

## A Holiday Adventure.



Y brother and I, one September afternoon last year, started out for a walk. I took my gun—a 12-gauge breech-loader—and my dog, but wandering through two or three miles of woods without seeing anything to shoot, we came to a house where a boy, a great friend of mine and a companion on many hunting trips, was staying. We found him cleaning his gun; but when he saw us he put it away and soon we were in an animated conversation, of course about shooting. He said that he had been anxiously waiting for me to join him in an expedition against a fine buck, that he had seen several evenings drinking at a creek about half a mile away. He had just decided not to wait any longer, but was intending to go that very evening and try his luck alone.

We had our tea and about sun-set started for the creek, my friend having a 44 calibre Winchester. We crossed the little lake in front of the house, and a few hundred yard's walking over the main road brought us to what is locally known as a "beaver meadow," being a flat piece of country where a stream has been dammed by beavers, but the dam having broken, long coarse grass now takes the place of the water, except where a stream flows sluggishly through the centre of the flat.

We followed the stream down for about a quarter of a mile, and were coming to where it flowed into the woods between two hills that closed that end of the meadow, when my companion pulled me down into the grass, and pointed to a big buck standing drinking, about a hundred yards distant. We crawled a few feet nearer, but the deer heard us and made a spring for cover. At the same instant my friend rose, and, while the animal was in the middle of a leap, fired. The range being too far for my gun, which was only loaded with buck-shot, I did not shoot. When the smoke cleared away, we were surprised to see the deer standing in almost the same spot as before, and looking in every direction to see where the danger was, for he had not seen us, as we had got down into the long grass while the smoke was thick, and he had only heard us rustling the grass. However, he had no intention of remaining, and as he turned again for the woods two shots rang out, but when the smoke rose the deer was gone. We lost no time in gaining the spot the buck had just

left, and having crossed the creek proceeded to examine the ground. We saw a number of tracks where the animal had been walking through the mud, and where he had made for the woods, but as it was almost dark we did not follow him up. We felt sure that buck-shot would have no effect at that distance. Seeing no blood, and thinking that in the dusk, not being able to take accurate aim, we had missed him, and that even if he was hit, one bullet would hardly kill him till he had got perhaps a mile or more away, we gave up all hopes of getting him.

However, we decided to wait for an hour or so, in the hope of getting a shot at another deer, so we hid in the long grass and bided our time.

We had been waiting for half an hour and were getting rather tired, when we heard a stick crack up on the hill in front of us, and a moment later, a branch break. We began in a whisper to speculate upon the cause of this noise, and concluded that it was a large deer, forcing its way down through the thick under-growth. We cocked our guns as the steps drew near the bottom of the hill, and eagerly strained our eyes towards the dark line, which was all we could see of the edge of the woods. The foot-steps stopped and we heard a sniffing sound. Suddenly the noise changed to a loud snort, or succession of snorts, as our scent reached the animal, and it went back into the woods snorting loudly.

Neither of us spoke for a few minutes, then my friend broke the silence, exclaiming, "A bear, by Gosh!" We listened intently for some time, but heard nothing. The moon was just now rising over the hill and cast its light on the line of trees that marked the edge of the meadow behind us, leaving us in the shadow. We were just recovering from the surprise, which the noise of the bear had created, when we heard a splashing of water down the creek, some distance in the woods. It was evidently the bear crossing the creek. We changed our position and faced the side of the meadow, which was lit up by the moon, the deep shadow of the hill extending about twenty five yards beyond us. The semi-darkness, the lateness of the hour, and the distance from home, combined with the knowledge that a wild beast, probably ferocious, was in close proximity, made me at least, and I think I can speak for my companion, feel a trifle creepy. However, the bear did not give us time for reflection or