

The bear, whose hind paws clung to the root and rock, went down head first, and its fore paws touched the bushes beneath, clung to them. and held on, while, following the tree, its hind-quarters went right over, making the animal turn an involuntary somersault. Then its fore paws were snatched from their hold by its weight, and it fell some twenty feet, from tree to tree, where they bristled from the side before it could check its downward course, after which the huge beast coolly began to climb diagonally upward, till it reached the shelf from which it had fallen, and, after shaking itself, began slowly to retrace its steps upward, when it came upon the rifle Portway had dropped, stopped to snuffle round it for a few moments, and then proceeded toward where the encounter had first taken place, and where lay ready for him a feast such as did not often come in his generally vegetarian way.

Meanwhile, with a terrible rush, the tree, with its occupant, had gone down into the gulf, plunging from rock to bush and clump of pine, Portway clinging to it desperately, till it fell athwart a couple more trunks, and there lodged, but with such a jerk that the man was thrown from where he clung, to continue his descent alone crashing through tree and bush, till he was brought up suddenly and lay stunned and insensible to what had been going on.

At the end of a few minutes Portway unclosed his eyes and lay staring up at the sky, through the thick, ragged growth which sprang everywhere from the sides of the chasm. Then by degrees he realized that he had escaped, so far, from a terrible death, but it was some time longer before he dared to move.

When he did venture he uttered a cry of agony, and lay perfectly still again, for an acute pain had shot through his side, telling him plainly that he had not escaped free. At last though the cold sweat seemed to dry upon his brow, and he began to look round and upward so as thoroughly to grasp his position.

The side of the gulch projected where he lay, and quite a clump of pines had found sustenance, sufficient to grow into a bushy patch, among whose boughs Portway had fallen, the tops proving sufficiently elastic and dense to break his descent, though he had torn off enough to form quite a bed, upon which he rested.