

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Rocky Mountain Boys; Or, Camping in the Big Game Country, by St. George Rathborne

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Rocky Mountain Boys; Or, Camping in the Big Game Country

Author: St. George Rathborne

Release date: October 19, 2011 [EBook #37803]
Most recently updated: January 8, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOYS; OR, CAMPING IN THE BIG GAME COUNTRY ***

Rocky Mountain Boys

or

Camping in the Big Game Country

By

St. George Rathborne

Chicago
M. A. Donohue & Co.
Made in U. S. A.

Contents

- [CHAPTER I—COMRADES OF THE TRAIL](#)
- [CHAPTER II—IN POSSESSION OF THE DUGOUT](#)
- [CHAPTER III—THE FIRST GOOD LUCK](#)
- [CHAPTER IV—THE WOLF PACK](#)
- [CHAPTER V—A FIRST TASTE OF VENISON](#)
- [CHAPTER VI—FELIX TAKES HIS TURN](#)
- [CHAPTER VII—UNAVOIDABLE DELAY](#)
- [CHAPTER VIII—PLENTY OF TROUBLE](#)
- [CHAPTER IX—ADRIFT IN THE SNOW FOREST](#)
- [CHAPTER X—TURNING THE TABLES](#)
- [CHAPTER XI—THE BUCK'S HEAD](#)
- [CHAPTER XII—BURNING OUT A HONEY THIEF](#)
- [CHAPTER XIII—HUNTING THE BIGHORN](#)
- [CHAPTER XIV—A WAKEFUL NIGHT](#)
- [CHAPTER XV—OUT FOR A GRIZZLY](#)
- [CHAPTER XVI—THE TERROR OF THE ROCKIES](#)
- [CHAPTER XVII—WHEN MUSIC WAS PLAYED OUT](#)
- [CHAPTER XVIII—A HARD CUSTOMER](#)
- [CHAPTER XIX—BREAKING CAMP—CONCLUSION](#)

[CHAPTER I—COMRADES OF THE TRAIL](#)

"We must be pretty nearly there now, Tom, I take it!"

"I reckon we'll sight the dugout inside of half an hour or so, Felix; if the description, and the little chart old Sol Ten Eyck gave me, are correct."

"Well, I'll sure be glad when we arrive, because this pack is getting heavier, it seems to me, every hour now. One thing certain, Chum Tom, we'll go out of this part of the country a heap lighter than we're coming in; with all this good grub swallowed up after two months roughing it. Been three days on the trail now, since Frazer turned us loose out of his big bull-boat."

They were two pretty well-grown boys, the one tall and slender; while the other, whom he called Tom, seemed stockily built, with the ruddy hue of perfect health on his sun and wind tanned cheeks.

Tom was really Tom Tucker, and the taller young hunter, Felix Edmondson. Besides repeating rifles of a modern make, and such ordinary accompaniments as ditty bags and hunting knives, the lads were carrying heavy packs on their backs, to each of which were also strapped a pair of snow-shoes, proving that they anticipated staying around the foothills of the great Rocky Mountains, for some time at least, and were prepared for getting around when several feet of snow covered the ground.

They were in a region not a great distance from the border of that Wonderland which Uncle Sam has transferred into a grand playground, known far and wide as the Yellowstone Park. In fact, a range of the Rocky Mountains towered almost above them as they looked up, standing out against the blue afternoon sky like a rock-ribbed barrier.

Around them lay the great forest that in many places grows at the base of the giant uplifts that are well called the back-bone of the continent. It was a wild region, seldom pressed by the foot of man; save when some Indian or trapper chose to pursue his calling—the "primeval wilderness," Felix was fond of calling it, in his humorous way.

Felix was a city-bred boy who had ambitions to take up his father's profession later in life, and shine as a surgeon. But not being very strong, it was under this parent's wise advice that he was now knocking off for a year from his studies, and getting in the great Outdoors all he possibly could, in order to build himself up, so as to have a good foundation for the hard work that lay before him.

And he was succeeding wonderfully, since there is nothing better under the sun to change a weakly boy into a sturdy man than this free life of the Wild West. If proof of this statement were needed, it could be demonstrated in the life of Theodore Roosevelt himself, who took the same course of treatment.

As for Tom Tucker, he had always lived pretty much in the open ever since his father bought that Wyoming cattle range with its herds. Between times Tom had attended school, so that he was far from being ignorant; the fact of his great love of reading also put him in touch with what was going on in the world, whether in the line of scientific discoveries, exploration, or the constant change in the map of nations.

The two lads were really cousins, and it was while Felix was paying a long promised lengthy visit to the home of the other that this trip to the foothills of the Rockies was discussed and decided on.

Just at present the one great ambition in the life of the city lad was to bag a genuine grizzly bear. He had done considerable hunting of smaller game, having spent two seasons in the woods, one up in Maine, and the other in Canada. While he had more than one deer to his credit, besides wildcats, and even a wolf, Felix had conceived a desire to come face to face with the most dreaded wild animal of the American wilds, the grizzly.

So they had organized this expedition, being taken in a bull-boat as far on the way as was possible; and after that manfully shouldering their heavy packs. Under such conditions they did not cover many miles a day, which accounted for their being so long on the road.

But as Tom Tucker had said, they were now pretty near the end of their trail, and he fervently hoped that ere darkness descended they would have reached the goal of all their ambitious progress.

An old trapper with whom Tom had spent part of a season in another part of the big game country, had a dugout up here, in which he used to hibernate winter after winter, sometimes with a tried and true companion, often absolutely alone; content to live his simple life under the shadow of the mighty Rockies, and take his toll of the fur-bearing animals that frequented this favored region.

Tom had a rude map of the country, as well as directions, how to find the dugout when he got there. And here the two boys anticipated putting in about two months of the late fall and early winter, doing a little trapping, just for fun, and considerable hunting besides.

Naturally they expected having a glorious time, as what boy, with a love for the woods and the

chase, would not?

The leaves had long since turned a russet brown, and any day now they might expect the first snow of the season to fall. It was a time when the bracing air was filled with a tonic which Felix needed more than anything else in the wide world; and as his lungs filled with its life-giving qualities, the boy from the Far East was never tired of telling how different he was feeling from the conditions of a few months back.

As they struggled onward, hoping at almost any minute now to sight their goal, the two boys exchanged remarks concerning the matters that were naturally uppermost in their minds.

"You said that Old Sol hadn't been up here for several seasons now, didn't you, Tom?" the taller lad was asking.

"Why, yes," the other replied, "you see, the old fellow isn't as strong as he used to be, and does his hunting nearer his sister's home. Fact is, she won't let him come up here any more; and there are a lot of youngsters in her family, too, that Sol has become interested in. So he's satisfied to keep around there, if only they let him take a week now and then in the woods, with a comrade. That's how I came to know him, and often we spent some mighty fine days together. He taught me about all I know of trapping, and lots besides about the habits of big game animals. I'm itching to make use of some of the things that Old Sol handed down to me."

"And the traps he said he had caught up here, do you reckon, now, they'll be in decent condition, or rusted all to pieces?" Felix continued.

"Well," Tom observed, "he said he had rubbed them all over with bear's grease, and rolled them up in a leather cover, before he hid them away; so he expected they'd keep in fair shape many years. We'll have to take our chances on that. It wasn't the hope of making anything at trapping that fetched us away up here, you know. That's only a little side issue, you might say, just to see if we've learned anything about the game."

"One thing sure, Tom, this region doesn't seem to be overrun with settlers, seeing that we haven't met a solitary soul these three days; while game seems fairly plentiful, because we sighted seven black-tailed deer on the way, and had a peep at some bighorn sheep yesterday away up on the mountain."

"I've seen no sign of any one around but they told us below that once in a while some Indian was known to be in this part of the country, doing his winter's trapping. And you remember, they said that if we happened to run across an old Shoshone chief, who now goes by the name of Charley Crow, and who sometimes acts as guide for Eastern sportsmen, we ought to cultivate his acquaintance, because he has the reputation of being the straightest redskin in the whole State of Wyoming."

"I remember that they said he was really a halfbreed," remarked Felix; "but his wife is a full blood. Perhaps we may happen to run across the old fellow while we're up here. I'd like to meet him, wouldn't you, Tom?"

"Well, I don't know," replied the other, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, on which the big pack seemed to rest so easily in comparison with the way that of Felix gave him trouble; "I must say, that so far I've never run across an Injun I'd care much to cultivate. They're not what they used to be. The white man's whisky has changed them terribly. In the old days they never worked, only hunted; and went to war; while the squaws did all the drudgery in camp. And now, as a rule, they are just satisfied to loaf their lives away, fed by the bounty of the White Father at Washington—gambling and drinking, and doing a little stealing, when everything else fails them."

"But on the reservations many of them farm, and I understand with success, too," remonstrated Felix.

"Oh, sure, that must be a fact," admitted Tom, readily enough, "though I've never seen it; but others have told me that many of the braves have taken to farming, and are doing well. I was only speaking of the Injuns who wouldn't change their way of living. But Felix, take a look at that monster tree over there. Seems to me that answers the description Old Sol gives of the big one overhanging his hidden dugout."

Felix heaved a sigh of relief, as with one hand he mopped his forehead, using a red bandana handkerchief which he wore knotted around his neck in true cowboy fashion; for despite the coolness of the day, the labor had heated him up considerably.

"I hope so, Tom," he remarked, trying to act as though after all it was not such a vital matter whether or not they came upon the shack that day or the next; but all the same his eyes eagerly sought the vicinity of the big tree, and he was trying to make out something vaguely resembling the shape of a rough dugout near its base.

They kept on advancing, and Tom suddenly gave utterance to an exclamation of intense satisfaction.

"We've arrived, all right, Felix!" he declared, positively. "It must lie in that tangle under the

shadow of the tree. And say, this just suits me all to the good. Look around, and think of spending a whole two months in such a grand stretch of country. Here are the woods around us, where we must surely find lots of deer and other game; and there stands the range of mountains, where you're going to bag that grizzly you want so bad, not to speak of big-horns, such as can be found in no other section of the known world, I'm told. For one I'll feel like dancing a jig if it turns out that we've come on Old Sol's shack at last."

"Well, it'd take a whole lot to tempt me to do that same," chuckled Felix; "and anyhow, I'm not going to begin till we make sure. When I throw this pack down for the last time I'll be pretty happy, though, Tom, believe me."

"It has been pretty hard on you, Felix, for a fact," observed the other, "for the reason that you've not been used to carrying heavy packs on your back, like I am. Look at my shoulders and see what I could stand. I wanted you to let me take more of it in my load, you remember."

"Oh! just as if you hadn't picked out all the heaviest things already," declared Felix, indignantly, "why, I'm dead sure your bundle weighs a third again as much as mine does, right now. I'd be ashamed to let you tote it all, Tom, however willing you were. But do you see anything that looks like that blessed old dugout?"

Hardly had he asked this question than the other started on a run.

"That's what I do, Felix, right through that screen of bushes that serves to hide it from any one who didn't have a tip it was there. Make up your mind we're at the end of our long tramp, and in another hour you'll smell smoke, perhaps the tempting odor of coffee cooking. Hurrah! what did I tell you, old boy?"

There could no longer be any doubt, for as they broke their way through the vines and brush that had not been disturbed for several years, they looked upon a sort of half cabin, and the rest dugout. The rise of the ground had allowed Old Sol to construct an ideal winter hiding-place, with the great mountains to protect him from the worst of the chilling northwest winds and storms.

Down went both packs instantly. Tom began to caper around, to show his delight, and Felix actually followed suit; but more to get some of the "kinks" out of his weary leg muscles, for that last day's tramp had sorely tried the city boy.

"Here it is, just as he described it to me!" exclaimed Tom, staring hard at the singular little shelter where the trapper had spent many a happy season, content to gather his share of the pelts of the wild animals that wore valuable fur; and secure enough meat for his own consumption from the elk, black-tailed deer, or it might be, some antelope that lingered late in the Fall in the grassy valleys of the foothills.

"I suppose we might as well take a look in," remarked Felix, presently.

"That's right," replied the other, readily enough. "You see, such a thing as locks are unknown in this country. Notice that the door has a bar on the outside that simply holds it shut when the owner is away, so that wild animals will not have a chance to sneak in, and steal his grub. Well, all we have to do is just to give this bar a turn—whew! she moves hard, as if stuck there—then push open the door, and enter!"

Tom Tucker was carrying out his words to the letter, but just as he started to push the door back the two boys heard an ominous savage growl that came from within the cabin.

Immediately Tom, being a boy of quick action, drew the door shut again, and at the same time swung the stout bar into place; after which he turned around to look at his amazed companion.

CHAPTER II—IN POSSESSION OF THE DUGOUT

"Wow! would you hear that, now?" exclaimed Tom. "Pleasant sort of welcome to a pair of tired, footsore pilgrims, I should say."

"By George! there's some sort of animal that thinks it owns the shebang, and has made its den in the dugout!" remarked Felix, in a tone of astonishment.

"Just what's happened," continued his chum, stepping back, rifle in hand, in order to look around; "but what's bothering me, is to know how the beast got in, when both door and window blind were closed tight. Why, to be sure, it was the easiest thing going, to drop down that chimney! Old Sol forgot to fix that against a smart bobcat!"

"A bobcat!" echoed Felix, "do you think that's all it was? Sounded to me heavier than any cat's growl I ever heard. You must have whoppers up here in Wyoming, when you find them at all, Tom."

"Why, what did you think it could be?" asked the other, quickly.

"My first idea was that it might turn out to be a panther," said Felix, "or one of those bad fighters that they call Indian devils; but then, you ought to be the best judge. No matter what it is, we want that shack, don't we, Tom?"

"And we're going to have it, right away, Felix, as soon as we can dislodge that critter. I was in hopes he'd crawl up out of the chimney, and give us a crack at him; but it looks like he was too smart to try such a dodge, with two handy guns waiting to bowl him over."

"Suppose I pound on the door, and give him notice that he'd better be making his way out as fast as he can," proposed the taller lad.

"Let me do that, while you stand here, ready to give him a bullet the instant his head shows above the top of the chimney; that's made of slabs, you notice, and mud baked so hard that it's more like cement now. The light ain't all it might be; but by stepping over here, you ought to get him against that brighter background. All ready, are you, Felix?"

"Go ahead; and it's just like you, Tom, waiting to give me the first chance at everything. Knock him up, and tell him to vamose the ranch," with which Felix raised his Marlin repeater to his shoulder, and stood at attention.

With the butt of his rifle Tom gave several sharp pounds on the door of the dugout cabin. In response, the hairy occupant simply growled some more. Again did Tom tap his summons, and the growling continued.

"That's what I call real sassy," chuckled Tom. "He says he won't budge an inch, if we have got a quit claim deed from Old Sol to this shack! And he wants to know what we're going to do about it, either."

"I don't suppose it would be the right thing to do to open the door, and rush the beast," remarked Felix. "They're a bad lot, and scratches from their claws are apt to give a fellow blood poisoning, unless he's got the stuff to counteract it. How are we going to dislodge that cat, Tom?"

"You watch my smoke," went on Tom, "and in this case that ain't just a figure of speech, either, let me remark."

"Smoke! Oh! I'm on to your game, old fellow; and let me say it's the best thing we could do. Want any help?" Felix remarked, deeply interested.

"Not me," sang out the other, who had laid his gun aside, and seemed to be looking around for certain dead twigs, and such things as would be apt to take fire readily; "I'll get a little blaze started, and then give this green weed a chance to smoulder. It'll put up the rankest smell you ever did whiff, and when I toss the same in through the door, take my word for it that cat will soon make a run up the chimney."

He busied himself for another minute, and then struck a match. As a little fire started Tom stepped back and gathered an armful of a certain weed that had not yet been killed by the frost. This he threw upon the flame, when immediately a dark smoke began to rise. As Felix got a scent of it he gave a snort.

"You're sure right, when you said that beat anything I ever ran up against," he declared, vigorously; "whew! it must be the stink-weed of the Indians. Nothing else could throw off that awful smell."

"Just what it is; and now take care, for I'm going to open the door a little to toss the stuff inside," replied Tom.

"I see our finish, if that weed ever gets to smoking inside the dugout," sighed Felix, rather disconsolately, as he held his fingers to his nose, and tried to keep his rifle in position at the same time.

"Oh! we'll soon chase that out with coffee and such things," returned the cheerful Tom; "besides, you've got to stand lots of things when you can't help it. Here goes, Felix. Now, Old Claws, will you be good?"

He gathered up the smouldering weeds, and opening the door with one hand, suddenly tossed his burden within, slamming the barrier shut again, and turning the bar. They plainly heard some heavy object come with a crash against the door, as if the cat had sprung savagely, hoping to land on its enemy, as it undoubtedly considered the one who was bothering with its peaceful occupation of the apparently abandoned shack.

Snatching up his gun, Tom sprang back to where he too could get a dim view of the top of the short chimney, not more than ten feet away.

"You first, remember, Felix; I'm only going to break in if you fail to get him," he said, hastily.

They plainly heard the cat jumping around within the place, as though it resented the odor of smoke, and such smoke too! Felix certainly could sympathize with the animal.

"He's coming!" warned Tom, suddenly.

A distinct scratching sound came to the ears of Felix. He understood what must be the cause of this; the inmate of the dugout was about to vacate. Defying all other arguments, the cat had to succumb to that of smoke from the stink-weed.

Felix kept his eyes fixed on the top of that stumpy chimney, and his gunstock was already fast against his shoulder.

"There," exclaimed Tom, as something pushed up into view, and the form of a big bobcat was seen emerging.

It had just about all appeared in view, when the report of the Marlin sounded sharply through the neighboring woods, where perhaps a gun had not been fired for several years, so far as they knew.

"Back!" cried Tom, dragging at the arm of his comrade, as the monster cat came whirling down toward them, in such a mixed-up mess that it was impossible to say whether the animal were in its death throes, or making a savage leap at its tormentors, though in either case it was the safe policy to sheer off.

When the cat landed on the ground they both saw that it had received its death wound, and hence there was no need of a second shot from either of their guns.

"That settles him for good," remarked Tom, when, with a last spasmodic movement, the savage looking beast stiffened out. "Nice to have such a warm welcome, eh, when you get to your future snug home? Now to kick that weed out of doors in a big hurry, Felix."

"Go slow," warned the other.

"What for? Do you think there might be another inside? Not much. If one had to vacate, the other would have been on his heels. This was an old hermit cat, without any family, I guess; and a buster, too. Here goes, then."

With that he flung open the door. No growling greeted them, which was a pretty good indication that the shack had yielded up its entire quota of cats.

Tom jumped in and in a trice had tossed out the smouldering weeds; which Felix trampled under foot, until they ceased to give out any smoke or smell.

"Pretty rank in here, what with the cat and the weed; hard to tell which is the worse," declared Tom; "but we'll remedy that right quick."

Both boys bustled about, getting wood for a fire; and Tom selected as much fragrant burning fragments as his knowledge of the forest trees allowed. They carried this into the dugout, the shutter of which had been opened to admit of fresh air.

The big fireplace seemed to fairly yawn, and ask for a supply of fuel, and in a very short time they had the fire going briskly.

First of all, they did everything possible to get rid of the awful odors. The two big packs were brought inside and opened, so that the coffee could be reached, and once Tom had sprinkled a few pinches of the powdered grain on the hearth, and set a burning brand alongside, to cause it to catch fire, a different scent filled the place.

"Is that any better?" he asked, laughingly.

"A thousand per cent," replied Felix. "But say, I'm as hungry as a bear; and we can't get supper any too soon to suit me."

"Same here," chirped Tom; with which remark he started in to make immediate preparations for the meal.

Expecting to depend for the most part on the game they would find, for their subsistence while in the wilderness, they had carried only certain things along, in the shape of bacon, salt pork, coffee, tea, some sugar, flour, rice, hominy, and about a quart of onions for an occasional relish. That, with their blankets, some extra clothes, and ammunition, made up the heavy packs which the boys had been carrying on their backs for three full days now—the snow-shoes counted for little, as they were light weight.

While Tom made the coffee, Felix busied himself in cooking some of the bacon. Until they had managed to knock over a deer, or supplied themselves with meat in some other fashion, they must make a raid daily on their scanty stock of food.

"But tomorrow we'll both get busy, and see what we can bag," remarked Tom, when the other mentioned this depressing fact.

There were a few crackers left, as well as some cheese, upon which they had subsisted at

"noonings" on the way, not wishing to bother lighting a fire, and spending time in cooking anything, when in such haste to get located in their quarters.

Altogether they had a good satisfying meal, and Felix declared after it was over that he felt many times better.

"I'm going to smoke one pipe, just to give a flavor to the old shack where Sol burned many a pound of the weed in his day," remarked Tom, settling back comfortably, with a block of wood to support him.

"And what's in the wind then?" asked his cousin.

"I might try my hand at taking our first pelt," chuckled the other.

"Oh! yes, to be sure, I'd about forgotten that he's got a fur worth keeping. And Tom, every time we look at it, won't we just remember what a welcome he gave us on our arrival. To be sure it was only in growls; but then, that's the only language a poor old cat's got. But when you say you mean to try your hand, you're only joking, because I wager you took off many a pelt when out with Old Sol Ten Eyck."

