

together in the dining-room of the main boarding-house for worship. They were a kindly set of folk there, and always gave the preacher a ready hearing, for the time dragged heavily on Sunday afternoons for those who were not working.

The evening was fine, and after service, when hand-shaking and good-byes were over and the last news exchanged, I shouldered my satchel of books and started homeward. The sun had just set in a cloudless sky, the air was fresh, with a slight breeze blowing from the west as I set out, and the chill of night, which clings to those high climates through the hottest months of the year, was rapidly replacing the heated air of day with a refreshing coolness.

Along the road I had to travel, which wound about the sides of rocky heights and slid through narrow valleys by the side of shadowy lakelets, were several long railway trestles and deep cuttings. The largest of these was a trestle-work crossing the corner of an abandoned beaver-meadow, which ran up into an angle of the hills on the southern side of the track, and upon the north stretched away in a grassy flat till it was hidden by a turn in the valley. Just beyond this trestle-work was a long cutting about twenty feet deep, ending in a sudden curve which carried the track out into a narrow plain between the receding hills.

I had reached the middle of the trestle when my attention was attracted by the motion of a dark object among the beaver-grass some distance to the south of me, in the angle of the meadow cut off by the track. A few moments' observation convinced me, in spite of the gathering dusk, that it was a full-grown black bear. I hurried on silently, having no wish for a closer acquaintanceship with the brute, and was soon within the sheltering walls of the cutting. Congratulating myself that I had escaped his observation, I hastened onward through the shadow of the gravelly walls. I had scarcely covered a dozen yards, however, when a sudden rustling among the scrub which covered the sides of the hill was followed by a crashing of branches, and Bruin appeared upon the edge of the cutting directly above me.

He did not seem, as he paused for a moment on the brink, with his little eyes blinking and his red tongue lolling out between the double row of glistening teeth,—he did not seem so much savage as enquiring. He had evidently seen me as soon as I had observed him, and possibly, not being so quick of recognition, had resolved on a tour of inspection, and so had struck forward at an angle so as to intercept me some distance down the line. I remember noting—for it seemed odd to me afterwards that such a thought should occur in the midst of my surprise and consternation—how accurately he had gauged my rate of walking and distance from him to have come upon me so exactly, and I wondered how he managed it.

However, there was no time for a solution of the problem, if I was to escape his embrace, so I hastened on at a sharp walk, hoping by this means to keep a safer distance between us than if I broke into a run

and excited him to a gallop. I was soon about a dozen rods in advance of him, for he hesitated a moment before scrambling the gravelly side of the cutting. My object now was to gain some cover, and if possible throw him off the scent, or, failing in that, to put such a distance between us as to render the hazard of a run to the nearest camp, about two miles away, not too great for my undertaking.

I had no weapons about me but a Bible and two dozen hymn-books, which avail much in spiritual warfare but cannot be much relied upon in an encounter with a bear. I resolved, therefore, on gaining the curve of the road, where I was for a few moments hidden from the view of my pursuer, to exchange them for more material ammunition, and hastily depositing them among the weeds which lined the sides of the embankment, I filled my satchel with stones from the grading of the track, and hurried on. A few yards away was a telegraph pole, situated well down on the side of the track-bed, and breaking into a run as I neared it, I sprang from the ties, and clearing the weedy gravel alighted at its foot. A few moments more and I had clambered up the post, so that when Bruin rounded the bend of the road I was ensconced upon the cross-tree high above him. I had done this in the hope that he would miss my trail and continue down the track, but was doomed to disappointment. On reaching the spot from which I had made my leap, almost without a moment's hesitation, he left the track, and brushing through the brambles stopped at the post and gazed up at me. His expression as he squatted upon his haunches and turned his big head sideways to look up at me amused me in spite of my unpleasant situation,—it was so irresistibly comical; but the ludicrous soon gave place to the alarming when he began to clamber up the pole, hand over fist, as nimbly as a tar running up the rigging. I endeavored to drive him back by throwing at him the stones which I had gathered, but without effect; he growled savagely, and turning his black snout downward and away from me, to avoid the blows, came on with the back of his big shaggy head towards me.

It was my custom to carry with me upon my travels a stout walking-stick, which, without any definite notion other than that of retaining some weapon of defence, I had placed between my teeth on commencing the ascent of the post. It now stood me in good stead. The cross-tree of the post carried four wires, two on each arm; with my stick I broke the glass insulators which supported them, and grasping the outer ones in my hands so as to draw the four nearer together, I made a seat, upon which I edged myself out four or five feet from the post. Bruin meanwhile had gained the cross-tree, and was now crouching in the spot where I myself had been seated but a few moments since.

For a minute or so we looked at each other in silence, the bear panting with the labor of his ascent and I anxious as to how the affair would end. My pursuer did not leave me long in doubt; casting one paw around the post, he shoved the other gingerly out