn't so big then as I am now, and could ride a log with the next man. Well, we worked along till a Saturday afternoon, when we struck the worst place on the river,—Bentley's Bend, they called it."

There are two water-falls here about a half a mile apart; the first is about sixty feet high, and the second thirty or more. In the spring when the water is high the logs shoot over the falls. I don't go much on poetry, but I read a little piece the other day that put me in mind of the jam exactly; it went something like this:

The rapids were jammed
With the logs tight rammed
And crammed; you might know
The Devil had clinched them below

There was perhaps a million and a half or two million feet of lumber in that jam, and we worked at it for three days without getting a move. At length, the foreman found that the whole jam was held by three logs, (key logs we called them) sticking up in the air in the shape of a letter X with a stroke down the middle of it. It was then late in the afternoon and we were all working hard with plenty of swearing and yelling. Bob Patton and myself were on top of the key logs maybe fifteen feet high in the air prying away with our "peevies", and the rest of the gang tearing away below, all working like demons. We had the key-logs pretty well loosened when I saw it wasnt any too safe.

"Bob," said I, "we better get out of this, these logs are just about loose enough to start now, and I see the boys are getting ready to go."

"Oh, to hell with them, you stay with your uncle. We'll have the jam started in a minute," and he stuck his peevy in again. He had hardly spoken when the jam seemed to quiver and slowly start. There was a wild yell from below as the men rushed from log to log to the shore. The jam had started. Loosed from the extreme tension, the key-logs on which we were perched darted high in the air as though shot from a mighty bow; then it was every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. I dropped my peevy, and leaped straight out into the air. My face was toward the shore when I leaped, and I had not time to think of Bob. I landed square on my feet on a short log, and from there jumped to a rock not more than five feet from the bank. To leap to the bank was the work of an instant; then for the first time I looked back. Logs were pouring down in every direction and on all sides. Striking on the rocks, they would break and fly apart like pipe stems. I shuddered as I saw a fifty-foot hemlock stick sweep squarely across the rock where I had stood only a moment before. Then I saw Bob. His peevy had been fixed in the log when he went up, and he had held on to the handle and come down with it still in his grasp. We saw him fall between the logs,

but he did not sink and climbed up again. "The stream was very swift here just between the two falls and the mighty mass of logs was bearing out swiftly to the current in the middle of the stream. Then he saw it was all up with poor Bob. And he saw it himself too; but it ever a man died game, it was Bob Patton. For, standing as he was, riding a huge spruce log,—and riding it too as only he could—we saw him take his pipe from his blouse pocket, put it in his mouth and light it. Then, with his face turned toward us, he waved his hand as a last farewell to the "gang" watching him in dead silence from the shore; and was swept over the falls amid the thundering of the logs and the roar of the waters."

As the speaker finished every man in the room found himself bent forward eagerly, with smokeless pipe and glass untouched by his side. Howe filled his glass from the pitcher on the table, and said, half to himself: "No, I don't say Bob Patton was anything extra, but he died like a man."

TOMYRS.

ONE SPRING TIME.

It was a warm, spring day in the fickle month of April, away back in the sixties that a young girl friend and myself started for a ramble.

Tempted by the balmy air and clear blue sky we wandered on until we reached the heights above the sea. It all seemed so summer-like there that we determined to descend the bank to the shore. After many unsuccessful attempts, on account of the mud and water which covered the steep banks, we saw in the near distance a beautiful green descent, beneath some stunted looking alders. This fair spot we decided that we could walk without fear of mud or mire.

Alas! for appearances! I was the first to attempt the descent, which I did, in my usual heedless manner, by springing upon a large rock near the edge of the bank and then jumping from that to the bright green patch below the alders.

In an instant I was floundering in a quagmire; sinking deeper and deeper with each desperate attempt that I made to release myself from the clinging treacherous greedy mire.

Oh, how it clung to me! How it enfolded me and drew me deeper, yet deeper within its loathsome chilling embrace!

In my first desperate effort I had managed to grasp and hold a shoot from one of the bushes and this frail thing alone kept me from sinking deeper still. How long would it hold me up?

My horrified companion had been making fruitless attempts to aid me. Every effort was in vain. I said at last:

"Alice you must go to some of those houses across the fields and bring help or I shall never get out." "Go, dear," she answered, "I never can go and leave you alone in that dreadful place."