"Of course, and I hope I haven't forgotten the lessons he taught me; for there never was a better trapper known than Sol in his prime. He's brought in the skins of every kind of animal in the country, from a black fox, down to muskrat hides, when you couldn't hardly give these last away. But nowadays, with the big demand for all kinds of furs, and a shortening supply, the muskies are fetching a price that makes it pay a fellow to gather them."

"That's what I understood from a big fur dealer," Felix went on to remark. "What's going to happen when all the seals and foxes and mink and otter are gone, nobody knows. He said that people would either have to quit wearing any kind of furs; or else be satisfied with muskrat, or something that never will be extinct."

"Look at the wolf, for instance," said Tom. "Time was, when it hardly paid to skin one on the ranch, when we shot them. How is it now? Why, they've found that those skins make the finest kinds of warm coats for men driving in automobiles; and the consequence is the price keeps going up right along. Mr. Wolf has a rough road ahead of him in the next ten years. But nobody will cry if he's wiped out, because he's a bad lot, and sure death to young calves in the herd."

Felix was not addicted to the smoking habit, which probably was a good thing, as he lacked the robust figure of his western cousin. But Tom did certainly seem to suck a great deal of consolation from that little pipe of his, and the other boy had no objection to the fumes, indeed, the fragrant odor of the tonca bean, which was mixed with Tom's tobacco rather pleased his senses.

After he had finished that one pipe, Tom arose, and picking up his knife, said he would step out to attend to the dead cat.

"If I can't get the right light, why, I might hang the old boy up from the limb of a tree until morning," he said; "only that's likely to fetch others of the breed yowling around tonight. But I'll see."

A full moon had arisen after sunset, and while the trees kept much of her light from reaching the ground, still it was far from dark. Tom, however, was particular with respect to how he took off any pelt, and decided that it had better wait until morning. He stood outside there quite a little while, until Felix came to the door to ascertain what he was doing.

"Not taking time to bother with the hide tonight, then?" he asked, as he discovered the dead cat swinging about six feet from the ground, having been fastened there with a stout cord.

"Changed my mind, and concluded it would make a better job in daylight," answered the other. "But I was standing here, listening to something that ought to make you feel happy."

"What was that?" asked Felix, his curiosity of course aroused.

"I heard a 'woof woof' over there that told me a bear was passing by, and had got a whiff of human presence here," Tom went on to say, chuckling in his usual way.

"And do you think it could be a grizzly?" demanded Felix, thrilled with the very thought of such a thing.

"Oh! well, I never shot a grizzly, myself, and in fact only hunted for the breed once; so my ear isn't educated enough to tell the difference between the sounds made by a cinnamon, and his black cousin; but then, a bear means game, one way or the other; and that suits us both. Besides, bear steak ain't so *very* bad, even if it is tough generally. We'll look up that gentleman tomorrow, Felix, just as sure as anything."

One side of the cabin had a couple of rude but serviceable bunks built in the wall. Here the boys arranged their blankets; and thus prepared to put in their first night in camp with a roof over their heads.

They already saw where they would have numerous things to do in order to feel comfortable when the snows of early winter struck them; but there would be plenty of time for all that, as the days glided on.

After all, the night proved to be a quiet one, in spite of Tom's expressed fear that the swinging body of the cat might attract others of its species, who, gathering around, might think to hold a regular "wake" over the remains.

In fact, neither of them heard anything from the time they lay down until dawn came, and with it a desire for breakfast.

Feeling considerably refreshed, the two comrades set about accomplishing some of the numerous duties that had been laid out for the day.

Breakfast disposed of, they started to fix up the interior of the dugout shack, so as to make it seem more comfortable. Dozens of little things needed to be done. The roof showed signs of wear in several places, and had to be patched against the time when the cold winds would whistle and moan around the corners the livelong night, trying to get a nip at their toes and fingers.

During the morning, then, they were constantly busy, and before noon came around the camp looked a thousand per cent more cheerful.

"Begins to seem like somebody lived here, eh?" remarked Tom, as he looked about him with a satisfied air; he was rather "fussy" about how he did things, never being content to have them just "passable;" the best was none too good for him, Tom always declared; meaning that if anything was worth doing at all, it was worth doing well.

Tom had taken off the skin of the wildcat which was making a den of the dugout at the time of their arrival. This he had stretched in the proper fashion, over a thin piece of board, many of which they found in a corner of the place, having evidently served Old Sol for years in the same way.

Strange to say, Tom, knowing the secrets of trappers had not cut the skin underneath at all but turned it inside-out; this is called "casing," and the skin is dried with the flesh side out. Besides wildcat, a few other animals are also treated this way, notably 'possum, muskrat, mink and otter. As for beaver, raccoon, marten, fox, lynx, wolf, coyote and skunk, these may be slit underneath, and when stretched on the board, the hair is allowed to be on the outer side.

They are never cured near a fire or in the sun; the shade, where the wind can get at them being much more preferable, if "prime" or first-class pelts are desired; and of course that is the aim of every trapper.

Of course, one of the first things both boys had done on this morning was to take a look for signs of the bear Tom had heard passing in the night. The experienced Western lad had no difficulty in finding the tracks, and he showed his chum how the animal, after standing at a certain point, evidently sniffing in the direction of the smoke that came from their chimney, had made an abrupt turn, and headed once more for the neighboring defiles of the mountains, evidently not caring to remain in the vicinity of man, whom his instinct told him must always be the mortal enemy of his species.

"He was a bully big grizzly, too, all right, Felix!" announced Tom, pointing to the tremendous size of the footprints, with the marks of terrible claws showing; for a bear, like a dog, lacks the peculiar ability of the cat tribe to draw back its claws entirely except when needed.

Felix looked rather longingly toward the great rocky uplifts that seemed so very close by, although he well knew it was quite likely to prove a little undertaking, reaching any of the gulches and canyons that pierced the massive barrier.

"Not today, but soon, I hope," he remarked, turning with a smile toward Tom.

"That's right," remarked the other, "all in good time. We must first of all manage the eating end; or before we know it we won't have any meat in the cabin. Then we want to look up Old Sol's cache, where he's got some of his traps hid away. I'd just like to set a few of the same, to see if the luck holds good. And when, after a while, the spirit moves us, why, we'll start out to get that grizzly you've been dreaming about so long."

So Felix put the thought out of his head, and determined to abide his time. As he so often said, when some companion tried to make undue speed, "Rome wasn't built in a day," and the more haste the less speed to the end.

"How about that cache?" asked Felix, along about the noon hour, as they sat and rested up a bit after working faithfully all morning at many tasks.

"That's a fact!" exclaimed Tom, jumping up again in a hurry; "I'd let that slip my mind. And I'm a whole lot curious to know how the steel contraptions have stood the three years that have gone by since Old Sol was up here."

"Didn't you say he wanted you to try and lug the traps back, when we started for home again?" inquired the other boy.

"He said he had an enduring affection for the traps, and that if we could manage to carry a few, he'd think it just prime. I suppose an old fellow does kind of get attached to anything he's handled so long. P'raps some of the traps have histories, too. And since we expect to make a sledge, and pull all our stuff over the snow to where we agreed to meet Frazer on Christmas day, why, chances are, we can take the whole caboodle out of the mountains. I know it would tickle the old man a lot, and he's been mighty kind to me, let me tell you, Felix."

"Oh! we can do that easy enough," returned Felix, always ready to oblige; "when we leave here there'll be plenty of snow; and with our shoes we can make good time, picking out a day that's suited to the work."

Tom went over to the lower bunk. Getting down on his hands and knees he reached underneath, and presently drew forth what seemed to be a rudely made box. This he had some difficulty in opening, and when the top was finally pried off they found that the traps had been wrapped, each one, in an old, poor quality skin, that seemed to be in a pretty good state of preservation.

Of course Old Sol had expected to be up there again on the following Fall, when he put his traps away like this; and never dreamed that three years would slip by before the cache was opened. But he had carefully greased them with bear's fat, and as a whole they were looking very decent.

Altogether they made quite an assortment when Tom laid them out. The boy handled them almost with reverence. He knew that, as he had said before, each one must have a history. Many a story could they tell, if those grim-looking jaws could only speak—stories of captured wild animals galore, and of more than one fierce fight before the prisoner finally gave up the ghost.

"Tomorrow, perhaps, we can get several of these placed," Tom remarked, as, having hung the traps up from pegs in the wall, he started preparations looking to having some warm lunch, for the day was quite cold. "If I go out for a little turn this afternoon, as you said, why, I'll keep my eyes about me for likely places. Sol, in his many stories about his life up here, gave me more than a few hints about the favorite places he had for certain animals. I rather guess this place must have been his pet camp, and he used several in his day."

Felix was not quite recovered from his fatigue, and hence it had been agreed between them that perhaps he would be wise to stay in camp, and let Tom take the first look for meat.

Tom was as tough as a pine-knot. He had been used to roughing it all his life, and hardly knew such a thing as getting real tired. Besides, as he had known Old Sol personally, the chances were he would be able to find a deer more quickly than his cousin might. With that rough chart to guide him, and the stories of the old trapper still fresh in his mind, Tom believed he had a pretty comprehensive idea concerning the lay of the land, even before he had taken one step towards exploring the vicinity.

"The woods ought to be good enough for me," he had said; "and I hope to bring back a load of juicy venison; but if I don't strike up with my deer, why, we'll just have to fall back on that piece of ham that's left over."

"I hope not," remarked Felix, with a shrug; "I'm just tired of ham and bacon for a steady diet, and ache to have a piece of venison between my teeth. So here's wishing you the best luck ever, Tom, which is saying a good word for myself, too."

When Tom shouldered his gun, and took one last look at the now cozy interior of the cabin, he smiled back at his chum.

"Let me tell you, Felix," he remarked, "it looks good to me already; and I just know we're going to have the best sort of time up here, if only we manage to keep the wolf from the door."

"I'll do all I can to assist," laughingly responded Felix, little dreaming how shortly circumstances, just then utterly unseen, would bring these words of his companion forcibly before his mind.

"If you feel like it, Felix, you might be cutting up that big limb that was torn off the tree in some storm; we can't have too big a pile of fire wood, against the coming of winter, you know; and once we get a string of traps to look after, the less time we have to spend in chopping wood, the better."

And with these words, followed by a cheery wave of his chum's hand, Tom strode off for his first side hunt. They really were in need of fresh meat. Some five days had passed since leaving home, and with three to feed part of the time, this had made a little hole in the stock of provisions brought along with them.

Tom had done a great deal of hunting, and was familiar with most of the tricks resorted to by

those who are most successful in getting game. Of course he took occasion to notice the direction of the wind before leaving the cabin. It would be the height of folly to try and stalk a deer with the breeze blowing his scent directly to the delicate nostrils of his intended quarry, for the wary animal must detect his presence long before he could hope to get within gunshot, and as a consequence would be off "like a streak of greased lightning," as Tom himself put it.

As he went along, the boy kept his eyes about him, observing numerous things of a nature to interest a hunter and trapper. The sigh of the wind through the tree-tops was sweetest music in the ears of Tom Tucker; many a night had it lulled him to sleep when in the woods; or stealing softly over the grassy prairie, where the cattle grazed, it had carried with it the chirp of crickets and katydids and all the other familiar sounds of a summer night on the range.

Never a leaf came floating to the ground near him but that his quick eye sought it out instinctively. If some little squirrel rustled the leaves, his ear was on the alert, even as his eager finger touched the trigger of his gun, ready for a shot at a bounding black-tail deer.

So Tom went on for perhaps an hour.

He was not more than half a mile away from the camp at most, since he had considered it good policy to make a half circle, covering as much ground as possible in this, his first tramp.

So far he had seen nothing worth shooting at, though signs of deer had caught his watchful eye numerous times; and he felt sure they used these grounds for feeding purposes, as there were patches of green grass every little while.

And then, all of a sudden, there was a loud rustle of the leaves that sent a thrill through the young hunter. He saw a deer leap over a fallen tree with all the ease in the world, and start to bound away, taking great springs. Instinct rather than anything else caused Tom to throw his rifle to his shoulder; and then he fired, just as the buck turned slightly in order to avoid some obstruction, which Tom had already known would make him veer.

With a crash the deer went down. Throwing another cartridge into the firing chamber of his gun, Tom started full speed toward the spot, ready to finish his quarry, if such a thing proved necessary; for he had known deer to get up again, full of fight, after being thrown to the ground by a shot.

But that first well-placed ball had accomplished its work. The buck was dead by the time Tom reached the spot, pleased with his success, which he looked upon as a splendid sign of future luck.

As the afternoon was well along, and he would have half a mile to "tote" his burden, the boy lost no time in setting to work removing the skin of the animal, and then cutting the deer up, so as to secure the choice portions, including of course the two haunches.

Outside of the hams and perhaps the shoulders there is not a great deal about a deer worth taking; so in due time Tom had packed all he wanted in the hide, which he made up into a compact bundle, and threw over his shoulder.

Thus loaded, and in a happy frame of mind, he started in the direction of camp. Never once during his hour's tramp had Tom been compelled to guess where the dugout lay. The woods were as an open book to him, so accustomed was he to unconsciously noting many little things around him—the moss on the trees; the way the forest monarchs inclined away from the prevailing storms that came from the west in this region, sweeping down the sides of the mountains; with these and many other signs to tell him, a hunter can read locations as easily as you or I might a printed page in a book.

Tom had been moving along a short time in this way when suddenly he stopped to listen. The report of a gun had been borne to his ears, and from the direction of the camp, though the breeze was not favorable for carrying sounds.

"Hello!" he started to remark; when to his surprise a second shot followed the first, and quickly came a third.

By this time Tom was excited. He fancied that this might be a signal calling for help, as is well known among woodsmen, and cattle rustlers. Thoughts of the rough characters said to be somewhere in this vicinity, after being run out of Yellowstone Park by the soldiers guarding the preserves, flashed into his mind.

And so Tom, hastily throwing his pack up over a limb, where it would be safe for a while at least, and carefully noting the spot, so he could find the meat again, started on a wild run for the location of Old Sol's hideout.

CHAPTER IV—THE WOLF PACK

When Felix found himself alone he set about doing a number of things which he had in mind,

meaning to tackle the wood problem when it got later in the afternoon.

Time passes quickly when any one is busily employed, and so the hour slipped by almost before he knew it. From some distance away there suddenly came the report of a rifle. Felix listened eagerly, but no second shot sounded. This seemed to tell him that none was needed.

"I reckon Tom got what he wanted that time," he said to himself, as he went on doing what had engaged his attention; "when he lets go, something generally drops. Makes my mouth water, just to think of having a saddle of venison hanging up here for a starter. And then it'll be my turn next to make a try. Yes, Tom was right; and it sure does look like we were going to have the time of our lives up here in this Rocky Mountain foothills country."

He remembered after a bit that there was only a scant amount of wood handy, and that Tom had hinted about laying in a further supply.

"Guess I'll just get a bucket of water, and then take to the axe for a spell," he remarked to himself, for, like a good many other people, Felix was quite fond of talking to himself when alone.

Among other things they had found an old but serviceable galvanized bucket, which Old Sol had carefully greased, and put away for future use. It had taken Felix not a little time to get it in fairly decent shape again; but it would hold water, and that was a fortunate thing. Under such conditions campers have no right to be overly particular about the looks of things; and a little rust never hurt any one yet, Felix stoutly declared.

So, taking the bucket, he set out for the spring, which happened to be about two hundred feet away from the dugout.

No doubt Sol Ten Eyck was fully aware of the existence of that same fine spring when he started to locate his trapping cabin here in the wilderness; in fact it had everything to do with his selecting that particular locality for putting up his dugout-shack.

He had told Tom that that spring must be connected with some of those in the National Park; because, no matter how cold the winter was, it never froze up. What water came from it might get as hard as anything in the zero temperature; but as for the spring itself, it continued to cheerily bubble forth all through the wintry weather, defying Jack Frost to seal its mouth.

Felix was thinking of his chum as he made his way toward the spring. Doubtless he pictured Tom as busily engaged preparing the carcass of the deer for transportation to the camp; and he could in imagination almost see the pleasure his cousin was taking in his work.

"There never was a better chum than Tom," Felix was saying to himself, as he dipped his bucket carefully into the water; and then, noticing that in approaching too closely he had caused the water to become slightly "roiled," he poured this away, and stooping there, waited a few minutes until it should settle again.

A sound caught his hearing that caused him to quickly look up, and then turn his head. What he saw gave the boy a thrill such as he had seldom experienced before.

One, two, three savage looking animals were standing there, staring at him in a hungry way, just as though they considered themselves in good luck to come upon a dinner so easily.

They had all the appearance of dogs, but although Felix could not own up to any considerable experience with wolves, he knew in a flash that that was what these visitors must be.

And they looked dangerous, too. A single wolf is a cowardly beast, and will almost always slink away from a human being; but when in company, or running with a pack, he becomes an entirely different sort of animal. At such times, especially when sharp pressed by hunger, in the middle of the winter, he will break into the sheep-fold of a farmer, and even pull down a running horse that has been exhausted by a long flight.

Felix had read many a wild story of wolf hunts in Russia; and knew with what fierceness the animals on the Siberian steppes often chase travelers in native vehicles, frequently devouring men and horses.

So he did not underestimate the wolves that so suddenly appeared before him as he stooped over the spring, bucket in hand.

It flashed upon him that save for his hunting knife he was wholly unarmed just then; for his trusty Marlin had of course been left in the cabin; and what use would a five inch blade be against a trio of active, vigorous and reckless wolves, bent upon securing a dinner?

He stood up, and took a step toward the cabin. Ominous growls greeted the act, as though they would warn Felix that they did not mean to allow him to gain the shelter of his fort.

Felix had another thrill about that time. The first had meant only excitement; but this went further, and whispered of alarm as well.

How they bared their white fangs, and raised the long hair on their bony shoulders, to show that

they were primed for fight.

The boy realized that unless he proved himself quick-witted the chances of his ever getting to where he could snatch up his good rifle, and give them what they deserved, would be pretty slim.

At such a time as this the brain works as if on fire. It seemed to Felix as though a score of things flashed through his mind at the same instant. He wondered if he could frighten the animals by dashing at them, waving his arms, and letting out a few wild whoops, for sometimes wolves are sent into a panic by the sound of the human voice.

But if the expedient failed, why, it would bring him all the sooner to grips with the three hairy scamps that seemed to invite a trail of strength, and resourcefulness.

How about the bucket—could he knock upon the bottom with his knuckles at the same time, and add to the din, so as to produce a temporary fear in their hearts?

The cabin was only two hundred feet away, and Felix just knew he could fairly fly over this distance, given half a chance; but if they recovered soon enough to leap after him, was he not likely to have them on his back before he could get inside and slam the door shut?

But something *must* be done!

He could see them edging a little closer all the while, as though unable to hold themselves wholly in check. And they were spreading out more in the shape of a fan, too, as if they knew the best way to trap him.

Whatever was to be done, he must lose no more time about it, or the attack would follow, and then it would be too late to devise any scheme looking to creating a diversion.

It seemed as though just at that instant Felix remembered something that promised to open up a possible avenue of escape.

When he was sitting there, resting for a few minutes, he had picked up the newspaper that had been wrapped around some of their smoked meat. Despite its greasy condition Felix had become interested in an article on some subject of surgery that happened to catch his eye. This he had partly read through; and then, wishing to complete a certain task with which he was engaged, he had doubled the paper up, and unconcernedly thrust it into a rear pocket; little dreaming how in doing this he might have been actually saving his own life. So do trifles sometimes turn out to be of the greatest moment.

This paper, with its greasy surface, would make a fierce flame, if only for a brief time; and he always carried a bountiful supply of matches along with him; for Tom had advised this, as a precaution, in case he ever became lost, when each one would be worth a priceless sum.

No sooner had the idea flashed into the mind of Felix than he put his hand around, in hopes of feeling the doubled paper. His heart was in his throat when at first he failed to touch anything, then he remembered that it was in the other hip pocket he had thrust the paper.

So he drew it out, rustling in a manner that elicited a fresh chorus of snarls and growls from the three guards, who stood between him and the shack where safety for him lay.

Crunching the paper up, Felix next sought for a match. He had a little safe in one pocket of his trousers; but so clear was his mind at this critical stage of the game that he instantly remembered placing several matches loosely in the side pocket of his coat, where he could get at them more easily when starting a fire for supper.

So ugly did the wolves act about this time that he was almost afraid they were determined not to wait any longer, but proceed to open hostilities. And so he continued to talk, and call out at them the while, in hopes of averting the crisis until he had started things moving himself.

Straight ahead of him lay the dugout. Once he began running he must make record time, and keep in a direct line for the door. How fortunate that he had left this wide open when starting after that bucket of water! All he would have to do would be to fly through that friendly aperture, snatch hold of the door, and fling it back of him. Then his next move would be to make one leap for the corner where the Marlin stood; once he felt its convincing metal in his hands, and after that he would not care a snap of his fingers for all the timber wolves that existed within a radius of ten miles.

All these preliminaries Felix seemed to settle, just like a great general would his plan of campaign; only he had to do it out of hand. The impatient and hungry wolves would not wait his pleasure; they wanted things to be moving along.

Felix had let the empty bucket drop to the ground when his brilliant scheme came flashing into his mind, so that both his hands were free to conduct the work he had arranged.

