

It was just sunset when the stage was ready to go on, but there were two of us who did not propose to go that way. We were unarmed, but determined, and while the stage lumbered off down the rough road we found a club apiece and set out on the trail of the robbers. Luckily for us, the miner had been long in the country and seen a good deal of the hunter's life. We therefore had no difficulty in following the trail until darkness came on. The fellows made directly for the foothills, and we had no doubt that they had some sort of a cave or stronghold out there. They took matters so coolly that they could not have been a great way ahead of us when darkness fell. I was then for resting until daylight, but the miner urged that we should push on. From the topography of the country he felt certain that a ravine or rift would be found not far away. We were then between the foothills and the true mountain, in a narrow valley, and a full moon had come up. Without this light we could not have made our way, as the ground was much broken and boulders lay thickly scattered about.

We went ahead cautiously up this valley for about a mile, and of a sudden a rift opened to the left, and the glare of a campfire greeted our eyes. It was not over two hundred feet away, and after a minute we made out the forms of the two men as they seemed to be preparing supper. We had found them, but what of it? They had all the arms and we were defenseless. We crept back a few yards to hold a consultation, and the miner carefully studied the lay of the land. He was of the opinion that it was a short, dry, rift, with a cave at the far end. Three sides were enclosed by walls of earth and rock, and our only way was to attack the men from above. How high we would have to climb, or what the difficulties, we could not say. We were not three minutes deciding to make the attempt, and we prepared for it by leaving coats, vests, hats, and boots behind. We began the ascent about a hundred feet back from the mouth of the rift, and I do not believe two panthers could have done better. The side of the mountain was thickly covered with cedars, vines, and rocks, and progress was made almost entirely by creeping. Once we drew ourselves up a cliff full twenty feet high by a grapevine hanging down, and again we

made use of a tree to seek a higher elevation. We had been going up for half an hour before we bore off to the right in the direction of the rift. We then had to move far more cautiously, and I presume it was a full hour from the time we left the valley before we lay on our stomachs a hundred feet above the campfire and looked over. The men were directly beneath us, seated close together, and were smoking as they counted the money.

We had but one way to attack. Luckily for us it was a straight descent. I could have dropped a coin fair upon the hat of the man beneath me. We were out upon a rocky shelf, but there were loose stones of all sizes all about us. I selected one weighing about twenty-five pounds, the miner got one equally as large, and we carefully crept back to the edge with them. The fall of the smallest pebble would startle the men below, and we used as much caution as if our lives would pay the forfeit. After a bit we were ready. The men had not moved. For about a minute I lost my nerve. It seemed a horrible thing to do. Had I been alone I believe I should have relented. The miner seemed to read my thoughts, and he put his mouth to my ear and whispered:

"Remember how they shot the ranchman, and remember that they take our every shilling!"

We poised the stones on the edge of the cliff, and at a whispered "Now" from him we dropped them. I heard them strike, and drew back. He peered over, and after a moment recovered his balance and said:

"Now we can go down! Those chaps will never rob another coach!"

It took us longer to go down than to come up, but we made the descent in safety, and walked around to and up the rift. The fire had nearly died out. We replenished it, and then saw that both men were dead. It was a horrible sight and one I do not care to describe. Our rock had fallen squarely down upon their heads, and you can imagine the result. There was a dry, airy cave but a few feet away, and the gang had made the place a rendezvous for a long time. We recovered every dollar our coach had been robbed of and more than as much again which had been taken from others. The cave had a big supply of firearms, blankets, and provisions, and in a