

Though, as I said above, no explanations were needed by my companion, it is time for me to remember that my hearers are differently situated. The circumstances which I am about to relate are such that I might pain certain estimable families should I suffer myself to be too explicit. I shall refrain, therefore, from name and date, contenting myself with the statement that the events to be described are still very fresh in the minds of those dwelling in the neighbourhood of the Tabusintac, which is an unimportant river on the Gulf shore of the Province of New Brunswick. In this region there are several small towns, separated from each other by leagues of wilderness; and one of these, about two weeks before my story commences, had been thrown into a wild excitement by the disappearance of a refined young girl who had been something of a leader in the little society of the district. She had been showing of late some symptoms of mental trouble, and it soon became evident that she had fled to the woods in a sudden fit of insanity. It was the latter part of autumn, with boisterous weather, and few wild berries to be found. The idea of this delicate girl, wont to be surrounded by every devotion, wandering alone through the pitchy darkness or the more appallingly lonely moonlight of those ragged forests, starving slowly on such scant food as she could pick up, and in the midst of perpetual peril from bears and panthers, turned every man of us into a woodsman and a trail-seeker. The town divided itself into small hunting parties, which struck out in every direction, seeking a clue. And the neighbour settlements joined in the search. H—— and myself, who happened at the time to be visiting some friends in the town, had all our sympathies excited by the occurrence. Profiting by our experience in woodcraft and canoeing, we had come many miles in pursuit of an almost impalpable clue; and now, at last, our guesses were become a certainty.

As we traced up the small foot-prints there was elation in our hearts, at thought of the rescue we were bringing for the unfortunate girl; but at the same time crept over us a half-confessed thrill of weird terror, lest we should find her in some way dreadfully changed, or dying pitifully in that unspeakably desolate place. But these dim fears were speedily changed to a real and immediate apprehension, as we observed that the foot-prints which we were pursuing were followed also by the track of a huge bear. That the trappings in the sand, before spoken of, had been made by a bear, we had of course seen from the first. Bear-tracks were in this region too numerous to excite any comment. But when we noticed that, inexorably as the wake follows the boat, the girl's feet were tracked by those of the beast, we were filled with horror. Wherever she had swerved aimlessly to this side or to that, thither went the bear's feet also, often obliterating for yards at a time the delicate traces which were our guide. Deviously the girl's steps wandered among the cranberry tangles, where she seemed to have been eating of the fruit abundantly; and at last they led back into the woods whence I had just emerged. Here we might easily have lost them, but for the dreadful footmarks of their pursuer, which made a clear trail through underbrush and thicket. Whosoever this trail crossed a bit of naked soil or boggy sward, there were we sure to detect the little print.

Breathless, and with beating hearts, our guns ready for action, we hastened on, over fallen trees, through swamp and covert, till suddenly we were brought to an amazed standstill by the sound of a woman's voice singing near at hand. As we listened the singing stopped; and we heard her, as we fancied, talking to herself in a caressing tone. Then the clear voice was raised again, in a familiar old song that rang sweetly and strangely through that wild place. Evidently, she was still safe; and curiosity, not unmixed with a sort of awe, led us to approach as noiselessly as possible. A light evening breeze had arisen, which set the branches swaying gently, and prevented the occasional snapping of a twig beneath our feet from being markedly noticeable. Presently, through a screen of small spruce which kept us concealed, we looked out upon a little glade; and on the further edge of it beheld a sight which for a moment held us speechless. A huge tree had been blown down, and lay with its mass of roots and soil high in the air. In the hollow beneath was a sort of den or lair; and beside it, on a stone, sat the object of our search. In the lap of her torn and muddled gown she had cranberries, and

every now and then she would stop to eat a few, daintily; at the same time stretching out an idle hand to caress a great black bear, which lay at her feet and watched her like a spaniel. At first view of the strange scene H—— had instinctively raised his gun to the shoulder, but had lowered it again even before I could grasp his arm. Here was a state of affairs which put to rout all our calculations.

Mutely we gazed at each other, and our eyes asked what was to be done. To have shot the animal in cold blood would have seemed to me almost like murder, or at least heartless treachery and ingratitude. But it was growing dusk, and something had to be done at once. Just then H——, in pushing aside some boughs for a better view of the prodigy, made a movement which caught the girl's attention. She gave a startled cry and sprang to her feet; and straightway, with a roar of anger, the bear came plunging across the glade to our insufficient hiding-place. There was no time for deliberation. H—— raised his gun and fired. The shot plainly took effect—it was a heavy charge of buckshot—and the brute staggered; but he came on again instantly, so I lifted my own weapon. As I did so there was a cry of terror from the girl, and the bear stopped in uncertainty. Then he ran back to see what new peril was threatening his mistress. H—— seized me by the arm, and said "I haven't the heart to kill that creature! Let us clear out before he comes at us again!" This agreed well with my own feelings, from which the hunter's instinct had been effectually banished at sight of the monster's devotion to his unhappy charge. We ran back a few rods, whither we felt that the animal would not leave his mistress to pursue us. And then we paused to review the situation.

The more we reviewed it, the more unsatisfactory did it appear. It was evident that we could not recover the girl that night, if indeed we could do so at any time, without first destroying the animal which had befriended her. And that she was to be recovered that same night was our fixed resolve. At last we planned that we should encourage the brute to pursue us, and should thus avoid giving her the shock of seeing him killed under her eyes. Considering also that H——'s shot had taken effect in the animal's body, we reflected that in all probability that one wound would in the end prove fatal; in which case to finish the work at once would be no more than an act of compassion. Nevertheless, it was with most unpleasant feelings that we returned to the charge.

As we again drew near we heard a sound of sobbing. The girl, kneeling on the moss, was tearing her skirt into fragments, and trying to staunch a wound in the animal's neck. As we re-appeared he struggled half onto his feet with a menacing growl, but immediately fell over again, and lay on his side, bleeding profusely. The girl came towards us, wringing her hands, and prayed us piteously that we would not kill her dog. We led her back to the creature's side, and humoured her by trying to stop the bleeding. Then we put her hand upon his heart, and showed her that he was already dead. At first she refused to leave him, but obeyed when we spoke firmly, and came with us, weeping and frightened. It was moonlight when we regained our canoe. The sight of this seemed to make her more rational, and her fears vanished. But she continued to talk about her poor dog, which had taken care of her when such terrible things were howling about the dark woods. Even as she spoke, the strange cry of our northern panther, or "Indian Devil," came trembling towards us from a cedar swamp far off under the moonlight; and her eyes dilated with terror. Wrapping her up warmly in coats and blankets, we fixed her a snug place amidships of the canoe; and soon she fell asleep, quieted by the soft motion, as we glided down the current toward the settlement at the river's mouth.

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A WOMAN was seated in a buggy in front of a store on Yonge Street the other day when the horse began to kick, and a pedestrian caught him by the bridle and observed, "Seems as if he was frightened at something." "Perhaps he is," replied the woman as she tumbled out, "but I always thought the front of a horse got scared first."