First of all was the striking of the match, and this he would have to accomplish along one leg of his trousers, as Tom always did. The act was greeted by more nasty and irritating snarls, as the three wolves moved still closer, hardly able to hold back longer.

When the flame of the match was communicated to the greasy newspaper, of course it flashed up splendidly.

This was his chance, and delay now would be apt to injure his prospects of being able to reach the shelter of the cabin.

So Felix began to wave his flaming torch, made up of the twisted newspaper, and at the same time sprang straight at the three wolves. He knew that such a move would add to their temporary panicky state of feeling and give him a chance to cover some ground.

And as he started to jump at them, he also called out at the top of his voice, and waved both arms, as though he might be an animated human windmill in action, bearing down upon them.

CHAPTER V—A FIRST TASTE OF VENISON

"Get out! Get out, you rascals!"

That was about the burden of what Felix yelled, as he dashed at the three timber wolves; although, when put to it afterwards he could never be sure of what he said, only that he endeavored to make his whole appearance as fierce looking as possible.

It seemed to be a success, too, for the animals turned tail, and bolted. Wolves, as indeed about every other wild animal in the woods or in the mountains, inherit a peculiar dread of fire, though of course the only acquaintance most of them have with its terrifying qualities is when a forest or a prairie fire threatens their lives.

Even before the white man came to these shores of America, the Indians knew how to use flint and steel in order to kindle their fires; and besides, now and then, doubtless conflagrations may have occurred through fire coming down from the clouds, and the lightning striking some dead tree in the woods.

Thus the fear of flames is born in these predatory animals; and as even in the broad daylight the wolves saw the greasy newspaper flash up into a little pyramid of fire, they just "scooted for all they were worth," as Felix afterwards declared, when telling the story of his little adventure.

He did not even waste a second in glancing over his shoulder as he ran, in order to ascertain how far this fear carried them. Chances were, they would quickly get over the condition of panic, especially when seeing their expected dinner making off in that vigorous fashion. And Felix knew that once this occurred, they would be racing after him as fast as they could run.

As the boy had always been fond of baseball, and kindred games, while at school, doubtless he could look back to many an occasion when he put in what he considered his "best licks" in endeavoring to stretch out a two-base hit into a three-bagger; or possibly trying to steal home, when the ball was being sent back to the pitcher, and his club needed a run the worst kind, to win.

But Felix always claimed that had he been able to cover ground on those occasions as rapidly as he did when those three wolves were after him, he might have easily counted a home-run on that two-base hit; or be sitting on the home plate by the time the pitcher was ready to throw to catch him.

He fairly flew, every muscle and nerve being "on the job," as he called it. The yawning open door was just in front of him; but by now he could positively hear a terrible scratching sound in his rear, which must be produced by the scrambling of his lupine foes over the intervening ground.

They had recovered from their temporary scare, and were after him at full speed, bent on pulling him down as they would a wounded deer.

But he reached the dugout, and shot through that opening like a flash. At the instant of doing so he reached out, and catching hold of the door, gave it a desperate fling.

He heard it strike something, which could only be the head of the foremost wolf. And turning as quickly as possible, Felix threw his weight against the door, which was even then commencing to move inward, under the rush of enemies without.

But there was enough of vigor and alarm in the boy to crush the door fast; after which he secured it with the bar.

He was safe, then, and had cheated the hungry beasts out of their expected dinner. Felix seemed to experience a sudden change in the state of his feelings. He had been alarmed before; now he was angry at those three bold beasts. And turning around, he picked up the Marlin with which he expected to get his ferocious grizzly; and which had been chosen particularly on account of its hard shooting qualities, as well as its faithfulness in a pinch, the mechanism never failing to work, as some guns have a weakness for doing.

Once he had the hammer drawn back, and Felix walked deliberately over to the door, which he meant to swing open. He might have taken to the window just as well, but somehow he felt so fortified by this accession of the repeating gun that he scorned such "baby" action.

Taking down the bar, he allowed the door to open just a few inches. That gave him the chance he wanted to see the gleaming eyes and the red mouth of a wolf not two feet away.

With the shot he saw the animal roll over in convulsions; while the other two lost no time in making hasty tracks away from that dangerous locality.

And here was where Felix showed that he knew what he was doing when he selected the door instead of the smaller opening that served as a window, since it actually had a pane of glass, and a movable sash—he was enabled to immediately step outside, gun in hand, and take a couple of shots at the fleeing wolves.

With each report one of the scampering beasts rolled over. It was as fine shooting as Felix had ever done in all his life, and he had always been accounted a rather clever hand with either rifle or bird gun.

"All down in that alley; set 'em up again!" he exclaimed, thrilled with the remarkable success that had followed his work.

Not one of the ferocious beasts got up again, to try and limp away; so that the young Nimrod was not compelled to use more than a single cartridge apiece.

But when, presently, he went to the spring for that bucket of water, Felix, you may be sure, carried the rifle along with him; and the three cartridges that had been ejected were replaced by fresh ones.

There were no more wolves hovering around in that immediate neighborhood, apparently, and he was not disturbed any further. So Felix set about chopping his wood in the most unconcerned way possible, after examining the bodies of his prizes, and dragging them into a row under the big tree.

A short time later he heard Tom's "cooie," and answered it. Of course the other had ceased his wild run as soon as he caught the regular sound of the descending axe; but when he came up presently, fairly panting for breath, his face displayed more than ordinary curiosity.

"What was it, Felix?" he asked.

"Do you mean, why did I fire those three shots?" asked the other, meaning to tantalize his chum a little; for he could see how Tom was burning up with eagerness to know the cause of the firing.

"Yes, yes, of course. It's generally the signal that a fellow needs help," said Tom, eagerly.

"Well, my time for needing help had about passed when I let drive with the Marlin gun," Felix went on, in a mysterious way that the other could make nothing out of. "But if you could have dropped in here about a minute before that time, I tell you now, you'd have been the most welcome sight my eyes could have looked on."

"But why? Open up, Felix, and tell me what happened. You shot something, didn't you?" Tom went on to demand.

"I shot three times, and there were just that number of the scamps, Tom."

Whereupon Tom glanced around, and in consequence quickly discovered the several forms of the defunct beasts lying in a grim row under the big tree.

"Well, I'll be hanged if it wasn't a whole pack of wolves; and what fierce looking fellows, too!" he exclaimed, as he hurried over to examine them.

"Huh!" grunted Felix; "I reckon each one looked about as tall as a house to me, when they stood there, and showed me by their bared fangs, and savage growls, that they didn't mean to let me make a dash from the spring to the shack without tackling me."

"The spring! D'ye mean to say they waylaid you there? But how lucky it was that you didn't forget to have your gun along!" ejaculated Tom.

"That's where the joke comes in," remarked the other, drily; "because it never once occurred to me that a fellow ought to go to get a bucket of water, with his gun under one arm. It was in the cabin at the time, more's the pity."

Tom plumped down on the ground, and mopped his face with his bandana; his run had apparently heated him up considerably.

"Spin the yarn, Felix; don't keep me guessing so hard. However in the wide world did you keep them off till you grabbed up the gun?" he urged.

"Couldn't have done it at all, I give you my word, because they were just bent on tackling me off-hand; but it chanced that I had an old newspaper in my pocket."

"A newspaper!" echoed Tom; "what under the sun did that have to do with it! How could a paper interest wolves? Come on, tell me what you did, Felix?"

"Struck a match, and made a bully old torch. Then I just jumped for 'em, and hollered to beat the band!" replied the other, with a grin.

Tom's face was a study as he listened, and he too smiled broadly.

"A great stunt, my boy, it sure was," he went on to say. "And so that scared 'em off enough for you to get inside, where your gun was, did it?"

"But only by a close shave," replied Felix. "One of the critters came slap up against the door even when I was banging it shut; and they all tried to outpush me."

"Then I suppose you just opened the little window, and gave the sassy beasts one, two, three, eh, Felix?"

"Just what I did, only it was the door I opened a little, Tom. After I'd bowled one over, the others put for shelter, just as I expected; and so I was able to just step outside, and plunk the runners as neat as you please. I'm some proud of those two shots; they were as good as anything I ever did at my best."

"Well, you have done yourself proud, let me tell you that; but in my mind the best part of the whole business was where you thought up that clever dodge of using that newspaper for a torch. It was a stroke of genius," said Tom, earnestly, and there could be no doubt that he meant it.

"But I heard you shoot; did you get any fresh meat? Excuse me for asking; but I'm that hungry for a bite of venison I'll have to forget my manners, Tom?"

"Oh! I downed a young black-tail buck, and was toting the meat to camp when I heard you shoot three times. Of course I just thought you'd visitors here in the shape of that Abe Cozzins and Perley Kline we've been hearing so much about, as guides who've been doing all sorts of tough things, been fired from the Park, and are suspected of shooting game on the Government reservation. You just bet I did some tall sprinting for a while; then when I heard you start chopping, I knew you must be all right; but by that time I was too much worked up to turn around and go back for the venison I hung on a limb. I'll do that as soon as I get my breath once more."

Felix swung his axe merrily, while the other watched him.

"You couldn't have better exercise than that for broadening your chest and hardening your muscles don't you know it, Felix," Tom asked, presently.

"Sure I do, and that's a sly hint I'm to be the steady wood chopper while we're up in camp at the foot of the Rockies," replied the other, laughingly; "but I really like the handling of an axe first-rate; and with more practice I think I'll be able to bring it down exactly where I want, every time, just like those loggers up in Maine do."

"Well, I must say you're in an awful big hurry to load up with pelts," Tom continued, with a whimsical grimace in the direction of the three wolves. "Here you hardly get in camp before you begin by knocking over a big cat that crawls out of our chimney; and before a single day goes by you've lain out a heap of fine wolf hides for me to stretch and dry. At that rate I see myself keeping busy right along and we'll have a load to take back on our sledge that'll make Frazer's eyes stick out of his head. I kind of think he laughed in his sleeve at the idea of two boys catching any of these fur bearing animals. He'll have another guess coming. But I ought to be hiking out after that venison. I'd hate to have any critter make way with it, after going to all the trouble I did, eh, Felix?"

"And then, we need it in our business so bad, too," remarked the other, drily; "so I think you'd better be getting it, Tom."

Accordingly, Tom started off again to retrace his steps, promising to be back in half an hour or less. With the pleasing prospect of fresh meat for supper, Felix worked with additional vim, as he swung the light axe they had carried with them through the three days they had been on the trail up here.

Now and then he would steal a glance toward the row of grim trophies that had fallen to his skill as a marksman; yet from certain words that dropped from his lips it was evident that Felix gave much of the credit to his faithful gun.

"Just point it straight, and it'll do the rest every time," he chuckled, with a fond look at the rifle snuggled down close to where he was working, so that he could snatch it up at a second's warning, if necessary.

After a time the cheery whistle of his chum was heard near by, and then Tom appeared, staggering under his load, but making light of it when Felix protested that he should not have

tried to carry so much.

"Plenty of meat for a week or two, because it'll keep sweet and nice in this mountain air, and particularly at this time of year," Felix had said, as he helped unload the pack-horse and sized up the cuts.

"Don't examine 'em too close," remonstrated the Nimrod; "I never was a good hand at butchering; though I had ought to be, because I've been raised among cattle, and have cut up many a steer. But it answers our purpose."

"Well, if you call that poor work, you'll take a fit when you see what I do," remarked the other, shaking his head in despair.

As the afternoon was now getting along, they determined that they might as well start things moving, looking toward supper. Both of them were fairly wild to get the first taste of meat on the trip.

At home, and cooked in the civilized fashion, with possibly only a poor appetite spurring one on, venison is apt to seem dry eating; but take it out in the woods with the proper surroundings, and hunger that is clamorous in its demands; with the game cooked after the hunter's fashion, and there is nothing more delightful. Just so the coffee tastes like nectar out of a rusty old tin cup, while at home much of the pleasure is lost if there happens to be a crack in the delicate china cup in which the fragrant juice of the Java bean is served. The conditions and surroundings have a great deal to do with the enjoyment of a thing; and venison was never intended to be eaten over a snow-white table cloth, and flanked by cut glass and china and silverware.

While Felix commenced to get supper Tom gave his attention to taking off the gray "jackets," as he called them, of the wolves.

"Some day, not a great ways off," he remarked, "they'll be keeping a chauffeur or a gentleman in a car snug and warm, and that's a better use for them, than just covering three pesky calf-killers. I'm always tickled all to death to see a wolf knocked over, I despise the breed so; they're so sneaky and so cruel."

"Well, they looked that way to me, let me tell you," remarked Felix from within the shack, where he was busily employed; "especially when they drew back their lips and showed me what long fangs they had, all of 'em. But all's well that ends well; and we've got a nice bunch of wolf pelts to start on."

After awhile the tantalizing odor of coffee began to steal out to Tom; and then this was supplemented by the delightful smell of frying meat; for they had fetched along a good-sized frying pan, without which Tom never would go camping.

He had just washed up, after completing his job, so far as the first part of it went, when Felix announced that supper was ready.

"I reckon you'd better take a look around tomorrow," Tom remarked, as they sat there by the fire, enjoying a bountiful meal that made both boys as contented as kings. "I had my inning today; and besides, I've got lots of work to do, what with getting these wolf pelts fastened on stretchers; and setting a few traps in places not a great ways from the shack. And after the time you had, I give you fair warning that I'll never be caught out, with my gun at home. If you'd had time, of course, you could have climbed a tree; but those hungry chaps didn't mean to let you try such a dodge. Chances were they'd have nabbed you in three shakes of a lamb's tail."

"But we've got enough meat for awhile, haven't we?" asked Felix.

"Better lay in a stock while the chance offers," replied the other, wisely. "If we want to keep it I know how the Indians jerk their venison, and it ain't half way bad, cooked in a stew, or eaten as it's dried. Pemmican they call it, and some of the lot they carry is about as black as your hat, from the smoke it was dried in. An Indian brave can run for days with only a handful of that stuff along to nibble at when he feels faint. It's a life saver, all right."

"Perhaps, then, I will take a look around," Felix admitted; for he was eager to try his luck with the deer, as well as have a chance to observe what the surrounding country looked like.

They passed a pleasant evening, both busy doing some little thing; for there could always be found plenty that needed attention; and Tom was a great hand to want to have everything about him shipshape.

And when finally, becoming tired, the two chums turned in, they did not need any rocking to put them to sleep.

CHAPTER VI—FELIX TAKES HIS TURN

So another day found the campers under the shadow of the great Rockies. They were up early,

for it had been about nine o'clock when they turned in on the preceding night; and there was plenty waiting to be done.

"Suppose you let the pelts go until later in the day, Tom," remarked Felix as they ate breakfast at the rough table, which Old Sol had built for his use when he used to spend so many months every winter up here, in this favorite nook.

"What for?" asked the other, well knowing that Felix would never make this odd proposition without having some good reason for it.

"Well," said his chum, slowly, "I'd like to go with you for a little while, and see how you set the traps you think of putting out. Then, later on in the day, perhaps after we've had a bite of lunch, I might try a tramp in another quarter from where you went, just to see what the country looks like."

"Just as you say," replied Tom, readily enough. "I didn't stop to think that perhaps you'd like to see the operation. And I guess it's just as well that you pick up some information about how to do the job; because some days perhaps you'll want to run the line of traps yourself; and then you'll have to know how to set them, as well as keep your scent from staying around, and warning timid animals away."

In about half an hour they started forth, each carrying a few traps. Tom had been cudgeling his brains to remember all that Old Sol had told him about his favorite places for setting his mink traps. There was a little ravine close by, through which a stream of water ran; and along the banks of this the wary animals abound.

Perhaps Tom may not have gone about his task in exactly the same way an experienced trapper would; for it takes years of work to learn all there is to know in connection with the cunning little fur-bearing animals that look on man as their most implacable foe, as indeed he has been ever since the world began.

Some people have a knack for doing this sort of thing, while others never seem able to learn anything about the game. Tom was one of the former. He had spent enough time with Old Sol to learn a great many points that were worth knowing. The rest could only come through personal experience in the field.

These mink traps were set in front of certain openings in the banks which, from the signs, were "used" by the mink in traveling about, a peculiar habit they have of doing at certain times of the year.

Then a couple of fox traps were left at spots which Tom understood were likely to bring about results. Great care had to be exercised in setting these traps, so as to conceal the human scent, which would come to the acute sense of smell of the sly fox, and completely baffle the designs of the would-be trappers.

After that some muskrats traps were placed in a little marsh where the rodents lived in great numbers. They are possibly the easiest animal to trap there is; and as the price of their skins has been going steadily up from next to nothing, until now they bring as high as sixty-five cents apiece, it pays a trapper to devote his entire time to taking the rats; which, truth to tell, are really no relation to the ordinary house rats, but are called musquash by the Indians, and are really very tasty as food.

It was when the boys were starting back to the dugout, after locating the last of their muskrat traps in the marsh, that Tom made a discovery.

"Looky here!" he exclaimed, pointing to one side; "what's been going on, d'ye suppose? Part of a deer, and it hasn't been killed more'n a week. Why, the foxes haven't made way with it all. Queer those hungry wolves didn't scent it; but then they don't eat carrion as a rule, like the coyotes. They're daintier in their choice of food."

"Whatever do you suppose killed this deer?" asked Felix, as they turned that way.

"We'll soon find out," replied his chum; "but the chances are ten to one it was a bullet from a rifle."

He bent over to examine the few remains, and presently looked up with a smile.

"What did I tell you, Felix?" he demanded, holding some small object before his chum's eyes.

It was a bullet, somewhat flattened from having struck the heavier bones, when it pierced the body of the deer.

"And only a week back, you say, Tom?" remarked Felix, a frown appearing on his face. "Then some party has been around here a short time ago? I had begun to believe we were going to have it all to ourselves; but I suppose that would be too good luck. Any idea what sort of a man the hunter was?"

"Injun," replied Tom, laconically, as he pointed to the mark of a moccasin in the soft soil near by;

and which Felix noticed "toed-in;" for an Indian always walks that way; as Nature intended man should, before he began to wear stiff boots, and started to use his feet the wrong way, by "toeing-out."

"Whew! then all I hope is, that it turns out to be that good old halfbreed we heard so much about, Charley Crow they call him, because his other name is too much for a fellow's tongue. I wouldn't mind him so much; and if he's starting to put in a season trapping in this neighborhood, why, we might make friends with him, you know."

"As for me," declared Tom, with a disconsolate look on his sun-burned face; "you know, I don't take much stock in any Injun or half-breed. I only hope we have the good fortune not to run across this fellow, or any of his kind, all the time we stick it out up here. But then I'm prejudiced, I own up. Charley may be all they say about him. We'll let it go at that. If he doesn't bother us, be sure I'll not go ten steps out of my way to look him up."

All the same, it made them a little serious as they walked back to the camp. If there were others hunting and trapping in that section, such a thing always opened the door for all sorts of new troubles.

Supposing there should turn out to be a whole hunting party of Shoshones or Flatfoot Indians off their reservation, and engaged in a grand hunt; they would make things look pretty "sick," as Tom expressed it, around there, in short order.

But then, fortunately perhaps, boys are not much given to forebodings; and presently both Tom and his chum were feeling themselves again. Doubtless the recollection of that deer would return to them more than a few times to arouse these same doubts and speculations. And every time Tom felt that smashed bit of lead in his pocket, he would allow himself to indulge in guesses that could hardly lead to anywhere in particular.

It was now getting on toward noon, and Felix announced that he would not bother making a start until some time afterwards. There was no need of hurry, and inside of a couple of hours, he thought he ought to cover as much ground as he wanted to get over for that time.

"I'd better be making a start with those wolf pelts," said Tom; "because there's no telling what we may have on our hands by tomorrow, if only a third of those nine traps bring us returns. Makes me think I'm out again with Old Sol. How much I'd like to have him along, right now, he's such a bully old chap; and with a lot of queer things to tell about his experiences."

Although Felix did not bother to say so, truth to tell, he was entirely satisfied with the way things ran just then; there could not be a better comrade than Tom Tucker, and according to his mind, two was always a better number than three.

He watched Tom get busy with one of the pelts, and affix it to the large stretching board; after he had done considerable scraping, so as to get the skin as free from flesh as possible.

"They're prime skins, and that's what," the worker declared. "And if you'd shot this fellow on purpose so as not to injure his hide, you couldn't have done better."

"That must be the one that was trying to butt in at the door when I opened it just a mite," declared Felix. "I gave him his right down his throat; for he had his mouth open, and I could see the rows of shining white teeth; besides his red tongue hanging out."

"Of course that's it," remarked Tom. "I remember now that the others are shot in the side, and both of them just back of the foreleg. Great work, that, my boy; and when it comes to shooting I'll have to take a back seat, I reckon."

"Lay it to the gun," chuckled Felix; "all you have to do is to stick that shooting-iron out, and shut your eyes as you pull trigger. It does all the rest."

"Yes, and goes out to retrieve your game besides," added Tom, with a laugh. "The gun's all right, and I've used it enough to know what it can do; but there's a whole lot in the fellow behind the gun, as they say in the navy."