"Perhaps you would like to jump in and keep me company," I rejoined crossly, then I cried wildly "Go, for Heavens sake, go, or I will perish before your eyes. I cannot hold out very long."

With a sobbing cry she turned and ran to my bidding.

Then I was alone. Alone with the clinging, clammy thing that sought to draw me down within its loathsome depths. Alone with the ever-restless sea rolling in beneath me.

How like a dirge those rolling waves sounded! It was a long way across those fields and I was sinking slowly, but surely, down. Another desperate effort I made to draw myself up but the attempts only loosened some of the earth about the old roots.

I was young to die and to die such a dreadful death! The day had grown suddenly chill and dark. The sky was

clouded over, the mists came creeping in, hanging low over the sea. Well! It did not matter. Soon I would be hidden alike from sky and sea. Oh! how cold that awful place was! I could not die there alone, far from all living creatures, and I raised my voice in a long wailing cry for "Help." Only the booming of the incoming waves answered to my cry. Then the numbness of despair seemed to creep over me and unconsciously I loosened my grasp on the alder branch and I sank still deeper, still farther into that loathsome grave. I awoke again from my despair. Once again I sent forth a wild shrill cry for help, and then—kind Heaven be thanked!—I heard close above me, an answering cry. It was the voice of my companion who had returned, accompanied by a man from one of the distant houses.

My new found friend, after speaking some encouraging words, telling me to be of good cheer, soon bridged across the quagmire with a stout plank which he carried with him to make a safe foothold for himself. A short, but desperate effort on his part and I stood once more on terra firma.

My kind rescuer would listen to no word of thanks, but said, "Don't stand talking ye be nigh chilled to death. Get over to some o' them houses and get fixed up."

I obeyed him for I sadly needed to "get fixed up." I was indeed a woful sight. At the first house where I sought admission I was roughly told to "Be off, for a dirty dragged tramp, that would dirt up any clean kitchen floor."

The next place where I timidly asked a shelter I found them goodness and kindness itself. All things possible were done for my comfort. A rousing fire was built, a good hot cup of tea given to me and the daughter of the house considerably loaned me fresh undergarments and her best new Sunday gown to replace my own now useless attire.

"But I am a stranger to you," I said. "What if I do not return your clothing?"

"No fear, Miss," the mother answered. "We know a lady when we see one."

Here was balm to my wounded pride; after being called "a dirty tramp" at the other house to be so kindly recognized at this.

The daughter's eyes sparkled with delight as I took from my neck a ribbon to which was attached a golden trinket and tied it around her own neck saying,

"Wear this in remembrance of the stranger you have so kindly befriended."

My companion and I walked slowly home through the silvery mist and evening shadows, my heart filled with joy and thankfulness that I still walked among the living instead of being buried in the morass, there to slowly turn into a petrified maiden, perhaps, who after the lapse of ages would be unearthed and exhibited for the edification of future generations.

PURPLE HEATHER.

JENNIE'S BURGLARS.

Oh Jennie I am so afraid—afraid child; why I have stayed alone in the house many a time and have not a fear.

Allie Crosby did not say anything more but at bedtime went all over the house before retiring.

The two girls were cousins, Jennie Murray being the only child of James Murray of Toronto, and Allie Crosby her cousin was visiting her from St. John.

The girls had been alone all day, Mr. and Mrs. Murray being called away a few miles on account of the illness of a relation when a severe storm had commenced in the afternoon, and preventing their return that evening.

The servant was taken sick in the afternoon and had to go to bed.

The girls were alone and retiring late, Jennie was soon sleeping soundly. Allie

felt nervous so did not get to sleep for some time; she had fallen into a light doze and was awakened by Jennie saying, "Allie, did you hear a noise?" They listened and soon heard a sharp grating sound. They got up and cautiously went to the head of the stairs. After a minute or two they heard a window raised and two men conversing in whispers. We kept perfectly quiet and we heard one say, "I know he has five hundred dollars he got yesterday and the safe is in the library. The girls are asleep for I got Jane to drug their tea." We listened in breathless silence, and when we heard the men go into the library room, we crept back to our bed room.

"What will we do?" said Allie; "I believe Jane shammed sick and let us get our own tea on purpose. Wasn't it good we took coffee instead of tea?"

Jennie after listening for a few moments said, you remain quiet, I am going down stairs to see what they are doing."

