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A TRAGEDY OF THE WILD.

A LUMBERMAN'S THRILLING EXPERIENCE RETOLD.

(By Gertrude Cornish Knight.)

Never in the thirty odd years of my life had I been in such a predicament. Truly the wheel of fortune had ceased to revolve for me. Here I was, stranded in the city of Port Arthur, that bustling, bustling, commercial centre of New Ontario, where everyone but myself seemed to have plenty and to spare.

I stopped in front of a brilliantly lighted window and drew from my pocket fifty cents, every cent I had in the world. True I had a job in sight for that very afternoon I had signed a contract, with the J. Greer Lumber Company to work in the bush for the winter, getting out ties for the Grand Trunk Railroad, then under construction.

As I have already said things seemed very much against me. Only by two minutes, and through no fault of my own, I had missed the five-thirty train which had carried the gang of men who were to be my companions during the coming months. To the company's camps which were situated a few miles beyond Kakabeca Falls. What to do I hardly knew. Fifty cents would hardly buy my supper and provide a bed and there would be all the next day to go hungry while I was waiting for the train. Freight trains were numerous, but I had seen too many of the results of stealing rides on them to be attracted by one.

It was only a matter of thirty-five miles to the camp and after taking everything into consideration I decided, as the night was fine, to put in the time by walking to my destination, rather than spend the long hours on the streets. My luggage, with the exception of two revolvers, was in the baggage car by this time and nearing its journey's end. Having nothing to keep me I struck off up the railroad track until I came to the trail that I knew would lead me straight to the camp.

Scrunch, scrunch, went the snow beneath my feet as I trudged briskly along in the crisp December night. The stars overhead shone clear and bright against the dark opaque blue of the winter sky. The pine trees that rose tall and gaunt on either side of the road quivered beneath their covering of snow like the forms of shrouded skeletons nodding to each other across the narrow way.

Perhaps it was the oppressive silence that stirred the spirit of unrest within me but a vague alarm seemed to take possession of me and caused my feet to fairly fly over the frosty snow. White rabbits scurried across my path and even these small signs of animal life seemed a welcome break in that vast solitude.

I had covered over one-half the distance and the hour was getting late when I heard behind me the sharp, short bark of a wolf, followed by another and still another. Then as the savage brutes drew nearer I distinctly heard the beat, beat of heavy hoofs upon the ground and it was with a sigh of relief that I realized I was not yet the subject of their attention but that some great creature of the

woods was making a race for life.

With my heart in my mouth I looked sharply around for a place of safety and found to my joy a huge rock towering perhaps thirty feet above me. The great wall was in the form of a V in the corner of which several ragged projections made it possible for me to ascend quite easily. Scarcely had I scaled the wall and secreted myself in the small scrub that crowned the top, when, straining my eyes in the direction from whence came the blood curdling yelps and howls of the infuriated pursuers and the hoof thuds of the pursued, there broke upon my startled vision the huge form of a full grown bull moose, at whose heels snapped at least a dozen great grey timber wolves. Huddling down in my lofty nest I thought the brutes in their wild race would soon rush past my hiding place and leave me to continue my journey, although the thought of again venturing on the road alone caused me to loosen the belt that held my weapons that I might gain from their shining barrels and well filled chambers that sense of protection which in my present perilous position I was sadly in need of.

The great moose was now almost opposite my rendezvous and I was straining my eyes for what I thought would be a last glimpse of him when to my horror the V shaped crevice in the rock below attracted his bloodshot eyes and, realizing no doubt that his strength was almost spent, he swung his great body into the niche and with a last despairing snort faced his ravenous enemies.

Crouching as near the ground as possible and not daring to move for fear of attracting the attention of the ferocious combatants below I witnessed one of the strangest battles that ever took place before the eyes of a man. The competitors were twelve to one but that one was of the giant kings of the northern wilds and prepared to fight to the last, as a mountaineer always should, facing the enemy. Placing his already torn and bleeding haunches far back in the crevice, thus preventing an attack from the rear, he lowered his majestic head, crowned with a magnificent pair of horns, and charged fair into the bloodthirsty pack. Again and again they threw themselves upon him as though sure of a speedy victory now that they had brought their prey to bay. The huge horns tore this way and that, throwing quivering grey bodies to the right and to the left while the desperate brute beat into the earth everything within reach of his powerful hoofs. Long and loud the battle raged; my temples beat with excitement and I leaned far out over the rocky ledge that I might not lose a jot nor tittle of that awful struggle.

One by one the wolves, pierced by the horns, or trampled by the hoofs of the foe, gave up the struggle, either falling dead or crawling away into the bushes to die, until at last the remaining two realizing that the fight was against them, took to their heels and disappeared into the darkness.

I could hear the heavy breathing of the victorious monarch and see his great body still crouched far back in the rocks. That he had not escaped without injury I already knew but I was not prepared to see the grand old warrior, instead of taking to the forest, as I had expected, sink to his knees and then, with a low moan, roll over on his side and lie motionless.

Still afraid to venture forth I huddled as best I could on my elevated couch and although cold and uncomfortable, must have fallen asleep through sheer fatigue as it was dawn when I again realized what was going on around me. Pulling myself together and seeing that all was quiet below I carefully let myself down the face of the rock and standing on the scene of the battle, I shuddered with the sickening realization of the awfulness of the struggle that had taken place there. What had been a snowy nook was now a slough of blood. Eight mangled grey bodies lay in the contorted positions in which the death struggle had left them, while at my feet lay the great moose, more majestic, perhaps, in his fallen glory than when he roamed proudly and dauntlessly through his native woods. His body which was still warm, was a mass of torn and bleeding flesh; great patches of coarse hair littered the scarlet ground for many yards on every side; one eye was torn completely from the socket and the other, covered with a flapping piece of skin,

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showed that his latest efforts in self defence must have been made in total darkness. Cramped by long hours on the rocky ledge and dizzy from the sight of that gruesome battle ground, I staggered once more into the road

but it was not until the still unfettered voice of the Kakabeca Falls greeted my ears that I realized my nearness to those of my own kind and that the scene that I had so recently

witnessed was only one of many such struggles among the wild creatures of the woods, where even the law of the survival of the fittest does not always hold good.

RULES and REGULATIONS!

Under the authority of Chapter 36, Section 14, of the Consolidated Statutes (2nd Series), the following Regulations have been made by the undersigned Stipendiary Magistrate:

1. Within the Municipal Limits no person shall "Coast," Skate or Slide down the hills or highways or streets, except in the West End of the City from the crest of Palk's Hill to the Cross Roads, and in the East End down Robinson's Hill, under a penalty not exceeding Five Dollars for every breach hereof.

2. Within the Municipal Limits any person throwing stones in the said streets shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding Five Dollars for each offence.

3. No person shall play games in the highways or other places calculated to inconvenience or annoy under a penalty not exceeding Five Dollars for every breach of this Regulation.

NOTE.—The property of parents may be liable under distress for any penalty imposed on a minor.

Given under my Hand, at the Court House, St. John's, this 20th day of November, A.D. 1912.

J. G. CONROY,
Stipendiary Magistrate.