"By the way, Tom, you'd better tell me if you think there's any chance of my getting lost in these same old woods. I don't know half as much as you do about finding my way about; and I used to have the greatest weakness for losing my bearings you ever saw, some time back. Yes, I studied up all the known ways for telling the direction, if I lost my compass and could point out north as well as the next fellow; but the trouble with me was, I couldn't say whether camp meant north, south, east or west, most of the time. Of course, here I'd have the mountains to guide me; and besides, I've got a bully little compass somewhere around; so I don't think I'll worry about it. And even if I did stray off, it could only be for a night. After several stabs at it, I'd be sure to arrive at the proper direction."

"I don't believe you would lose yourself around here if you tried, Felix," asserted Tom, positively. "You're only saying that to josh me. But I'm not going to let it bother me any. If you don't turn up, why, I'll be on your trail in the morning." Tom said this jokingly, never dreaming that he might have a chance to put his words into practice so soon.

He, himself, had never been lost in all his life. Like the homing pigeon, Tom seemed to have some sort of instinct that, under all circumstances, allowed him to face toward home when he wanted to turn that way. And he could not understand how anyone could make such mountains out of mole-hills. Why, all they had to do was to use their eyes, and what sense lay in their head, in order to figure out just how to head to get back to their starting point.

And yet you could drop Felix down into the heart of a strange city, even great London, and he would presently be able to find his way around, so that in a week's time the streets would be as familiar to him as those of his native town; while probably Tom Tucker would have to be escorted to his hotel by the police every time he sauntered forth. He was used to one thing, and Felix another.

When two hours had passed Tom, seeing that his companion had not made any sign of going forth began to ask questions.

"Give up the idea of that little hunt for today, Felix?"

"Oh! no," was the reply, as the other got up and stretched himself, for he had been busying himself with some small job that allowed of sitting.

"Better be moving, then, or you'll be caught by darkness away from camp; and then you'll have to try bunking alone for once," suggested the other.

"That's so," Felix went on, beginning to buckle on his ammunition belt, and put a few things in the pockets of his coat, the sight of which made Tom elevate his eyebrows.

"Don't mean to take any chances, eh?" he remarked.

"Oh! well, there's no telling, and you yourself always say its best to be prepared. I expect to be back inside of two hours at the most, however," and Felix picked up his gun, showing that he was now ready to start.

"And I expect to have a lot of things done by the time you do come back," remarked Tom. "If you're lucky enough to get your deer, perhaps you'd better only bring home the saddle, and leave the rest for tomorrow."

"You're saying that because you know I'm not built along the same husky lines you are," declared Felix; "but lots of times these thin fellows can show plenty of grit and carrying power. So-long, Tom."

"And Felix," called out the other, as an after thought, "if you happen to run up against any of those fellows like Abe Cozzins and Perley Kline,—you remember Frazer telling us about their stamp, don't you?—better give 'em a wide berth. We know they're being looked for by the Government men, and p'raps they know it too, so they may feel ugly toward every one. If we were together I wouldn't think much of it; but you haven't rubbed up against that sort of border scoundrel as much as I have. Be careful, won't you?"

"I guess I will, Tom; and don't worry about me."

With that Felix was gone, his gun over his shoulder, and not a sign of his recent weariness to be seen about his quick, springy step, Tom noticed, with satisfaction.

The time passed rapidly to the boy who was so busy in camp. In fact, he hardly noticed its passage, and when he heard a distant shot, soon followed by a second, he was astonished to find that two hours had really gone.

"That sounded as though he'd struck something worth while," Tom was saying to himself, with a smile, once more turning his attention to whatever it was at which he chanced to be working at the time. "But unless he hurries in his work, it'll come on dark before he gets back. At this time of year night just seems to be in the tallest kind of a hurry to get a move on the daylight."

And indeed, as the dusk deepened, and he saw nothing of his chum, Tom went to the open door many times, wondering whether after all Felix might not have wandered so far afield that his own laughing prediction was being fulfilled, and that in truth he was temporarily lost.

But Tom, having prepared supper for two, waited a long time before he would sit down alone to eat his portion. As Felix was still absent the Western boy began to feel more or less worried. He had thought there could be little or no danger in those woods at the base of the Rockies; but now, with the absence of his chum, he began to see all sorts of evil things that might have come upon Felix, rather unused to these vast ranges of wilderness, so different from those he was accustomed to roaming in the Far East.

Later grew the hour, and Tom realized that the matter was getting a bit serious. He even went out, and fired his gun three times in rapid succession; and then listened eagerly; but there was no air stirring to carry sounds, and only the melancholy hooting of an owl up among the cliffs far away answered him.

CHAPTER VII—UNAVOIDABLE DELAY

There was a reason, and a good one, too, for Felix failing to show up that afternoon or evening, which will become apparent to the reader after a short time.

When he strode away from the camp under the big tree, it was as cheerfully as ever he had felt in all his life; nor was he dreaming of the possibilities of anything odd, or out of the usual rut, overtaking him. But many times it is the unexpected that swoops down upon us; just as storms once in a while surprise the oldest weather prophets, coming from a point they have never considered.

Felix wanted very much to duplicate the performance of his chum. He had made up his mind to three things, which he hoped his trip to the Rockies would bring forth. One of these, as has been said before, was to be able to shoot a ferocious grizzly bear, alone and unaided. Then he yearned to bring down one of those sturdy jumpers of the steeps, a Rocky Mountain sheep, or bighorn, stories concerning which he had read so many times; and last of all, he hoped to get the head of a seven-pronged buck, something that in all his hunting before he had never been able to secure for his collection.

He strode away, and in less than half an hour had begun to work things to suit the conditions of the hunt. The wind had changed materially from the preceding day, and was now coming out of the northwest. This allowed Felix a chance to head in a northerly direction, which was just what he wanted; because it gave him the option of covering ground which Tom had not touched in his little hunt.

Now he was moving cautiously along, eyes and ears on the alert; for his chum had warned him that in all probability the first thing he would know concerning the presence of a deer would be when he heard it jump hurriedly to its feet in some thicket, and then catch a glimpse of its brown side as it leaped wildly away. And Felix, being a clever snap-shot with his favorite gun, was on the watch ready to do himself credit.

Of course, even the best of hunters may make a poor shot at times, since when a deer plunges madly through woods and brush there is no certainty for aim; but he believed that if the chances gave him half a show he would make a success of his little excursion.

A more cautious or experienced lad than Felix would of course have taken more pains to note the lay of the land, and its other features, calculated to prove of more or less value to him later on in case he got his bearings mixed.

But he was buoyant and indifferent; besides, it happened that he had lately discovered certain tracks that held his interest, to the exclusion of all such minor things as the possibility of his getting lost.

These hoof prints had certainly been made by a deer of unusual size, a fact he viewed with exultation, since it told him that undoubtedly here was the very buck for which he had long been looking, and whose antlered head he began to hope was to grace the wall of his den at home.

And as he moved along he registered a silent vow that he would let nothing come in the way to interfere with the success of his undertaking, should he only have the good fortune to come up with his quarry.

Felix could not tell exactly how old the tracks were. He saw by several signs, however, that they had been made since early morning, since in places they had broken down the partly frozen earth. He was trusting partly to luck that the deer might not be miles away from him just then. If he had followed the usual custom of his kind he had lain down during the middle of the day, when the sun was warm, and might be feeding by this time.

An hour passed away, and Felix was just as eagerly tramping along with his eyes fixed upon those tracks as when he first started. If there was one trait young Edmondson possessed that cropped out frequently, it was his stubbornness, once his mind was made up; no matter what difficulties loomed up ahead, that were calculated to dismay the ordinary fellow, he would not be deterred.

By now he had covered fully twice the distance from the camp that he had intended to do; for instead of sweeping around, and making a half circle, he was keeping almost straight on, even though the trail zigzagged at times.

Even Felix, without the extended experience in tracking which his companion possessed, could tell that he was gaining on the deer, which had stopped to browse from time to time, when some tempting bit of green grass was come upon in small glades under the heavy timber growth.

This kept his excitement at fever height. What mattered it if he did not get back to camp that night; he had made ample preparations for spending a short period alone under the trees; and in fact was not wholly averse to trying how it felt to be making a bivouac in that Wyoming wilderness, quite by himself; for Felix was always seeking new and novel sensations, and he could not remember ever camping in solitary state in all his life.

At any rate Felix gave promise of some day making a splendid trailer; since the prime requisite to

success along this line is stick-at-it-iveness, such as marks the wolf following the deer through day and night, until finally he wearies his intended quarry, and brings it to bay.

The tracks now looked much fresher than when he started to follow them. He began to hope that he might come suddenly upon his game in some quiet nook; and hence his eager finger toyed nervously with the trigger, as he kept pushing ahead.

And just as he had anticipated many a time, the first thing he heard was a loud snort. Then up jumped a buck of such splendid proportions that Felix was thrilled doubly by the apparition. Nevertheless, he did not lose his head, as many boys would have done under similar circumstances; but as the big beast leaped away, the Marlin repeater was flung up to the young hunter's shoulder, and its sharp report instantly followed.

With a crash the deer went down in a heap; but after a wild scramble, seemed able to get upon its feet again, proving that the first shot had failed to effect a fatal wound.

Felix naturally expected to see the animal go off with frantic bounds, and was prepared to send several shots after him, in the hope of bringing him down with a lucky bullet; but he did not calculate what a painful wound might accomplish in arousing the combative spirit and fury in an old buck.

To his intense amazement and consternation, the animal, while "bounding" all right, headed directly toward him, instead of away.

This surprising fact must have disconcerted the young Nimrod a trifle, at least, as it has many a veteran marksman under similar conditions; at least it caused him to aim badly; so that although he pulled trigger and the gun spoke, the advancing animal did not seem to swerve from the direct course he had taken in starting, and which if pursued, would bring him swooping down upon the boy.

Now Felix had heard Tom tell about the far from amiable qualities shown by these same hermit bucks, when aroused, and enraged by wounds; and how dangerous a charge on the part of one might prove.

He even noted that the antlers were much larger than the coveted seven-prongs upon which he had set his mind and hopes; and indeed just at that moment they must have appeared to his excited imagination about five feet long, and each prong threatening to do him a tremendous amount of harm if it came in contact with his person.

Felix rejoiced in the fact that he was in the neighborhood of a good-sized tree, behind which he could take immediate shelter, for the charging animal was so close upon him that he had no chance to shoot for a third time.

And it was with considerable activity and eagerness that the young Nimrod gave a leap to one side, and placed the tree-trunk between; but he clung with a desperate clutch to his rifle, knowing instinctively that sooner or later this was the only thing that could rid him of the implacable foe that his shots had aroused to such fury.

And then began a merry chase around that tree, with the wounded buck trying all he knew how to reach the fleeing hunter with those terrible antlers, which Felix had coveted so much; it began to look just then as though he might make their acquaintance in a fashion he had never dreamed possible.

Of course the boy had only part of the distance to cover that the deer required, in order to pass around the large trunk; but he was compelled to do this so many times, and kept going at such constant whirlwind speed that presently it began to cause Felix to puff a little; while to his alarm the raging beast seemed capable of keeping the chase up indefinitely, despite the wound in his shoulder, which Felix noted was bleeding considerably.

This fact warned Felix that he had better get busy, and think up some new line of tactics, if he hoped to come out of the scrape with flying colors, for he certainly could not gallop, or even slide, around that tree as he had been doing now for ten minutes, much longer.

The buck was desperately in earnest, and several times, came near impaling the boy with his antlers; so that Felix found himself kept busy between rushes in avoiding these dangerous attacks.

His attention being taken up just then with trying to work the mechanism of his rifle, in the hope of being able to put another bit of lead into the anatomy of his pursuer, possibly he failed to note just where he was stepping, for suddenly Felix tripped over some object, and fell just in the path of the swooping buck!

The rifle was twisted from his hands as he tried to save himself, and dropped far beyond his reach. As he tried to squirm out of the way of the charging buck, he felt a thrill of horror when the antlers of the beast were thrust under him, just missing his flesh, as it were, by an inch.

Before he could think twice, he was raised in the air by a sudden upward movement of the deer's

head; and then went sailing swiftly through space, with his arms and legs flying in four separate directions.

Just how high he really did go Felix never knew, though he often pondered over the matter with considerable amusement, and wished some ambitious photographer might have been present with his little snap-shot camera to take the picture, for his edification in future days.

At any rate, he felt his progress checked by the branches of the tree under which he happened to be at the time; and with an involuntary movement, for thinking was positively out of the question at that moment, he instantly threw out both hands, his one idea being to clutch something that would prevent his falling back upon those cruel looking antlers of the wounded buck.

Fortune was kind enough to allow Felix to fasten to a friendly limb, and hold on tenaciously so that after a little struggle he found himself astride the same, and looking down in mingled astonishment and satisfaction on the chagrined buck below.

The furious animal seemed surprised that the object of his sudden hatred should decline to drop back again, to be gored and trampled upon, in order to satisfy the rampant spirit of revenge that was now wholly dominating the buck's actions. He gave positive evidence of his humor by leaping upward again and again as if in hopes of reaching the panting lad, who sat there just out of range; though once the sweeping antlers managed to touch the dangling foot of the hunter, causing Felix to experience an involuntary thrill of apprehension, as he snatched his leg hastily away.

Then by slow degrees the ludicrous nature of his predicament dawned upon Felix, and leaning back he laughed long and heartily; this only after he had anxiously felt of his ribs and limbs, to make positive that nothing beyond a few minor contusions and bruises had resulted from this heaving act of the animal in causing him to take an unexpected aerial flight.

After that he amused himself in addressing the animal, snorting and prancing below, calling him many sarcastic names that might have wounded the buck's self respect, could he but have understood. But the stubborn deer seemed bent upon only one thing, which was to visit his wrath upon the object of his hatred, or at least keep him treed, if it took him all night.

When another hour had passed without the beast showing the slightest inclination of quitting his post, Felix gave over his playful mood, and began to survey the situation in a more serious light.

Why, the stubborn old chap was apt to keep up his vigil all night; and even then some.

While the boy might be able to maintain his position among the branches of the tree that length of time without great difficulty, Felix considered the possibility of having to remain there inactive during a chilly night, with anything but pleasure. Thoughts of a cozy campfire taunted him, and urged him on to devise some method of outwitting the old buck.

What could he do to frighten the beast away? Apparently Mr. Buck was not one to be easily scared; and unless heroic measures were adopted, the chances of his occupying that elevated position until at least dawn, seemed excellent.

Felix cudged his brains, endeavoring to recall anything he had ever heard or read covering this strange ground.

Of course his first thought and expectation lay in the direction of his rifle; for if so be he could only get this valuable asset in his grasp, it would soon be goodbye to his tormentor.

Then he remembered that there was also another method of frightening the buck away, if only he could apply it. This consisted of taking some powder from several of the cartridges belonging to his gun, which still reposed in his belt, moistening it until it had the consistency of paste; then allowing it to partly dry; but while still in a soft condition thrusting a number of pins into the ball, with the points sticking out like the quills on the back of the "fretful porcupine."

Watching his opportunity, he would have to make a skillful cast, after first applying a lighted match to this boyish idea of a "spit-devil," and fasten it to the back of the jumping deer. Rendered frantic by the pain, and fright, the animal would of course dash madly away, and leave the prisoner of the tree a chance to descend at his leisure.

This latter scheme was very alluring in the eyes of Felix, in that it would relieve him of his persistent enemy; but at the same time he remembered that he wanted that same buck's antlers, and more than ever now, since they had given him the strangest free ride of all his experience; and letting him get away was not at all to his taste.

Then again, not being an experienced bull fighter, expert in tossing the ribbon-bedecked burrs that fasten to the sides of a bull in the ring, and make him ready for the sacrifice of the matador's sword, Felix doubted his ability to land his projectile upon the back of the buck at just the right second, and make it stick there long enough to frighten the valiant old fellow.

On the whole, he concluded to attempt the other plan, which had to do with the recovery of his precious rifle.

To accomplish this it was first necessary to produce some cord, and a hook; and then do some fishing for the weapon; all the while the buck must be watching his labors, with a possibility of defeating his efforts just when success seemed assured.

Fortunately Felix had the cord, all right; and in that wonderful little ditty bag, which Tom had taught him to always carry, there turned out to be a solitary fish-hook; though what use Felix had intended putting it to, was a problem which he could hardly have answered, had the question been asked.

He also hung a little weight upon the cord, to properly balance it, and allow of better angling.

Everything being ready, Felix crawled out on a limb where he would be just above the coveted rifle. The watchful buck noted his movements with no doubt considerable curiosity; and even followed below, shaking his antlered head from time to time, as if to warn the treed hunter what he must expect if he should slip from his hold, and fall to the ground, an accident Felix did not mean to have happen if he knew it.

The boy saw that if he commenced work now, the deer might frustrate all his efforts by entangling the line in his horns, and jerking it from his hands; so he settled down, as if to locate there permanently on that new limb.

Presently, as if reassured by his actions that there was nothing to be feared from the hunter, the deer began to move restlessly around, stopping now and then to look up questioningly; it seemed as though the beast had an idea he might thus coax his enemy to descend; for his manner was as plain an invitation as anything Felix had ever seen; but the boy failed to take advantage of it, continuing his labor of allowing the line to drop nearer and nearer the gun.

It was quite an exciting moment for the boy when the hook finally landed.

CHAPTER VIII—PLENTY OF TROUBLE

Felix found it a more difficult task, getting that hook fastened in the trigger guard of the rifle, than ever he had dreamed could be possible. A dozen times he thought he had accomplished the feat, only to have the cord twirl, and the tricky hook double upon itself; so that his "bite" turned out to be a mere "nibble," altogether unsatisfactory in results.

But Felix would never give over, and kept at his task with a grim determination that was, in fact, born of desperation; since he could think of no other way whereby a cold night in that tree might be avoided.

Finally success came to crown his efforts, and he actually felt the "pull" of the rifle's weight, when he tightened the cord.

The suspicious buck, attracted by the movement of the ascending rifle, started to advance in that direction, as if bent upon investigating this new feature of the game; so that Felix, in sudden fear lest his little trick might be spoiled just when it promised a golden success, had to make a quick ascension.

When his angry four-footed foe made a vicious leap forward and upward, as if bent upon sending the swinging gun a dozen yards away, the boy's heart seemed to be almost in his mouth with the suspense; but as the old saying has it, "a miss is as good as a mile," and the buck failed to strike the object of his sudden new animosity, though coming perilously near it.

When his eager fingers clutched the precious Marlin, Felix felt like giving vent to a shout of joy. He knew now that the game lay safely in his hands; and had the old buck been as wise as he was savage, he would have lost not a second in trotting away from that dangerous vicinity; but unaware of his new peril he only started a new series of furious jumps in the air, in the futile endeavor to strike the dangling legs of his tantalizing human foe.

At another time Felix might have allowed himself to feel a little compunction about taking the life of such a valiant old fellow; but his sides still ached from the rough experience he had passed through, and it was absolutely necessary that he clear the way to his descent from that tree.

So he quietly waited until he had a chance to get in a death shot, and glancing along the matted top of his rifle barrel, he pulled the trigger.

Then the report sounded, the gallant buck went over in a heap; there was no wild leap into the air as so frequently happens when a deer receives its fatal hurt; but the buck just seemed to crumple up, and drop dejectedly in his tracks, as if to prove that he had kept up the fight to the bitter end.

Then Felix came down from the tree that he had never climbed; which queer feat few people could duplicate, in even a varied experience.

He already knew that, as night was now at hand, he would have to make camp there in the

wilderness; so that at least it was some consolation to know that he need not starve, with all that fresh meat ready at his hand; since he had in the buck, tough eating though he might prove, sufficient food for any length of time.

Felix immediately set about making ready for the night, after bleeding the dead deer—fuel was hastily gathered, and a rude temporary shelter erected, after the way he had seen it done by Adirondack guides, and called a "lean-to." This was fashioned out of boughs that he found handy, and which would at least keep off most of the cold, penetrating north wind, as well as snow, should this last fall during the night.

In front of this shelter he built his fire; and once its cheery presence came to bolster up his courage, Felix felt no anxiety concerning his experience.

In the words of the immortal wandering Indian, he could say when rescued: "Injun no lost—wigwam lost—Injun *here!*" for he felt that it would prove an easy task on the morrow to take the back trail, loaded with the spoils of the chase, and by noon no doubt, bring up close to the camp under the big tree.

Proudly he severed the head of the buck, with those grand antlers which would some fine day hang in his den at home. This he managed to hang from the limb of the tree, hoping thus to preserve it from any animal that might be attracted to the spot by the scent of fresh blood. Afterwards he meant to come with Tom, and manage in some fashion to "tote" that head back to camp, where with the aid of the Western boy he would no doubt be able to preserve it for mounting.

After that he began to cut away some of the choice portions of the meat, and when the job was completed, he hung the balance that he cared to keep from the limb of the tree, encased in the hide of the old buck.

Felix was feeling pretty hungry by now. Soon several generous slices of meat had been secured upon the points of splinters of wood the other ends of which he thrust into the ground, and inclined at such an angle that presently the venison began to sizzle under the influence of the red coals, and at last send out a very appetizing odor, calculated to make the hungry boy even more ravenous.

The meat proved pretty tough, partly on account of the age of the animal; and also because of its not having been allowed to hang a certain length of time, as is always preferable in climates where the game will not easily spoil. When, however, a fellow has the real woods appetite, these minor things are ignored; and Felix munched away for half an hour in perfect content, until in the end he realized that he had had enough.