Mr. Murray when he built the House had a large closet built off the library which had a heavy lock on it. Mr. Murray being manufacturer often had large sums of money and valuable papers in both the safe and closet.

Allie slipped on her clothes while Jennie slipped on her dressing gown and descended the stairs.

A faint gleam of light from the library was all she could see at first, but after a few minutes she found the room empty both men being in the closet. She took the situation in a moment, would she have the courage to cross the room and shut the closet door, it had a spring lock and then they would be prisoners.

She knew that the men were desperate and if she failed it would be sure death to herself and Allie. But our Canadian women are grit to the backbone and she determined to try.

She listened breathlessly and slipping cautiously over, got behind a large screen quite near the door. The first thing she heard was "Say Bill don't you think we had better go up and see if those girls are asleep? No need of doing that, said Bill, for if they make any noise we will blow out their brains."

Jennie's heart beat so, she thought they must hear her. She had to cross about five feet almost in front of the light before getting to the door. With a silent prayer for strength she noisily slipped over the space and quick as a flash slammed the door and then sank to the floor in a dead faint. Allie heard the noise and ran down stairs to find Jennie helpless and the men beating at the door and vowing vengeance.

She slipped upstairs in James' room and found her shamming sleep—locked the door—then ran to the nearest neighbour. On the way she met a policeman and told him, then telephoned at the drug store for further help. Allie accompanied by a doctor who was fortunately passing went back to Mr. Murray's residence.

Jennie by this time had partially revived and was soon telling the policeman about the affair. After a few minutes help arrived, and they consulted how to get the burglars secured. They at last opened the door and secured the prisoners. They proved to be two desperadoes for whom the police had been looking for some time. The house was carefully guarded until Mr. and Mrs. Murray arrived by early train.

Of course the doctor had to call next morning and see how Jennie was, and it was remarked by the neighbors that Jennie Murray was a long time recovering from her fright, as the doctor still continued his visits to the house.

But in a few months the Doctor led the brave Jennie to the altar, and always blessed Jennie's burglars, as they were the



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means of his getting such a true and loving wife.

Allie accompanied them on their wedding trip to St. John, that delightful city by the sea, where they spent two or three weeks pleasantly enjoying its rugged scenery. They then returned to Toronto to reside, while Allie remained in St. John and wrote out the narrative for PROGRESS' Story Competition.

SOPHIA.

JAKE AND THE WHITE BEAR.

An Exciting Experience in the Rigging of a Vessel in Arctic Waters.

There is an old sailor named Jake, recently returned to San Francisco from an arctic cruise, who has made up his mind not to go on another whaling expedition, no matter what happens. The reason is this:

On one occasion during his late voyage Jake was on watch in the night—that is, as much night as it ever gets up there in the summer. The sun had been down about an hour, and would rise again about an hour later. It was a beautiful night as the ship lay there in the ice, and the air seemed scintillating with a phosphorescent glow that penetrated everywhere and made no shadows. On all sides the pack ice lay close to the vessel and reached for miles in every direction, broken occasionally by a large berg or the faint outlines of another ship. The silence was profound; it seemed to produce a roaring sound like the waves of a distant ocean. Such surroundings will put a person in a semi-comatose state from which the slightest sound will awaken him with a start.

Jake suddenly saw something white in the gloom climbing the mast. His first impulse was to jump to the deck, but before he could act upon it the white object climbed through the lubber hole, and Jake then saw it was a polar bear. Jake realized that he was in a most dangerous position and began to think of means to escape. He called to the watch on deck below, but they couldn't hear. He tried to get out under the canvas, but the bear grabbed him and pulled him back. It began thumping him, and every time Jake attempted to move away it would growl. Suddenly his eyes lighted on a rope hanging to the deck just back of the cradle. By this means he thought he could reach the deck. To swing himself free was but the work of an instant, but the bear made a jump and caught hold of his foot. But a few vigorous kicks freed him and then began a new terror. Perhaps the rope was not strong and would break or he might miss the stay and swing against the mast and be dashed to death. The moment in the air seemed years filled with horror, and several times Jake wished he had taken his chances with the bear. To grab the stay and hold on was most difficult and twice Jake's hands slipped and he almost lost it.

When he reached the deck he looked up and saw the rope swing back to the cradle, where the bear grabbed it. It tried to do as it had seen Jake do, but had no success, swinging clear than it slipped and fell to the deck. The crew had beenest for breakfast.