After that there was nothing to be done but get ready to spend the night as comfortably as the circumstances allowed; indeed, after thinking it over, and what a lucky escape he had had from staying in that tree all night, hungry and cold, the boy felt that he had nothing to complain about.

He had taken pains to gather an ample supply of firewood, and also made sure that the magazine of his gun was fully charged; so that when he got good and ready, he felt quite safe to lie down and sleep; knowing that in all probability he was sure to be up and down many times during that night, since camping entirely alone was in the line of a new experience for Felix.

Nothing of any note occurred during the hours he spent there under his temporary shelter of an arbor; although he fancied that several times when he awoke, and got up to put more fuel on the fire, a sly bobcat must be prowling around, eager to steal some of the meat but deterred by the blaze; the presence of a human being possibly had also something to do with its lack of courage; for when day came nothing was missing.

Breakfast, which was an exact repetition of supper, being disposed of, Felix began to figure on what course he should take in order to make a bee-line for the camp. He consulted his little compass, and sent several glances around him at the big mountains, that strangely enough seemed to encompass him about much more than he had dreamed possible, and gave him a puzzle to solve.

So he decided upon his course, although with a lingering doubt that he might once more be about to enjoy an old experience in his career—that of losing himself.

Half an hour later, with a pack upon his back containing all he could carry of the choice portions of the gallant buck, Felix started forth. He cast one backward look, filled with regret, at the antlered head of his prize, still secured to the limb of the tree; at least he hoped to return at some time in the near future and secure those horns for a trophy, even though it were not possible to preserve the head entire.

Felix walked for half an hour, trying to keep as near to the course he had laid out as seemed possible. Really it was not such an easy proposition as he had at first calculated. Why was it he had so poor a sense of direction, he could not say? But he felt sure, that unless he improved very much in this respect, he could never hope to make a good woodsman like Tom was, for instance.

Somehow, by this time, the boy began to lose a little of his former confidence. Things did not

seem at all familiar, and he began to feel sure that he could not have come this way.

Once more he consulted his compass, and tried to figure out which direction stood for home. He laughed at himself for feeling so uncertain. What a silly sensation this must be to a proud boy, to realize that he is actually all at sea in the woods, and cannot say for a certainty which way he ought to go.

Felix laid out a new course, and made a fresh start. He was not at all discouraged as yet, and only looked on the thing in the light of a joke; just as he had his sailing through the air, to hang to the limb of the tree, after the buck had given him a rise in the world.

Once he heard a shot ahead. This caused him to wonder whether it could be Tom, or some one else; and he soon decided that if his chum were anywhere near by he would be more apt to give the well known signal of three shots in order to let the wanderer know of his presence; when Felix would be expected to answer in kind.

Tom had warned him several times to keep an eye out for certain vicious characters, said to be in hiding away up in this part of Wyoming—men who had once been honest guides, but drifted into bad ways; and having been known to kill game in the Yellowstone Park reservation, were being sought after by the authorities, who meant to make an example of them to deter others from doing likewise.

He had understood that such men might not be averse to robbing and abusing a young chap who happened to cross their path; and so Felix, with this troublesome thought struggling in his brain, walked on in silence, looking cautiously to the right and to the left, as if he feared that he might suddenly run upon some kind of danger.

Was that a groan he heard; or did some wild animal give vent to a sound?

It seemed to come from the bushes over to his left; and as he stood stock-still, and listened, he once more heard the strange and doleful sound, which seemed to be half way between a groan and a grunt.

Immediately Felix lowered his burden softly to the ground, and clutching his rifle in readiness for instant use, he walked slowly in that direction, scanning every foot as he thus advanced.

Then he discovered a slight movement, as the sound again came to his ears; and realized that some one was sitting upon the ground, holding fast to his arm, as if in great distress and pain. The sight of red blood trickling between the bronzed fingers of the party told Felix that he had come upon the scene just in time to be very useful along his chosen line. Undoubtedly the dark-faced stranger had been badly injured by the accidental discharge of his own gun; which would account for the single shot Felix had heard.

Without question the man was an Indian, perhaps a halfbreed; though he dressed pretty much as did any white man who spent much of his time in the wilderness; wearing corduroy trousers; and a blue flannel shirt, covered by a faded heavy jacket; while a greasy slouch hat lay upon the ground, where it had evidently fallen at the time he hurriedly dropped his gun.

Felix hastened forward to reach the side of the suffering man, whose raven black locks he now saw were being touched with the frost of years. The prospect of a job along his favorite line caused the lad to quicken his steps; for all the professional instincts of his nature were aroused.

The Indian seemed to maintain the usual stoicism of his race; though the pain and the weakness at times caused him to shut his teeth hard, in the effort to stifle the groan that tried to well forth.

Any one could easily see that in this quarter at least the boy was quite at home, even though there might be a few things connected with woodcraft wherein he could blunder.

He immediately took hold, examined the ugly gunshot wound that was bleeding so freely, in the fleshy part of the left arm, made a rude but effective tourniquet by twisting a stout stick in his handkerchief, which he had carefully knotted, so that the protuberance rested exactly on the artery; and in this fashion stopped the cut from bleeding.

Then he bound it up as best he could, showing considerable skill in so doing.

The old Indian did not utter a single word while all this was going on. He had shown considerable disappointment upon first seeing that the newcomer was only a mere lad; but presently his black eyes began to glitter with satisfaction, when he saw the business-like way in which Felix took hold of his job, and the astonishingly clever way in which he accomplished that which the other had in vain tried to do by working the wrong way.

"There, my friend," said Felix, as he finished his job, "I guess you'll hold out now, until you get home. Listen, and I'll tell you just what must be done after that," and then he proceeded to explain in simple language what should follow his "first aid to the injured work;" to all of which the other listened gravely, with an occasional nod of his head, to indicate that he understood.

"How far away do you live?" asked the young hunter, finally, wondering whether he had not

better volunteer to accompany the wounded man home; though he understood that an Indian's pride would be terribly hurt by such a happening.

For the first time the other spoke, and he proved to have an excellent command of English, quite surprising the boy. It told that he was accustomed to associating with the whites, and that in all probability he had served as guide to many a party of bighorn hunters from the East, as Felix suspected.

"Not far away—can get to cabin all right now. Charley Crow never forget this. Never before pull gun through bushes by muzzle—much fool this time, serve right if head 'stead of arm get bullet. Worst of all is shame of telling my people, who will say Charley Crow getting too old go on hunt any more; better stay home and dry venison. But I go now on back trail; no need any that you come 'long. Tell me name of Little Doctor, so I may let my people know what friend they have. Some day mabbe my turn—you wait. Now shake hands, and say goodbye. Charley Crow him get to cabin all right, you never be 'fraid."

So Felix gladly told him who he was, and how, with a chum, he had come to spend some weeks hunting, and doing a little trapping, in the foot-hills of the Rockies. In speaking of Tom Tucker he happened to mention the name of Old Sol; and immediately the brown face of the old halfbreed lighted up.

"Known Old Sol right well. Here one year, we come this way, and always good friend Charley Crow. Much glad meet him Tom. Some day mabbe drop in see same. If need help, come to cabin under shadow of yonder peak, and my boys they glad do you good turn, because me, Charley Crow, still head of house! Goodbye!"

He drew himself up proudly, regardless of the pain his wound must be causing him; and the lad could see that despite his evident age, the well-known halfbreed was as straight as any pine that ever grew in the Northland.

Then he stalked away, leaving Felix to look after himself, and wonder if Fate had any further adventures in store for him during his little outing.

He did not doubt in the least but that so vigorous a man could easily reach the home cabin which, in company with his family, he must be occupying for a winter's campaign among the fur-bearing animals that frequented the district. At the same time it did begin to look as though there might be a storm in prospect, as the heavens had clouded over, and an occasional snow-flake drifted down lazily, as though they might be reckoned ambassadors sent to herald the coming of the first real snow fall of the season.

So Felix once more lifted his pack to his back, and again started in the direction he believed the camp to be. When it was too late he bitterly regretted that he had not also swallowed his pride, and asked Charley Crow the right trail that would take him to the cabin of Old Sol. He had no positive sense of certainty as to whether his course were the right one; and for all he knew, with the mountains apparently turned around in his mind, he might even now be heading in the wrong direction.

The lad presently began to realize that his load was beginning to tell, for he had really attempted to carry off too much of the venison in the desire to stock the camp for some time to come. Twice he found it convenient to halt, and rest up a bit; when he once more took up the tramp with a shade of reluctance, and half a notion to divide the spoils.

It was while he was resting the second time that he caught a strange sound that gave him quite a thrill. The baying could only proceed from a pack of hounds chasing a fleeing deer!

Felix was troubled a little, and for a very good reason. In talking about those lawless guides who had been expelled from Yellowstone Park by the Government authorities, Tom Tucker had incidentally informed him that one of their favorite tricks was to keep several deer dogs, with which they were accustomed to having regular old fashioned chases, such as used to be frequent in the Adirondacks in his native State before the anti-hounding law was passed and enforced, making it a crime to use dogs for such a purpose.

He hoped that the chase would lead away from him, as he certainly did not want to make the acquaintance of these rough men, against whom Tom Tucker had warned him more than a few times.

Listening carefully as the snapping and baying sounded constantly louder, Felix presently concluded that the animals were certainly heading his way, and approaching rapidly. He gritted his teeth with a grim determination to defend himself if beset by the hound pack; and picked up his rifle from the ground, where he had laid it when resting.

At least he was not kept long in suspense. Inside of three minutes he discovered something moving rapidly through the bushes, and almost immediately saw that it was a noble buck, with its tongue lolling from its mouth, and giving other evidences of having been chased hither and thither for hours by the hounds, that doubtless had been educated, just like a rabbit dog Felix owned, to bring the tired animal back to where the hunters waited.

Somehow the sight of that tortured buck gave Felix a wave of disgust. He seemed to feel an immediate hope that it would escape from the game butchers who used so unfair a mode for securing their quarry. Yes, Felix, in the heat of his anger, even went so far as to mentally express a hope that one of the owners of the pack—who must be near by, because he had plainly heard a shout, as of exultation over the possible ending of the chase—would fall into the clutches of the keepers of the great Government game reservation, said to be on the lookout for them as transgressors of the law.

To his astonishment the pursued buck suddenly changed its course a little, and headed almost directly toward the spot where Felix was standing, watching the affair with considerable interest. It actually seemed to the excited boy as though the despairing deer had turned toward him, in a last frantic hope that he might be merciful, and stretch out a hand to give the help that was elsewhere denied; though in all probability the deer never noticed his motionless figure standing there, as it sprang past, and vanished in the thick scrub beyond.

The pack of hounds was now in full sight, racing eagerly along, yapping, and giving tongue after the manner of their kind when they are close on the fleeing quarry. They looked about as fierce and ugly as so many wolves might have been, since the old instinct had been aroused in them by the chase. For the time being they had gone back once more to the state of the primal beast in pursuit of the prey so necessary to continued existence, as a survival of the fittest. Felix shuddered as he saw their foam-flecked mouths, from which the red tongues lolled.

There were just three of the dogs, all told, and Felix drew back the hammer of his Marlin, not liking the looks of the aroused beasts, and suspecting that in their present condition they might not hesitate to attack a boy, under the impression that as the trail led almost directly toward him, he must have spirited away their intended prey, which they had chased so long.

In that event there was just one thing Felix could do, which was to defend himself against the pack, no matter at what cost.

CHAPTER IX—ADRIFT IN THE SNOW FOREST

Felix did not have much time to settle this question, for immediately the hounds swerved upon the trail, they must have caught sight of him, for there came an even more savage and vengeful tone to their baying; and leaving the scent, they plunged helter-skelter straight toward the standing figure of the young hunter. Perhaps the pack of meat at his feet aroused their instincts for food; Felix never knew.

One look would be sufficient to tell what they meant to do. To Felix it became patent that, since running would not avail him in the least, he must either climb up a tree in a big hurry, or else defend himself; unless he meant to allow those savage beasts to drag him down, and mangle him shockingly, before their owners could reach the scene.

The prospect was not to his liking, but he had made up his mind as to what his course should be; so he threw up his gun, with the full intention of settling one, or all of the dogs, unless something intervened.

He heard a loud shout as he did so, from some little distance away; but it was impossible to tell whether the call was intended as a warning to him not to fire on the ferocious pack; or an endeavor to recall the hounds; but no matter, it was a wasted effort, since Felix could not hold back his fire, his very life being in peril.

Remembering the serious consequences that had followed his hasty shot at the big buck, Felix was a little more careful when pressing the trigger of his repeating rifle. In return he had the satisfaction of seeing the leading hound roll over immediately after he fired.

Calmly the boy threw out the empty cartridge, and sent another into the firing chamber. Had he been a volunteer upon parade, and firing at an inanimate target, he could not have gone through the manoeuvre with more precision and exactness. Consequently, the gun, being made by the most skillful workmen, did its duty faithfully, as it always will when properly handled; and in about two winks of an eye Felix stood there, ready to repeat his performance, in case the necessity awaited.

Neither of the other two dogs had taken the least warning from the fate that had overtaken their companion. If anything, they tried to increase their speed in chasing toward the boy who stood there as though defying them to come on, though of course this was hardly the thought animating the actions of Felix.

"All right; you will have it, then!" he muttered, as his eye glanced along the matted barrel; and then his forefinger ever so slightly touched the willing trigger, at which there was a second sharp report.

Dog Number Two proceeded to whirl around, leaping up in the air, and in many ways showing he had received a dose that was likely to put him forever out of the running.

Felix put him immediately away from his mind. There was one more, and all the danger now centered in that remaining beast. By this time the leaping dog was fearfully close to him, and coming with unabated speed that proved him a stayer, after such a long chase.

He presented a really terrifying aspect, with the foam dribbling from his open jaws; the hair on his short neck standing on end like bristles; and his eyes seeming to be bloodshot through the heat and excitement of the long pursuit.

Still, Felix did not seem to be rattled even a little bit, a fact that caused him to feel considerable wonder, as well as satisfaction, later on, when reviewing all the circumstances connected with the momentous occasion.

He had his gun up to his shoulder with pretty much the confidence of a veteran Nimrod, meeting the charge of an old rogue elephant, or a wounded tiger, in the East Indian jungles. When the dog was not more than twenty feet away, he pressed the trigger.

His confidence was well placed, it seemed, for his ball must have entered the brain of the third and last hound; which whirled half way around, to fall in a heap; staggered to his feet, took several tottering steps forward, still strong in his overmastering impulse, even in death, and then once more dropped, never to rise again.

The lad had hardly dared hope to meet with such remarkable success in such an adventure, yet there were the three hounds lying on the ground—Felix had doubtless saved the poor hunted buck from destruction; but at what cost to himself?

Loud curses could be heard, drawing rapidly closer; and it was evident that the owners of the pack would presently burst upon the scene, filled with fury at the fate of their hounds.

Most young fellows might have deemed discretion the better part of valor, and abandoning the meat, made themselves scarce as soon as possible; taking to their heels, with but one thought in view, and that to leave the immediate neighborhood as speedily as possible.

That might have been the wisest plan, too, considering all things; but somehow Felix Edmondson was too proud to give in to this impulse. He was still flushed with the success of his battle; and also with indignation toward those who would resort to such unsportsmanlike methods for securing game.

Besides, would he not have been torn to pieces by the fierce animals, only for his ability to handle that faithful rifle?

So Felix simply took a look at his gun, to make sure that it was ready for use, slipping in several more cartridges where they would give a good account of themselves, and awaited the coming of the fuming owners of the defunct pack.

They proved to be two in number, and at sight of them Felix realized that his worst fears were about to be realized, in that he was face to face with a pair of the most notorious characters in the whole region—the descriptions tallied exactly, even to the single eye of Abe Cozzins; and the flaming red beard of Perley Kline.

In times past these men had served as guides, and possibly skillful ones too, because they were born woodsmen; but the love of liquor had dulled their sense of honesty, and after a time they began to gain a reputation for being light fingered, valuables disappearing mysteriously from camps where they had charge. By degrees, then, they lost all chance for securing regular employment, since gentlemen coming from the East for big game shooting, liked to feel that they could depend fully on the guide, in whose hands they entrusted their fortunes, even their lives, at times.

Consequently Cozzins and Kline, being unemployed most of the time, began to hunt game illegally within the confines of Yellowstone Park; which, coming to the attention of the authorities, always keen to punish anything of this sort, the men were really being looked for, far and wide, and in a measure found themselves in the place of the hunted.

It was this unwholesome looking couple who now strode angrily up to young Edmondson, with fury blazing in their eyes.

Felix held his rifle in such a manner that, had they shown a disposition to attack him, he could have defended himself, and treated them to a dose of the same medicine he had handed out to their dogs.

"Hold hard, there!" he remarked, sharply; "you've come close enough. Now say what you want from there!"

The two rough men, while evidently astonished to find themselves spoken to in this strain, understanding that the young fellow who could stand there and deliberately knock over three savage hounds in succession was not one to be easily daunted, pulled up, and divided their scowling glances between the hunter and the dead dogs, for the last animal had ceased to make a movement by now.

"Say, what d'ye mean ashootin' our dawgs thataways?" spluttered the fellow who had only one eye, though that was now glaring with a fierceness equal to half a dozen ordinary optics; he also punctuated his words with a variety of forcible exclamations, which there is no necessity for repeating, though doubtless Abe Cozzins imagined they added vim and picturesqueness to his query, and might help awe the boy.

"I was minding my own business when they started to attack me, with murder in their eyes. If I hadn't shot I'd have been torn to pieces. Everybody has a right to defend himself. If I hadn't happened to have a repeating rifle of the best make to fall back on, and knew how to use it, there'd have been murder done; and you'd have to stand the blame. I'm sorry, now, I had to kill the poor brutes, for they hardly knew what they were doing. I reckon the whole blame lies with their owners."

Bold words these, from a young fellow not yet fully grown, and addressed to two of the wildest, most reckless spirits in all Wyoming; perhaps those men could not remember having been taken so to task for many a day; and in surprise they exchanged dubious glances, and then looked hastily and uneasily around, as though half expecting that Felix must be backed up by half a dozen comrades.

Seeing no signs of such an enemy, however, they became themselves again, though far too tricky to throw off the mask wholly, while that lad stood by his gun, and seemed ready to try conclusions with them.

Felix should have known that they were just as furious as ever under the surface; but then he was not experienced in such matters, and judged other people more or less by his own feelings.

He saw them talking together in low tones; after which they allowed their dark faces to take on a more affable look, as they once more turned toward him.

"Say, younker," commenced Abe Cozzins, in a whining voice, "we ain't got no grudge aginst yuh for what yuh done. Them dawgs was some valuable tuh us, sure, but if so be they pestered yuh, thar was on'y one thing yuh could do; an' we reckons yuh done thet good an' hard. The pesky critters broke away from us, an' we was atryin' tuh git holt o' 'em agin, when this hyar thing happened. They's no reason we should hold hard feelin's aginst yuh fur defendin' yerself aginst 'em; anybody'd a done the same. But it comes mighty hard on two pore guides outen a job; fur yuh see, we was atakin' of them dawgs tuh Colonel Walpole over at ther reservation, who'd promised tuh buy 'em off us, tuh run down fellows as gits too gay ashootin' up the game in ther Park."

Abe put on a piteous face while telling this hastily constructed yarn; and altogether he did succeed in disarming the suspicions of Felix, even though the boy might still consider that the two men were hard characters. Felix felt sorry at once.

"If that's so I don't mind chipping in, and giving you something to help out. Perhaps it wasn't your fault, then, that the dogs were loose; and I've heard of Colonel Walpole, too. Here's ten dollars on account; and if you choose to leave me an address, I might send you another bill when I get back home."

Felix spoke from the depths of a frank and honest heart. He felt that he had unwittingly been the cause of depriving these men of something they doubtless valued highly; and so far as he could within reason make amends, Felix was willing to settle the claim, unjust though it might be.

The two men exchanged looks, and actually grinned, as though with pleasure; after which Cozzins advanced with extended hand, at the same time talking volubly, evidently with the intention of taking the boy off his guard, though Felix did not suspect such a thing.

"Say, that's purty white in yuh, stranger. 'Taint many fellers as'd do sech a nice job as thet, arter the dawgs'd broke loose on 'em. Me an' my pal is much obliged, and yuh bet we'll never furgit sech kindness. 'Taint often we sees a tenner these hard times. Now, if so be we kin do anything in return, why—take thet, ye young cub!" and of a sudden, catching Felix off his guard, he struck him a vicious blow in the face, and at the same instant snatched the rifle out of his hands.

The boy staggered back, and would have fallen, only for the support of a tree. For half a dozen seconds he stood there, staring at the brutal ruffian, now laughing, and examining the captured repeating rifle; while the blood trickled down his cheek, where the heavy and hard knuckles of the man had bruised and broken the skin.

Then, as if realizing the dastardly and cowardly nature of the attack upon him, even while he was in the act of generously compensating them for having killed their dogs, Felix became wild with anger. Uttering a scream he started to leap at Cozzins, reckless as to the consequences, and only desirous of returning that foul blow.

The man swung the rifle up so as to cover the advancing lad; though it may be deemed doubtful whether he would have fired under any provocation, since they were already two against one; and then there was always a possibility that the boy might be connected with those grim guardians of the Park, whose advent on the scene Abe and his comrade dreaded more than they would be willing to confess.

Perley Kline, however, sprang in between, throwing aside the barrel of the gun, and giving Felix a push that sent him headlong to the grim ground, his head striking with such force that for a brief time he actually lost all consciousness of what was going on.

He felt hands searching his person, and knew that the rascals were actually turning to downright robbery in their extremity; though truth to tell, possibly this was not the first time they had had their hands in the pockets of others who happened to be asleep.

Then they seemed to consult in low tones, after which each of them gave the lad a contemptuous kick, as if to vent their spleen further, in order to cancel the debt they thought he owed them on account of the slaughter of their trained dogs.

As Felix lay there in a half-conscious condition, smarting from his wounds, he realized that they had gone off, after stripping him of everything of value he possessed, and even taking the pack of venison he had "toted" over such a weary distance, up to that time.

Felix, still full of grit, attempted to follow them, after staggering to his feet; but really he found himself so weak from his injuries that his head began to fairly swim, and he had to drop down on a friendly log before going twenty paces.

He heard a derisive laugh that made him groan with disgust over his inability to do anything; then the sound of footsteps grew fainter, and he knew that he had been left alone in the heart of the wilderness, with no weapon for self-defense, or to be used in an effort to procure the means of continued existence, in case he could not find the camp.

This, however, sank into insignificance beside the ignominy of those kicks; and his proud young soul writhed under the memory of the insult; while he mentally registered a vow to make those two ruffians pay dearly for the experience, sooner or later, as the chance arose.

By slow degrees he began to get back his strength, and could think seriously concerning his next step. At first he burned with the desire to try and follow after those scoundrels, and in some way manage to recover all they had taken from him; but second thought convinced him that such a task was far beyond his capacity in his present helpless condition; even supposing he could follow successfully, which was extremely doubtful, how could he hold two armed men up, and make them disgorge?

No, it would surely be better for him to conserve his powers in every way possible, and try to effect a junction with his chum; when they could talk it over, and decide what ought to be done in order to turn the tables on Cozzins and Kline.

The fact that he was now without food seemed to give Felix more cause for concern than anything else. The thieves had confiscated the contents of the little knapsack he had carried with him, or rather ditty bag; all he found of any value was a lone match that seemed to have escaped the hasty search of the men; and in his eyes this assumed an importance all out of proportion to its size.

Felix believed that if only he could follow his back trail, and reach the tree where his desperate encounter with the wounded buck had taken place, he would find plenty of meat to last him many days; and with that last precious match he could start a fire that he would not allow to go out; so that here he might camp until such time as Tom came hunting for him.

This, then, was the sensible programme that finally took possession of the boy; although it was with considerable disappointment he gave up all idea of following after the two men, seeking revenge because of their cowardly conduct.

Every time Felix put a hand up to his bruised cheek he gritted his teeth, and in imagination saw the rogues brought to account through his instrumentality; and it was surprising how much satisfaction such a pleasing prospect gave him.

Quitting the vicinity of the three dead dogs that had been left where they lay by their late masters, he started to follow his back trail, with all the skill he was capable of calling to his assistance.

This was, of course, something he had never dreamed of doing half an hour previously; but all the same, he was glad to see he had somehow managed to leave such a plain series of tracks, burdened with the meat pack as he had been, that there promised to be little trouble in following the trail, if only the snow held off.

That began to worry him now; what if a bitterly cold storm should break while he was wandering about in the wilderness, with only a single match between himself and freezing to death?

The idea proved so very unpleasant that it urged him to make better time in following his back trail; and yet when he remembered how long he had been walking since starting forth after breakfast; and that it must take him at least the same length of time to again cover the ground, Felix began to fear he was in for the worst experience of all.

However, the lad was full of grit, and could not be made to easily lie down when trouble

threatened; he would meet it face to face.

When almost an hour had passed, and he reckoned that he was possibly half way back to the tree that had been a haven of refuge to him in that fight with the wounded buck, he took heart of grace, and hope began to rise stronger in his breast; but only for a brief space of time.

Then he took notice of the fact that the lazy flakes were beginning to descend more thickly and it began to look as though the air would soon be filled with the feathered harbingers of coming winter, until he could not see ten feet away.

The remembrance of that single match gave him a strange sense of comfort, small item that it might be reckoned. What did cause him to fret, though, was the possibility of the ground soon being so covered with the snow that he could no longer find his own late trail, and must give over the hope of reaching supplies under the big tree.

Five minutes later and he realized that this condition really faced him, since he was now utterly unable to discern the faintest trace of his footprints; while around him stretched the vast woods, each quarter looking the same in the rapidly descending snow.

He had taken his bearings after a fashion, and continued to stumble along for a little while, in the hope that he might by good luck run across the tree in which he had fastened the antlered head of the buck.

Finally Felix realized the hopelessness of his hunt, and determined to make a camp, where he could hold out the best way possible against cold and hunger. Imagine his utter dismay when he discovered that in some strange manner his little ditty bag, containing that one precious match, must have been detached by some officious branch, when he was making his way along. At least, it had utterly disappeared, and he was now facing a condition rendered doubly bad on account of the increasing cold which deemed to come with the snow.

CHAPTER X—TURNING THE TABLES

The discovery that he had now no possible means for fighting the cold, that was sure to increase as the day wore on and night approached, gave Felix a rude shock.

He faced a situation that might prove very serious indeed; and it was little wonder that he instituted an eager search of all his pockets, in the faint hope that he might in some way manage to find just one fugitive match that had escaped the spoilers, and in the end prove, his salvation.

Only keen disappointment rewarded his efforts; and after going three times over every pocket, he was forced to give it up with a grunt of disgust.

All thought of trying to find the tree in which the venison hung now passed from his mind; and he devoted his efforts to searching for some friendly hollow, where he could make a shelter in some rude fashion against the night that would come after a while, for it must by now be about the middle of the short day.

What would he not have been willing to pay for a little box of safety matches, that sell for a penny in town? But he might as well wish for the moon; as one was as easy to secure as the other, just then.

So he pushed on, staggering through the increasing snow fall. When he was indifferent to such a thing, he had noted several splendid places where he might have found decent shelter, and built up a refuge against the storm; but now that the need had arisen, Fate seemed to take an especial delight in baffling him, for, look as he would, he did not come across anything that appealed to his fancy.

Rendered desperate at length, when he found his strength giving out on account of his unusual exertions during the two days, and the rough treatment he had received both from the wounded buck and the angry desperadoes, Felix finally made up his mind that he could wait no longer for what he wanted, but must make a virtue of necessity, and take what offered.

So, coming across a tree that had fallen during some violent wind storm, he saw that when the roots had been torn up quite a large patch of earth had come along with them. The hollow back of this barrier would prove a very good refuge against the storm, for it happened to face in the best possible way.

Here in this hole, then, he must burrow, doing the best he knew how to hide from the wind that blew the snow with such violence. Felix set about carrying out this idea without further loss of time.

Of course it was but an apology of a den after all; though much better than remaining out where the cold wind had a sweep at him. Here he settled down to pass the balance of that dreary afternoon, which he remembered must be followed by a night he was not soon apt to forget.

Bitter regrets swept over him from time to time, as he lay there huddled in a heap. Never again would he be caught so easily by soft words, when he ought to know these were only a mask to hide treacherous work.

And then, after taking himself to task in this manner, most severely, Felix would recollect that even an experienced woodsman may make a mistake occasionally. Look at old Charley Crow, for instance, a man born and brought up in the wilderness, and accustomed to handling a gun from childhood; yet had he not been incautious enough to draw his rifle toward him, *muzzle first*, through some bushes, with the result that the weapon had been discharged, sending the bullet through the arm of the old halfbreed?

Yes, some others besides greenhorns in the woods, make mistakes occasionally.

Slowly that afternoon dragged on, and then came night, which Felix knew was apt to be the longest and most disagreeable of all his life, thus far.

Little sleep came to the lost lad.

In fact, he hardly dared lose himself, for fear lest he actually freeze to death; for although the temperature did not actually fall very low at any time, to his excited imagination this humble little storm was in the nature of such a blizzard as those which Tom had told him visited the Far Northwest every Winter, carrying death to many cattle that were caught without shelter.

Every hour at least, Felix would crawl out of his shelter, to ascertain what the signs of promise might be with regard to the weather; and on such occasions he thought it the part of wisdom to exercise his limbs energetically; so as to keep his blood in circulation; and hence, upon creeping into his hole again, very like a fox, as he would grimly remark to himself, he was hardly in a condition to settle down.

He could not tell what time it was for several reasons; in the first place he had no watch, for the ruffians had carried off his little dollar nickel contraption in conjunction with all his other effects; and even had this not been the case, without a match, how could he have seen the face in order to note the position of the hands?

A woodsman would have known of several ways by means of which to tell about the time of night; but Felix was hardly up to such tricks, especially on a stormy night like this, when neither moon nor stars were visible.

But one thing cheered him after a while; and this was the fact that the snow had ceased to fall when about three inches lay on the ground. Then, after all, things might not be quite so bad as he had begun to picture them, and he would not be snowed-in, destitute of food, and all means for securing warmth; why, there might even be a chance for finding the camp on the following day, if only he could keep his wits about him, and figure correctly as to his present position, so as to locate the direction where the cabin lay.

When Felix had crawled out of his poor shelter for the seventh time, as he figured it, he began to look hopefully toward the quarter where according to his calculations the east must surely lie. Nor was he deceived, for he discovered to his great joy a very faint but positive sign that the sky was brightening, and this told that dawn must be near.

As soon as it was fairly light, he left his shelter, which after his boyish fashion he had named Camp Shiver, and struck out in what he believed to be the proper direction.

It was not very encouraging, however, starting on a long tramp hungry and cold; but Felix still had plenty of grit, and shutting his teeth hard, resolved to let nothing dismay him.

Two hours later, and he found himself obliged to confess that his knowledge of woodcraft seemed at fault, when brought face to face with the difficulties to be encountered in a snow forest. He was really hopelessly bewildered, and could not give the slightest guess as to whether he should head north, south, east or west, in order to reach camp. The mountains loomed upon two sides, now, as though he had wandered somehow into a sort of pocket.

He tried shouting now and then, though it seemed next to foolish to hope that any one could hear him, unless indeed it might prove to be the rough men with whom he had had his recent unhappy experience; so presently he stopped that.

The cold no longer brought anxiety, for his exertions kept him from feeling this; but he was mighty hungry, and had visions of all the glorious dishes he and Tom had ever eaten in company in the past; somehow they seemed to arise before him, and make him groan with the empty feeling within.

About this time Felix chanced to notice that he was almost under the shadow of a peculiar peak, which he remembered noticing before; and all at once it dawned on him that this was the very mountain Charley Crow had pointed to, when he declared that his cabin nestled at its base; and that if the Little Doctor chose to drop in there at any time, he would receive a royal Indian welcome.

The very idea filled Felix with unutterable joy. Oh! if only he could run across that Indian cabin now, how readily would he throw aside all his pride, and accept whatever food they could give him; perhaps even securing a guide in addition who would take him back to the camp.

And so, filled with a new ambition, he pushed ahead, his hopes revived once more. Through the branches of the trees, to which none of the snow had clung on account of the wind accompanying the storm, he could catch glimpses of the spur that extended out from the main mountain chain; and such progress did he make that in about an hour he fancied he smelled smoke in the air.

After that it was not a difficult thing to follow the direction in which this came to him on the wind; until in the end he gave a shout, upon discovering a rude log cabin nestling under an overhanging shelf of rock.

It must certainly be the temporary home of Charley Crow and his family; and with renewed hopes Felix started forward on a half run, so eager was he to make sure that his eyes had not deceived him.

Now he could see human beings moving about, and a couple of yellow mongrel curs started out with loud barks to meet him; but somehow he did not feel that they were dangerous, like those savage hounds that had been running the deer; and while only grasping a stout cudgel in his hand, Felix continued to advance.

A couple of young Indians hurried after the dogs, calling roughly to them to behave; and Felix knew that he had found friends. He lost no time in explaining that he was nearly famished; whereat the two exchanged glances, and ranging alongside, took him by the arms, and assisted him to the cabin; for somehow, such was the effect of the change from despair to great joy, that a singular weakness seemed to grip the lad.

He spoke the name of Charley Crow, and as if understanding what he wished to convey, they led him into the comfortable cabin, where the boy found himself face to face with the old halfbreed whom he had so gladly assisted in the woods.

Charley Crow had his wounded arm done up in bandages, and was sitting in a rudely made but comfortable chair. At sight of Felix a broad smile of welcome came upon the bronzed face of the old guide.

He held out his well hand, and greeted Felix warmly; indeed, there need be not the least fear but that every wish of the lost hunter would hardly be expressed before it was sure to be granted, if it lay in the power of these people.

Upon learning that food was the first thing he wanted, Charley Crow spoke to his sons, and to his wife, who seemed to be a full blooded Shoshone squaw. Eager to do something to show their gratitude toward the Little Doctor, of whom they had heard so much since the home coming of the wounded man, the two well-grown sons darted from the cabin, doubtless to get food from a *cache* in the open, where meat would keep fresh all winter, once it was frozen.

Felix soon related what dire misfortune had befallen him some time after parting from the old guide; and the anger of Charley Crow was aroused toward the pair of precious scoundrels who had dared to do this thing.

"They pass night not half mile away from here," he declared, "for my son Jo, he see same when he come in from his line of traps. He speak with these men, not wishing to make foes out of same; but when they ask him to stay at their fire, Jo, he no stop, for he know how they bad case. I promise you, my friend, all be return to you before this day it pass. But listen, that not all. Revenge you shall have for such kicks they give you. Not two mile away I know where is a camp of men from Park, who hunt for these Abe and Kline, I understand. When I learn about them I say to my sons, this is not business for us; let Mr. Harbison and his men find them. Now it is my affair. Make mind easy, for all will be well."

Felix was delighted with this assurance, for he disliked the idea of having to pass the remainder of his vacation in the region of the Rockies without that fine repeating rifle, which he looked to obtain him other trophies of the chase, in the shape of a grizzly bear; and possibly a bighorn, strange acrobat of the mountain ledges.

He was speedily placed before a bountiful breakfast, though since he had eaten nothing since that last meal under the big tree where the buck had fallen, he was at a loss to know what name to give his repast.

Mrs. Crow, it seemed, had learned how to cook after the white woman's way, for everything tasted just splendid to the boy, and after he had finished he declared he felt like a new fellow.

When about this time he saw the two sons of Charley Crow enter the cabin for a last conference before starting out, he begged to be allowed to accompany them.

Old Charley looked dubious at first, and then noting the eager flush on his face, and apparently sympathizing with the feeling that prompted Felix to wish to see with his own eyes the discomfiture of the two rascals who had robbed and mistreated him, he finally nodded his head in

the affirmative.

So, armed with the rather antiquated rifle of the old man, and fortified by his late good meal, Felix felt like a different person from the forlorn lad who had hovered in the hollow beneath the upturned roots of the fallen tree, and counted the long minutes of the preceding night, as they crept past.

They speedily passed over the two miles separating the Indian cabin from the place where Charley Crow had known the Government officers, who were out looking for offenders against the laws, to have their temporary camp. Luckily they found Mr. Harbison, who was in charge of the expedition, and both his deputies there.

Felix soon told his story, and was pleased to see the decided interest the others showed in his recital. They had long been trying to get on the trail of the two men, against whom they had warrants for several lawless acts.

A dozen or two questions followed, and the answers of Felix managed to put the officers in complete possession of the facts; especially after they heard what one of the sons of Charley Crow had to tell.

Speedily the party set out to find the spot where the two thieves had spent the night, according to the story of the young Indian.

Of course it could hardly be expected that Abe and his partner would be found still there, since they may have been heading for some distant point at the time, possibly intending to sell the fine repeating rifle that had come into their hands, and which they could claim they found in the woods; but with three inches of new snow covering the ground, there should be little trouble in following their trail.

It turned out just so; and upon making a close examination it was decided by the wardens, as well as the Indians, that the men had been gone just an hour; it appearing that they were in no hurry, since they had plenty of venison, thanks to Felix.

This was but a small start, and could be easily overcome, especially since those in the advance had not the slightest warning to the effect that they were being pursued, and hence would not be apt to make any especial effort looking to speed.

If Felix began to feel his limbs grow weary he would not have admitted the fact for worlds; but shut his teeth hard, and conjured up the scene he soon expected to feast his eyes upon, with those two ruffians who had kicked an almost senseless boy, in custody, perhaps their hands in irons; since he had noticed Mr. Harbison drop a couple of pair of wrist irons in the pocket of his coat ere starting out.

It was a pleasing picture, and with every twinge he felt from his wounds Felix kept saying to himself that it was a long lane that had no turning; and that he was perfectly justified in wanting to have the brutes caught.

They pushed on steadily, six in all, and every one armed. From time to time Mr. Harbison informed Felix they were steadily overtaking the fugitives, and that in all probability they would be apt to come upon them while they were taking a bite around noon.

Often, in time to come, would the boy recall the picture, and once again see each eager face of Indian and white man, as they pushed along through the aisles of that snow forest, bent upon the mission of justice.

He felt a constant sense of exhilaration, knowing that with every passing minute they must really be shortening the distance separating them from those whom they sought. And as he pushed on, filled with much of his old time determination, Felix kept a bright lookout ahead, endeavoring to discover the first sign of smoke in the air, or moving figures, that could only be those of the two bad men they sought.

So the time went by until, from the position of the sun, Felix knew that it could not be far from the noon hour. And at any moment now he hoped and expected to hear the welcome announcement that they had overtaken the men they followed.

CHAPTER XI—THE BUCK'S HEAD

An exclamation from one of the sons of Charley Crow announced that their quarry had been sighted ahead; and shortly afterward, even Felix could discover the smoke of a fire through the vista of tree trunks beyond; proving that, just as Mr. Harbison had said, the two men had halted to cook some more of their easily acquired venison, and take things easy.

In single file the party advanced; and so earnestly were the pair of scoundrels at the fire employed getting their lunch ready, that they failed to note the presence of the others until the six lined up close by, and Mr. Harbison called upon them to throw up their hands and surrender.

Both of them looked very ugly; and given half a chance they might have made it very interesting for the posse; but with six rifles covering them, they saw it would be the height of foolishness to resist. Besides, they had reason to know and fear the man in charge of the force; so, with a forced laugh, they held up their hands, and announced that they would not try to run away, or resist.

Mr. Harbison took no chances with such men. He speedily snapped the irons upon their wrists, which act brought out a chorus of hard words; for they had not expected being treated so severely, not having recognized Felix as yet, as his hat was drawn down well over his face, and he was wearing an extra old coat belonging to Charley Crow. So that the men fancied at first they were being arrested on account of some misdemeanor connected with their work in the reservation known as Yellowstone Park.

When, upon the request of the head of the posse, Felix stepped up, and identified the pair of rascals as the men who had set upon, beaten, and robbed him of his rifle, as well as everything else of value he had with him, they began to show signs of positive uneasiness, realizing that they were in a pretty bad fix.

It was indeed a great pleasure for the lad to once again fondle his own gun; and his first act was to carefully wipe it all over, as though he thought it may have suffered more or less contamination through contact with such a dirty specimen of humanity as the one-eyed Abe Cozzins.

The officers announced their intention of starting immediately south with the prisoners, as it would take them several days to reach the town they expected to use as a place for locking the men up in. Felix made arrangements to give his deposition when he came out with his chum, about Christmas; although Mr. Harbison admitted that he hardly needed anything more in order to send them to the penitentiary for a term of years.

Somehow Felix, now that he had recovered his possessions, did not feel so vindictive as he had expected he would; and had the fellows shown a proper spirit of humility the boy would have only too gladly allowed the matter to drop, so far as he was concerned.

But they chose to take just the opposite course, cursing him roundly, and making savage threats of all kinds as to what they would do if they got free; which was just the way to arouse all his resentment, and cause him to give his promise to appear against them later on.

Felix was very glad when they finally went away, leaving him with the two sons of old Charley Crow. Learning that they were not more than five miles away from the little shack where Old Sol had often held forth during the trapping season, the boy was seized with an overwhelming desire to get back home, and rest up; and when the others heard this, one of them, the strapping big fellow called Jo by his father, said he would see him safely there.

It was really quite a tug for Felix, and only his grim determination carried him through, for his lower limbs began to feel as though each of them weighed a ton; so that he found considerable difficulty in dragging them along; but as familiar scenes began to crop up, the nearer he came to the cabin, as a consequence he finally found himself in sight of home.

Never did a ship-wrecked mariner greet port with more enthusiasm than Felix did the little old dugout under the big tree.

Of course Tom was away, undoubtedly wildly scouring the woods in search of his missing chum; but then he would come back after a certain time to see whether the lost one had returned; so all that Felix had to do was to make himself comfortable and wait.

Jo said he would like to stay with him, and meet Tom. Any one who had known Old Sol was worth cultivating, in the eyes of the Indian boy, who had looked upon the veteran trapper as a veritable wonder.

They had a fine fire that warmed the interior of the cabin, and Felix was drowsing before this, while Jo examined the wonderful repeating rifle; when the door was flung violently open, and there stood Tom, his eyes staring as though he could hardly believe what they showed him.

Returning almost in despair because he could get no trace of his missing chum, he had discovered from the smoke that some one was occupying the dugout; after that it took him just five seconds to reach the door, and open the same.

In another instant Tom had thrown his arms around his cousin, and was hugging him just as though he might be a long-lost brother, instead of just his every-day chum; meanwhile muttering all sorts of things, and laughing hysterically, in the effort to master his pent-up emotion.

Felix was almost as deeply affected, and it was then and there that he learned just how dear Tom had become to him during the comparatively short time they had been comrades.

From beginning to end Tom made him tell the whole story, not omitting a single detail; and for an hour Felix held his audience spell-bound by a recital of the many queer things that had come his way, since that hour when he said goodbye with such a light heart, and started off after venison.

It was all like a story from a book to Tom. And of course it pleased him to hear how the conventional end had been reached, with the two rascals captured, the stolen goods restored to their real owner, and the criminals bundled off to jail in irons. Why, Tom could not hear enough of the details, but kept asking questions, and even turning to the Indian boy to find out what his chum could not tell.

"We'll get that buck's head the first thing tomorrow—that is, if you feel decent enough for the tramp," he declared, after he had had Felix minutely describe the place of the strange encounter, and where he had passed his first night.

Of course the other declared that he would be all right, and eager for business at the old stand; but the actual truth was, that for several days he felt the effects of his series of adventures; and the mark upon his cheek was still faintly visible two months later.

All the same, with Jo accompanying them they did go to the tree and secure the prized head, as well as what venison was left—some animal had been feasting on the latter; but there was still enough left to carry a lot away with them, and every mouthful of that meat which Felix masticated gave him more or less satisfaction, since he felt that he had well earned all that was coming to him in this respect.

Of course the traps had been neglected during all this confusion; and so Tom said he would take a run along the entire line that afternoon, in order that if any prizes had been captured, the skins might not be spoiled by too long an emersion in the water.

Jo started back home after they had had lunch. Both boys noticed with some amusement that the boy's last fond look was in the direction of the wonderful coffeepot, from whence had come that rich, smooth, fragrant nectar that had so tickled his palate; doubtless they would see more of Jo while they lingered among the foothills of the Rockies; but they would always have their latchstring out for any one who was connected with old Charley Crow.

As we already know, Tom had not felt any undue anxiety concerning his chum until the hour grew late on that first night. Then he had thought to step out, and fire his gun several times; but as Felix had not heard the reports, it seemed that he must have been further away than anyone suspected; or that the wind was wrong.

In the morning Tom had started out in the direction he supposed Felix might be; hoping to come across signs of his friend. But the woods were wide, and apparently he could not at any time have come near the place where the other had had his adventures.

Returning at nightfall, Tom had hoped he would find the other at the dugout, and a keen disappointment awaited him. That night was a restless one for him. The second day had been a repetition of the first; and late in the afternoon, dispirited and weary, Tom had drawn near the vicinity of the shack, when he was electrified to see smoke oozing from the chimney.

One thing the incident had surely accomplished, and this was to acquaint the boys with the fact, if they had not realized it before, that they were unusually fond of each other. In many ways they were unlike; but it seemed that what one lacked the other could supply; and in this respect they made an ideal team for campmates. The right kind of a cheerful, willing and genial comrade, who will wear well in camp, is hard indeed to find. It appears that, no matter what a fellow may seem like at home, when he lands in the wilderness, the veneer is bound to drop off, and the true elements that go to make up his real nature are quickly apparent.

After securing the buck's head Felix was content to remain in camp for a short time; ostensibly with the idea of "curing" it, so that it might ornament his room at home; but to tell the plain, unvarnished truth, the boy was still very sore, and until this in a measure wore off, the prospects of a long jaunt through the woods and into the mountains failed to appeal to him very much.

This feeling began to gradually grow less positive as a couple of days passed, and finally there was no longer any excuse to hug the fire-side, because the buck's head had been prepared after a fashion that Tom said he had never seen beaten.

So Felix fell back into the rut, just as though there had been no break, sometimes accompanying his chum in the round of the traps, or doing that duty alone; and again going out to look for fresh game, with generally the best of success.

Doubtless, as the boy tramped through the snowy woods he sometimes found himself starting when he fancied he heard the coarse voices of the two unfaithful guides; or it might be a smile, as of amusement, would creep over his face when it happened that some particular tree awakened memories of the one into which he had been so neatly tossed by the wounded buck.

These experiences all go to make up life; and one learns more quickly from having passed through such actual performances than by mere reading; or even listening to what others may have accomplished, pleasant though this may seem. Felix believed he was a much better woodsman for having met and boldly faced the difficulties that had been spread like a net for his unwary feet on that occasion.

His eye seemed more positive; his nerves firmer; and when he handled his rifle, it was with an

assurance born of experience, so that his aim was apt to be more accurate than before; while a confidence had been aroused in his soul that he would not have exchanged for anything he knew of.

So the youngster, upon being tossed into the water by an apparently cruel elder brother, and told to swim, upon striking out in desperation finds that by moving arms and legs he is able to keep afloat, and even make a little clumsy progress; and into his soul springs a pride that is never surpassed in later life, even when he wins battles in the business arena.

Perhaps the birdling experiences something of the same sensation upon being actually pushed from the nest by the wise mother, and discovering that by using its wings it can fly a short distance; it is an exhilaration never surpassed.

The buck's antlered head certainly did look mighty fine when fastened up on the wall of the shack; and Tom vowed that if Old Sol could only be there in spirit, he must feel pretty proud to see the walls of his well beloved dugout decorated in such a manner.

Of course, with his Marlin, Felix had also recovered all his other little traps from the ugly pair, while they were in the hands of the game wardens from the Park; so that he again had his little watch, his compass and his knife, together with what money they had taken from him, and which had tempted the cupidity of the thieving guides.

Realizing what he lacked in using a compass, he now set about studying things, under the guidance of his chum, in connection with the woods, that would prove useful to him in all time to come.

It was for some time a source of wonder to Tom Tucker why Old Charley Crow and his family, although within so short a distance of the dugout, had never set a line of traps in that neighborhood. One day, when young Jo was visiting them, drawn by memories of that seductive coffeepot, they plied him with questions, and thus learned that old Sol had the last year he was up here, through the use of certain medicines, of which he knew the value, been able to save the life of Mrs. Crow; and in gratitude none of the family would ever encroach on his preserves.

They knew that the old trapper had been absent for several years, and that game was very abundant over in that direction; but a sort of "dead line" had been established, across which none would wander with the intention of doing business. Lacking information to the contrary, they expected that Sol might show up at any time; and all of them were very jealous of having him suspect that they had "poached" on his territory.

When they heard this the boys felt drawn more than ever toward the honorable Crow family; and Felix privately declared that when he got back home, the first thing he meant to do was to dispatch a case of rifles just like his, though of a less expensive pattern, to make those good fellows supremely happy.

And so out of evil good many times springs; and as long as they stayed there at the foot of the great Rockies, Felix and his chum were likely to enjoy friendly intercourse with the dusky family in the cabin not many miles away.

CHAPTER XII—BURNING OUT A HONEY THIEF

But it seemed that Felix was not destined to absorb all the adventures that happened to be adrift up there in that neck of the woods adjoining the mountain chain.

And the next one had to fall to the lot of Tom. It was such an admixture of peril and humor, that whenever either of the chums happened to glance up at the wall of the cabin, where the wretched looking pelt of a black bear was stretched, almost invariably a grin would have to follow.

This is the way it came about:

Just a few days after Felix had been in that queer mix-up with the wounded buck, and the two guides, Tom was on his way back from a little line of traps, when the notion came to him to step aside from his beaten path, and explore a dense patch of timber into which neither of them had happened thus far to stroll.

There was no telling what he might not discover, for it certainly looked dark and forbidding enough to shelter almost anything. As his catch of furs that day chanced to be limited to a couple of muskrats, and a single mink, Tom was just in the humor for striking at something out of the common.

He hung the pelts from the limb of a tree, and in plain sight, so that he might not have any particular difficulty about recovering the same; and with his rifle in readiness, plunged into the tangled growth, which was thicker than anything Tom had noticed around them.

Progress was rather slow, for he had to pass around many obstacles, so dense was the vegetation

in this low lying spot adjoining the marshy tract where he found the muskrat colony. There was a sense of pleasure, however, in peering around, not knowing at what minute a fleet doe might jump up before him.

To his surprise, and also a little to his chagrin, the tempting place did not appear to harbor any sort of game whatever. But then Tom was enough of a sportsman to know that such often proves the case; the likely spots turn out good for nothing; while, when least expected, luck often springs upon the unwary.

Only one thing caught his attention in making his way along, that seemed worth a second thought. Stooping down in the heart of the dense growth, Tom picked something up, which he proceeded to examine with increasing interest.

It seemed to be a piece of comb from the honey store of a wild colony of bees, such as are found in nearly every section of the country south of a certain belt, beyond which the winters are too severe for the busy little insects.

Now, Tom had at some time in the past been in the company of a man who had once made a living, far away in New England, gathering wild honey, spruce gum, and many other products of the Maine pine woods. The subject had interested the boy exceedingly, and he had asked many questions relating to it, that brought him quite a store of information.

Just the sight and smell of this old piece of comb aroused within him an eager desire to discover just where it came from. If only he could bring home a pail of delicious honey, what would Felix say? Why, his mouth began to water at the very thought of such a delightful accession to their larder. Think of dripping sweetness flowing over the fine flapjacks Felix liked to make, and in which he really excelled!

That was too much for Tom. He just couldn't stand it any longer, but resolved that since game refused to spring up before his rifle, he would forget all about hunting; save that somewhere in this thicket growth there evidently lay a bee tree, fairly groaning with richness; and which he was resolved to find, if it lay in his power to do so.

He looked up, but could see no sign near him indicating that bees had a hive in any tree; in fact there was none of a suitable size right there.

Tom shrewdly guessed the truth. He knew that black bears have a sweet tooth; and will go miles to rob a bee tree. The stings of thousands of the little insects do not appear to bother Bruin a particle; perhaps he is immune to the poison they inject; or else most of them fail to reach his skin, on account of the thick hair.

Apparently, then, some thief of a bear was periodically robbing this secret storehouse of its sweets, and had dragged this comb away with him on a recent visit.

The comb, while somewhat discolored, had not been drained of its nectar more than a few days, Tom thought. That would seem to indicate that the hive could not be very far away. If he could only find it, with an axe he might soon fell the tree in which it was secreted, and then take toll of the preserves.

Every tree around came under his observation, and was only allowed to pass after he had surveyed its entire trunk, and become convinced that it had no hollow part in which a colony of busy workers might find a home for the winter's sleep.

And now that he was upon the subject of bear, he remembered that only a couple of days back he had himself seen signs of such an animal in the woods, and wondered how it came that a black, usually hibernating at this time of year, chanced to be moving around.

This explained it. Bruin had made a late discovery, and his appetite for sweet things would not allow him to shut himself up until "the last horn blew."

And perhaps, if he could find the bee tree, he might also get track of the bear, since it would be difficult to divorce the animal from so dainty a morsel, once he had found how to get at the hive.

So Tom kept up his search, all the time hoping to make a pleasing discovery that would make his chum's eye dance, and add a pleasing variety to their meals.

He had spent half an hour in this vain hunt when he came upon a tree that seemed to offer possibilities; for it had a big cavity, and there was more or less of a chance that some of its larger limbs were also hollow. It is this kind that appears to be the favorite lodgment of the bees after swarming from some other hive that is overcrowded; a place where they can grow indefinitely, and lay up an increasing store with each successive summer.

A ton of honey has sometimes been gathered from a single bee tree; much of it too old and discolored to be of much good but showing that the little workers never know when they have enough for their winter use.

Tom became so impressed with the possibilities of this particular tree that he determined to

climb up its trunk and investigate at close range.

Of course, in order to ascend, he was compelled to lay his rifle on the ground, as he would surely need both hands to draw himself upward. Perhaps at the time Tom may have remembered the strange experience of his chum, Felix, while held unarmed in a tree, by the wounded buck; but if so, Tom did not dream of allowing such an idea to deter him in the least. Who could imagine any trouble springing from such an apparently innocent amusement as climbing a tree to see if any of its limbs being hollow might shelter a swarm of bees, with their golden brown store of honey? And besides, a rifle is not often used to shoot such small game, Tom remembered with a chuckle.

Once among the branches, he had little difficulty in climbing aloft; and was soon going about his business of examining the various limbs that seemed to promise a hope of containing the treasure house he sought.

He must have passed the hole in the trunk while climbing up the other side, for otherwise such keen eyes as Tom Tucker possessed would surely have noticed certain scratches calculated to arouse his suspicions.

One by one the limbs were looked over, and dismissed from the list of possibilities, until there remained only a small opening in the main trunk, about twenty feet above his head.

Without much hope of finding what he sought there, Tom climbed laboriously upward to this point, just about to give over the quest; he could not discover any signs that would indicate the presence of a swarm; and yet, as he placed his ear to this last opening, it seemed to him that he could catch a faint buzzing sound from within that excited new hopes.

He examined the trunk up and down, but there was certainly no chance of finding the anticipated hive further aloft; and if in the tree at all, it apparently must be down further.

The cavity beside him seemed to extend some distance downward; indeed, Tom was now of the opinion that it must connect with the larger opening he remembered having seen when on the ground, and which had slipped his attention when climbing. On his way back he must certainly take a look in there; meanwhile he would like to know positively that the bees were not snugly ensconced in the upper trunk near this minor gash; and as an idea flashed into his mind, without a second thought he set about carrying it into practice.

Taking a piece of oiled rag from the pocket of his khaki canvas hunting coat, which he was wearing at the time over his sweater and vest, he ignited it with a match, and immediately dropped this into the opening; holding back to see whether even a solitary bee made its appearance, since that would tell the story.

And Tom immediately became aware of the fact that there was certainly *something* going on inside that tree trunk. At first the boy found himself thinking that he stirred up the biggest bees' nest ever heard of; for from what at first seemed to be a simple buzzing, there grew a rumbling that kept on increasing, until it was simply astounding; and Tom hardly knew what to make of it all, as he hung there to the side of the tree trunk, looking downward.

The next thing he saw was smoke puffing out of where he knew the big opening lay.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, with mingled astonishment and amusement; "I did more than I expected, I reckon, and set the old buster afire inside. Say, she must have been as dry as tinder, to catch like that. Perhaps it's the fire making all that racket—no it ain't, either, for I never heard a burning tree make a noise like that. Sounds like growls, too—by George, it *is* growls, and I just bet you I've struck the snugger of Mr. Bear first pop!"

The idea was so surprising that Tom just clung there, and stared with wide-open eyes at the opening below, from whence welled those strange sounds; together with various little wisps of smoke that seemed to be getting stronger as they ascended.

By and by the boy sniffed at this smoke, and as he did so he gave vent to another exclamation as if to voice his wonder, while something like a broad grin decorated his face.

"Burning hair, as sure as you live!" he exclaimed. "Bless me, if I don't think the old critter must be on fire; that oiled rag lit on his back, and took hold!"

Even as Tom gave vent to this startling opinion something appeared at the opening below; something that speedily resolved itself into a smouldering black bear, that looked both scared and angry as he backed out of his den, snapping at various parts of his fat body, where the fire had touched most severely.

If Tom had been able to restrain his loud and scornful laughter, in all probability Bruin would have scrambled down from the tree, and ambled off; or else rolled in the snow to cool his scorched body; but the sight seemed so very comical that the boy burst into a shout.

He was immediately sorry for doing so.

The singed bear twisted his head when in the act of lowering himself stern first, and caught sight

of his human enemy above.

Somehow the sight of the boy seemed to completely alter the animal's plans; and instead of showing fear, he now gave evidence of extreme anger, just as though he might be able to figure out some connection between the presence of that biped in his tree, and the suffering he was even then undergoing.

He showed his teeth in a vicious growl.

"Go on down, old man!" called out Tom, waving his hand; "the walking's fine. Besides, there's nothing for you up here. I'm not hankering for company, I tell you. So just skip out, please—do you hear, you beggar?" and Tom ended with a shout; for, to his consternation, the singed bear had commenced to ascend the tree again, evidently with the intention of trying conclusions with this enemy who had hurt him so grievously.

Tom did not exactly like the looks of things just about then.

There, he was, above the ground some forty feet, with an enraged bear climbing in his direction, and evidently bent on mischief. It was too great a distance to be covered in a jump, since the ground was frozen and hard, so that a broken ankle might be the result. To ascend further would mean that he must soon be chased to the very pinnacle of the tree, with Bruin close after, bent on clutching him with his sharp claws, and teaching him a lesson in politeness.

Whatever he expected to do must be started quickly, for the animal was getting closer all the time. If he only had a good long pole; or even a stout club, Tom believed he might poke the brute so furiously that he would conclude to give over his attempt to close with the boy who had laughed so heartlessly over his misfortunes, though Tom was doing so no longer, it might be noticed.

But he might just as well wish for his rifle, lying there so temptingly on the ground; it would be impossible to twist off a branch large enough, and reduce it to the proper consistency in time to meet the bear's attack.

Tom, as the bear came close, began to move out on a limb, wondering whether the animal would really follow after him. That doubt was speedily removed, for Bruin never so much as hesitated, though he came with extreme caution, feeling his way, step by step, suspicious lest he were being led into a trap.

It seemed to Tom, however, that if any one appeared to be in a trap, that individual must be himself. With each foot that he crept out on that bending limb, he felt that his chances for escaping those cruel claws in an encounter with their angry owner grew less and less.

Suppose the limb should break under their combined weight, it would be a serious thing to go tumbling down fully forty feet, in company with the fat, hairy monster; possibly to be clasped in his embrace after landing. Of course, if he could only be sure of alighting on Bruin when the collision came, it would not seem so bad; but that was only one chance in ten; and on the other hand the miserable beast might drop squarely upon him, which would be completing the tragedy.

One thing Tom noticed was, that the further out on the limb he crawled the more it sagged, so that he was even now close to the outcropping branches below; and the daring thought flashed through his brain that possibly he might suddenly let go his hold above, and by a show of dexterity, succeed in securing a new grip as he fell!

That would be leaving Bruin in the lurch nicely; for not daring to trust his cumbersome body to do likewise he would have to hedge back to the trunk, an operation taking time; and then descend in the ordinary way.

Meanwhile Tom could be slipping down the balance of the tree with the speed, that, in his boyish vernacular, he called "greased lightning," and when the bear arrived later on, he would find himself up against a snag in that always dependable rifle.

There was really no other course left open to him, and hence Tom felt bound to take the chances, such as they were.

He was naturally agile, and his muscles accustomed to hardy exercise; so that after all, it was not such a tremendously difficult task, slipping dextrously down the outside of that limb, and clutching hold of the next one as he reached it.

Tom half expected to see the bear go plunging downward, as the limb, relieved of the boy weight, must have been violently agitated; but apparently the animal knew just how to crouch there, and hold on.

A single look upward showed Tom this, and also that the bear was already commencing to edge cautiously backward, moving one foot gingerly at a time, just as Tom had seen a domestic cat do when after a sparrow in a tree.

Undoubtedly that must have been the strangest way in which Tom Tucker ever came down a tree;

just as the ascension of Felix had shattered all records. While his movements were certainly pretty rapid, he managed to carry himself so dextrously that, save for a number of small scratches, mostly along his wrists that did not count for anything, he presently reached the ground, none the worse for his remarkable experience.

By this time Bruin had succeeded in backing along the limb, and reaching the body of the tree, down which he commenced to pass, with an eye to business. Hence, Tom knew that he had no time to waste, if he meant to hold the advantage that his slide had given him.

Three bounds took him over to where his rifle lay, and snatching this weapon up, he was quickly back again at the base of the tree. After that it was just a picnic—that is, for Tom; what the bear thought no one ever bothered trying to find out.

The boy even felt a little compassion for the poor beast that was so rudely disturbed in the very beginning of his long winter nap, by having his house take fire; and upon crawling hastily forth, had the double aggravation of finding himself laughed at by a cruel two-legged foe; and when he sought to punish such liberties it would be to have a queer stick poked at his head, and hear a terrible bang that ended his earthly career.

But to tell the truth it was bear steaks that animated Tom now; for he realized that as a piece of marketable fur that sadly singed hide of Bruin would not pay for the trouble of taking it off.

He believed that the bear was both fat and rather young, and these considerations outweighed any compunction he might feel, as the animal kept coming closer to him.

Several times the bear stopped to look down at the human enemy waiting so confidently for him below; and it would seem as though some intuition must have warned Bruin that he could expect nothing less than trouble from that source; but to descend seemed to be the only thing left him, since his late den was now burning in a way that promised the complete destruction of the tree in due time.

And so the beast again started downward, growling ferociously; but now more in the expectation that such fierceness might frighten the hunter away from his post, than because of a genuine desire to come into contact with him.

However, Tom did not mean to take any unnecessary chances; he had never fought a "singed" bear, and hence could not say just how vindictive such an animal might turn out to be. So when Bruin was just about down Tom thrust out his gun until the muzzle almost touched the beast's small head, close to his ear; when he pulled trigger, and there was one less live bear in that neck of the woods.

Later on, Tom, following the trail of the marauding bear, did manage to discover the bee tree, and upon felling it, secured a bucket full of good honey; though he afterwards declared that he had never before heard of such a thing being done in the winter season.

Bruin had gotten at all he could easily reach, and had then taken up his quarters in the near vicinity; possibly in the hope and expectation that when spring came around, and the dormant bees awoke to new activity, he would be on hand to start a fresh campaign, in the hope of another rich feast.

He had not calculated upon the coming of Tom Tucker; and the discovery of that empty comb which he must have tossed contemptuously aside after draining its sweet store; so that its finding started the hunter on the track that ended in Bruin's downfall.

It was with considerable pleasure that Tom set about the task of denuding the honey thief of his singed pelt. He meant to simply keep this as a reminder of the strange adventure that had waylaid him on his return from the little marsh where the Northern muskrats abounded. But the meat was the main thing after all; and none of it must go to feed some prowling bobcat or panther.

With the assistance of his chum Tom managed to get every pound worth saving to the cabin, and that which could not be immediately used was frozen in a secure spot, from which it could not be stolen. Whenever their stock became low, all that was necessary, was to go out with the axe, and chop a few pounds off, as though it were fuel for the fire.

That account also went down in the log of Felix; for it gave him even more amusement than his own story of the buck that had tossed him into the tree; he often wished he had a picture of Tom in that tree, with the bear reaching out for him; and the boy finally sliding down the outside branches with desperate haste.

When Tom brought in that pail of wild honey, and declared they could really get all they wanted during their stay in the mountains, Felix fairly danced with glee. It just seemed to fill a long-felt want; and how delicious it did taste upon the next lot of flapjacks, which, of course, had to follow at the succeeding meal.

They ate so heartily, Tom declared that if this kept on, the larder would be cleaned out before half the time they had set for their stay in the camp were exhausted. But to all this kind of talk

Felix turned a deaf ear; for when such a magnificent appetite had come to him, building up his energies splendidly, it just *had* to be catered to, regardless, even though the two big Crow boys were hired to make the long trip to civilization on snow-shoes, perhaps, and "tote" back a fresh supply of stuff on a sledge.

One can accomplish almost anything when the pocketbook is well lined, especially with where substantials in the woods are concerned; and those hardy Indian lads would think little of such a trip through the snow of the valleys; indeed, it must seem something along the order of a picnic for them, since doubtless they had more than once done the same thing, without the inducement of a fat reward, such as Felix would be sure to promise them.

It seemed as though adventures were flocking their way thick and fast; and the boys could not help wondering what the nature of the next one would be like, as they sat in their cozy dugout at night time, and took their ease before a roaring fire that made things look so cheery.

All this while Felix had not forgotten the two principal things he had in mind when laying out this trip to the Rocky Mountain region.

A grizzly was the height of his ambition, and unless he could manage to get such a prize to his credit, all alone and unaided, he would feel very much disappointed indeed. And then there was that bighorn business—he had heard so much about these strange sheep of the rocky heights that he often expressed a wish to try and secure such a splendid trophy. Could he see a pair of those curved horns decorating his den at home, the boy felt that it would please him more than words could tell.

And Tom, understanding what all this eagerness meant to his comrade, was making preparations looking to a start along those lines; he had his eye out for signs of the monster that had passed near the cabin on the first night of their occupancy, and whose den he believed must be among the rocky canyons of the mountains, not half a mile away from the edge of the valley where the dugout lay.

CHAPTER XIII—HUNTING THE BIGHORN

"I've fixed things so that today the traps can take care of themselves," remarked Tom, one morning, as they sat there at the rude table eating their breakfast of oatmeal, and coffee, and some biscuits Felix had managed to make, using a pan for his oven, and with pretty fair success, too, Tom had declared, after making away with his tenth one, covered with honey.

Felix looked quickly up at his chum. He could read between the lines, and understood that Tom would not have said this unless he had something to propose.

"And what were you thinking of doing, then?" he asked, seeing that the other was waiting to be questioned.

"Well, I happened to notice yesterday that a little flock of bighorn sheep seemed to be feeding in a certain patch away up the face of the mountain, where there must be some grass that has been protected so far from the freeze; and I was wondering whether you would feel like taking a shy at the same, always providing we can climb up to a place within gunshot?"

Felix jumped up, as he was really through eating; his eyes danced with eagerness, just as Tom anticipated they would.

"Let's start right now," he remarked; whereat the other laughed at him.

"Not a bit of need for hurry," he said; "and I want to make certain preparations for the jaunt. It isn't any easy thing, climbing the mountains, and especially at this time of year. We may be away all night, for all we know, and must dress warm enough for anything like that. Besides, we want to make up something to eat; these left-over biscuits and some dried venison will just fill the bill. And then there's that rope we brought along, because you said we might need it; I'll wrap it around my middle, because in mountain climbing a rope is sometimes worth its weight ten times over in gold. Fact is, no mountain guide over in the Alps would think of starting out for a climb, without at least one rope along."

"I guess you're right," replied Felix; "and I'll begin to get things moving now. Looks like we might have a decent day, too; which I'm right glad to see. I'd hate to be caught up there in a snow storm, with a howling wind blowing." And stepping to the door he looked up to where the frowning rocky heights could be seen through the partly bare branches of the trees of the valley.

Tom would not allow his impatient companion to hurry him in the least. He declared that there was plenty of time; and he did not want to forget something which they ought to carry, the absence of which might work a hardship later on.

But about the time the sun was an hour high showing through the gap to the east, the two lads left the old dugout, and headed toward the west, where the main ridge arose like a monstrous barrier, shutting them out from everything lying beyond, since to cross its snowy peaks was a

task utterly beyond their ability, even had they ever dreamed of such an undertaking.

Later on, when they were really in one of the canyons, Felix began to comprehend something of the magnitude and grandeur of the massive Rockies. At a distance they had excited his curiosity and interest; but once he found himself in their midst, it was a feeling of awe that gradually took possession of his soul.

Still, the ambition of a hunter was strong within the Eastern lad; and when his companion pointed out to him a certain green spot nearly half way to the top of the nearest ridge and told him to notice the moving white specks upon it, he realized that these must be the famous big-horns feeding.

"However do you expect we're going to get up there?" asked Felix, aghast at the prospect of climbing at such a height, which looked something formidable to him just then.

"Perhaps we can't do it," replied the other; "but we're going to make a jab at the job all the same; and I reckon I know about the best way. I haven't been studying the make-up of these mountains, day after day, for nothing."

"I'd just depend on it, you've got your plan all laid out," laughed Felix. "I never knew you to start into anything without doing that."

"Oh! yes you have," answered the other, chuckling. "When I invaded the den of my friend, the black bear, and started to smoke him out without even knowing that it was his house, why, I guess I didn't have any plan made up beforehand. Any old thing just had to answer; but after all, I came out of that scrape better than I deserved, after being so breezy as to invite the gentleman to come out and get acquainted."

They started in to climb. Tom, as he said, had figured it pretty well all out, and in this way better progress was made than Felix would have thought possible.

Sometimes it turned out to be easy enough; and then again, they would either have to go around some obstruction, or else make a difficult ascent of a small cliff.

When noon came they had ascended a pretty good distance, and Felix saw that the green patch was much closer. Indeed, he could easily make out the bighorns now, and even counted them several times.

"Seven all told, in sight, Tom?" he remarked. "And I wonder if they'll still be there when we get within range, if we ever manage it?"

"If not, we must lie over until tomorrow, and take chances that way," replied the other. "For after going to all this trouble, we must try and get a sheep, just for the horns; because the mutton of a big fellow will dent your teeth."

"Have you got our route all mapped out above here?" asked Felix.

"Yes; and from now on we must be careful not to let them glimpse us even once," returned the Western boy. "I haven't hunted sheep before, but I know something of them, and they're mighty suspicious animals."

"I notice that we've got the wind in our faces," continued the other.

"Oh! sure, we couldn't have done the first thing any other way," Tom declared, as they once more started off.

An hour later, and Felix was allowed to creep to the edge of a little ridge of rock in order to take an observation. He found they had made such splendid progress that it almost seemed as though he might try to bring down that fellow sporting the massive horns, but then Tom had warned him that distances were deceiving up in that clear mountain air, and if so, after all he would be apt to make a mess of it should he try.

So once more, then, they had to go creeping along, always keeping out of sight of the wary game, yet forever ascending. And still, when Felix looked up at the top of the mountain they were climbing, it seemed about as far off heavenward as ever, in his eyes.

Later on Tom began to work around more. He believed that they were now about as close to the bighorn sheep as they could possibly get; and besides, as the afternoon was waning, the animals might at any time take a notion to quit their feeding ground, for some other locality, where they were in the habit of passing the night; and unless the boys got busy shortly, they would have to wait until another day before securing the coveted chance for a shot.

Leaving Felix lying in a little hollow, getting his breath after the last fierce climb, Tom crept forward. The other saw him gradually raise his head, and appear to take a peep over the rocks. Then drawing back, he turned and made a motion that meant he wanted his chum to come alongside.

Trembling with eagerness, Felix did so. And no sooner had he raised his eyes to a level with the

line of rock, so that he could look over, than he saw a sight calculated to pay him for all the trouble he had been to, in order to gain this position.

There were the sheep within the easiest possible gun range, so that it would seem as though even a greenhorn could not miss his aim, if he but took ordinary precautions.

"Oh!"

It was but the faintest sound, and seemed forced from Felix by the closeness of the game; but Tom nudged him in the ribs, as though to indicate that even such a whisper must not be indulged in.

There was really no need of saying a word, because, as they climbed, the boys had made all the necessary arrangements.

Felix, therefore, knew absolutely that he was to try and take care of the buck carrying those massive horns which he envied; while Tom, on his part, having his mind bent more on securing some mutton that could be eaten without first being chopped into atoms, meant to pick out a yearling, or one still younger, provided the flock contained any such.

Nor was that all, for they had arranged a silent code between them, looking to the critical moment when they would want to shoot. Tom was to give the signal for this, after he had learned that his comrade was all ready for business.

And on his part Felix must keep a bead on that big buck.

Perhaps the leader of the flock had some reason to feel suspicious. He had ceased browsing on the grass that grew in the little plateau sheltered thus far from the cold, and getting all the warmth of the sunshine; they could see him standing there as though he might be cut out of solid rock, apparently sniffing the air as if in some incredible manner he had caught a whiff of danger, even though the wind blew almost directly from him toward the spot where the boys lay.

Tom kicked the ankle of his chum twice. That meant he was ready to give the word to fire and Felix must be ready to press the trigger of his Marlin when he heard the one word that was to be whispered, so the Eastern boy nudged an answer with his elbow.

"Now!"

There was a double discharge, Tom firing just after his companion; for in his generosity he did not want to precede him, even by the fraction of a second, lest this serve to make the patriarch of the flock move, and disturb Felix in aiming.

The big buck with the wonderful horns made a leap into the air, and then rolled down the slope, falling from the end of the shelf. They could see his desperate efforts to cling to the rock at the brink with his forefeet; but powerful as he may have been, that deadly ball had sapped his strength with its shock; and ten seconds later he vanished from the sight of the hunters.

Of course the balance of the flock had bounded off in wild alarm, not waiting to see what the fate of their leader might be; all but one, which lay there on the green spot, perfectly still. Tom evidently had not suffered in his aim because of allowing his chum the first chance to pull trigger. As usual he had made a centre shot; and if only they could find a way to get across to where the young bighorn lay, there was a prospect of some pretty fine eating ahead.

"I got him, didn't I, Tom?" cried Felix, greatly pleased over the result of his shot.

"But where d'ye suppose the beggar dropped to, and will we ever be able to get to him? I'd just hate awfully to lose those horns, now that I've knocked him galley-west. What had we better do, Tom?"

"I'll tell you," replied the other, calmly; for it took considerable to excite Tom—an angry bear climbing up a tree after him had been known to do the trick all right, though. "First of all, before we try and go down after those horns you want, let's see if we can get over to where the sheep were grazing. For my part, I've got my mouth set for some mutton, when we get home again; and I'd hate to lose what I've shot. It would be a wicked waste, that's what."

They began to look around, there being no longer any necessity for concealment; and in a short time Tom announced that he believed he saw how he might cross over to the little green plateau where the bighorns had been feeding.

CHAPTER XIV—A WAKEFUL NIGHT

It required considerable climbing, as well as taking chances, for the boys to cross over to where the dead bighorn lay on the green plateau which had long been the dining table of the flock, and where they undoubtedly felt they were safe from all the ordinary enemies of their kind. But in reckoning thus, they knew not of the long range of the modern rifle, nor the terrible expanding

power of the up-to-date softnosed bullet, that mushrooms to three times its original size upon striking even the flesh of an animal.

When both of the lads had successfully landed on the plateau it was beginning to grow a little dusk. The sun had long since vanished behind the great rocky ridge that stood out above them against the sky.

"We'll have to put in a night up here, all right," commented Felix, as they arrived at the side of the dead sheep, over which Tom bent eagerly.

"Well, since we prepared for that same thing, it won't be so hard on us," replied the Western boy; "and I'm not any disappointed in my game either. I don't believe it's a year old even, and I'm only sorry we haven't some way to make a fire up here; for a slice or two off this chap would go great. Come over this way, and let's see; I've got a dim idea I saw a few stunted trees hanging to the face of the rock, where there were gaps, and some earth had blown in from time to time. If it turns out that way, count on a supper worth while; and that'll go better than just cold biscuits and jerked venison."

They had hardly rounded the shoulder of rock mentioned by Tom, than he gave vent to a shout of delight.

"There they are, just as I thought;" he remarked; "and now to see what we can do about picking up enough fine wood to make a fire. Every scrap will count. Look in the crevices, and every which way, for broken branches, twigs, and anything that will burn. We've just got to have supper, and that's all there is to it, with such bully game on hand!"

Presently Tom found a way to reach the stunted trees himself, and here he came upon a regular bonanza in the way of partly dead branches, which he kicked off in any way possible, until the boy below declared they had more than enough fuel to cook two suppers.

By the time they had selected the nook where a fire would be best sheltered from the night wind at that elevated spot, the darkness had begun to creep around them.

Below lay a black gulf, for they could no longer see the trees, or anything else that in the daytime marked the peaceful valley where they had their dugout home.

"We're lucky to have all this wood," remarked Felix, "because, unless I miss my guess, it's going to be pretty snappy cold up here tonight, and we've got no blankets along."

"Yes, I thought it would come in handy," returned Tom, who was already busily engaged cutting up the sheep, so as to have something to eat as soon as possible, because the climb, and the cold air of the mountain, had made both of the boys fairly ravenous. "And that's why I kept on sending down more, after you said three times we had enough. A fire eats up a heap of stuff, when you have to keep it going all night in the open air."

It was not long before Felix had the blaze going, and he declared that it certainly made things look a thousand per cent better. It was a dreary place, so far up the side of the mountains; and without that cheery blaze the night must have proven one they would never remember with any degree of pleasure.

After all, the mutton did taste pretty fine. Even Tom, who being the son of a cattle raiser, knew what prime beef meant, said it was very good, and well worth all the trouble they had taken to get it.

"But how about those horns?" asked Felix, who could not wholly get his mind off the subject that seemed to concern him, even more than the supper did; though for that matter he ate his share, and seemed to enjoy it. "Do you think we can get down to where my fine old granddaddy buck fell?"

"We must, sooner or later, and that's all there is to it," replied Tom. "What d'ye suppose we carried that rope along for if not to use it? Make your mind easy, you'll have those horns, chances are ten to one."

"Unless some wild animal carries the body away in the night," remarked Felix.

"No danger of that, my boy," laughed the other. "Fact is, the only beast that is able to do such a thing around here, would be a grizzly; and if he does, why, we'll just follow him to his lair, and tackle him. Then you'll have a chance to get back the bighorn head-piece, and knock over your grizzly, at the same time."

Felix had to smile at this.

"You know how to comfort a fellow all right, Tom," he remarked. "That would be sort of climbing up on our reverses, and making them pay a profit, wouldn't it? But I'll just try to forget all about the horns now, and enjoy the good things we have right here—heat and grub in plenty."

They did pass a pleasant evening; and later on, when both of them felt like lying down on the rocks to try and get some sleep, the fire was arranged so that it might keep going for some hours.

Tom expected to be up a number of times before dawn could be expected, and promised to take care that the blaze did not go entirely out at any hour.

Although Tom did not mention anything about it to his chum, he was a bit anxious concerning the state of the weather. That was the one thing that had made him hesitate when thinking about pleasing Felix by a climb up to the place where the coveted bighorns might be found.

What if a howling storm should swoop down upon them, while they were away from the cabin and up here in this elevated eyrie? He knew about how fierce a blizzard could rage, once it took a notion to come out of the faraway Alaska country. And should such a thing come to pass, the boys would be in for an experience before which all others must pale into insignificance.

With the bitter cold, there would be snow filling the air, perhaps with a fierce wind; so that for several days they would not dare attempt to descend into their blessed valley. Could they manage to keep from freezing there, in that exposed position, where a change of the wind would find them out, and prevent any possibility of keeping a fire going, even though they secured fuel to last out, an almost impossible feat.

And that was the main reason why Tom hardly slept at all during that night. He allowed his chum to get all the rest he could; nor did he envy Felix when, up and down almost every hour, he counted the minutes until they might see the first peep of dawn away off there in the eastern sky.

It had clouded up, which was one reason why Tom worried, for he thought he detected symptoms of a storm in the air.

But as even the longest night must come to an end, so finally Tom was heartened when he believed he could detect a little change off toward the east, which gradually grew better, until he was sure dawn meant to greet them.

So he caused the fire to pick up, and by the time daylight aroused Felix, breakfast was all ready for their attention. The fact of the matter was, Tom was bent on getting out of that as quickly as possible, even though they had to leave the task of recovering those massive horns until another day. He had a pretty fair idea with regard to where they might have fallen; and it would not be necessary to climb near so high up the side of the mountain. And, too, it could be done on a clear, promising day.

Felix was disappointed when he heard about the change of plans; but being a sensible fellow he quickly agreed with his chum that their first consideration must concern their safety. He, too, had been secretly fearing lest they find themselves trapped up in that high altitude by the coming of foul weather; and so he agreed to let the matter of securing his trophy go until later on.

"Tell you what," remarked Tom, as they prepared to depart the same way they had come, for that seemed the only means by which a human being could leave the elevated plateau, not being able to jump, like the bighorn sheep; "tell you what, we can swing around a little, after we get down from here, and if it happens that we get sight of your sheep, we'll make a try for it."

"That's good of you, Tom," replied the other, warmly; "but remember, we're not going to take any extra hazard, just to save those horns. I'd like to have them, all right, but a fellow's life is worth much more than a trophy."

A few flakes of snow drifted down as they started to leave, and Tom eyed the heavens critically.

"You never can tell about this snow business," he declared. "Seems like I know when it's going to give us rain, nearly every time; but this other fools me. But if we can get down to that next level I'll like it. Plenty more protection there; and some chance of getting wood too. Come along, and be mighty careful, Felix."

There were one or two places where it looked so risky that Tom insisted in fastening the rope to Felix. Then one of them would go at a time, while the other braced himself for a shock, which luckily never came; afterwards the leading one would take his turn at standing still, while the other came on.

All the while those tantalizing flakes drifted slowly down, just as though intent on keeping the young bighorn hunters' nerves on edge.

An hour later, and Tom expressed himself as delighted, because they had managed to reach the lower level. Now, even though the storm did descend upon them, he believed they would have a chance to keep on down into the valley; for the most dangerous rocky heights had been left behind.

Felix had not noticed how his chum was heading, and hence was surprised to hear Tom suddenly call out:

"Here it is, all right; been no grizzly around, you see, Felix!"

"My old buck, and with not a notch taken out of his grand curved horns!" cried the other, as he saw what his chum was pointing at, just ahead.

Tom set to work to get the trophies. He could not make the fine job of it such as he always liked to carry out; because the flakes seemed to be getting more numerous now, and evidently the storm was becoming tired of holding back, just to accommodate them.

"I can fix 'em up in apple-pie shape after we get home," he remarked; and Felix had no difficulty in forgiving him; because just then he believed that it would be a good thing to be quartered once again under the roof of the dugout, where he could find a peaceful bed, after a night on the hard, unyielding rocks.

It was, of course, no child's play, clambering down all sorts of slippery places, burdened, as the boys were, with the meat of the young big-horn, and the heavy head piece of the patriarch of the flock; but save for a few minor accidents that did not amount to anything beyond some scratches, they managed to finally reach the valley.

By that time, however, it was snowing heavily, and the wind seemed to be rising; for while the mountains were entirely concealed from their view, they could hear it beginning to whistle around the ledges and cliffs that had marked their line of descent.

And when, later, the boys staggered up to the dugout, it was with a sense of deepest satisfaction; now let the storm howl, since they were assured of shelter, food and warmth.

CHAPTER XV—OUT FOR A GRIZZLY

After all, the storm did not last more than a few hours. As Tom had declared, no one could ever predict what a snow storm was going to amount to. The boys, however, were just as well pleased that they managed to get safely housed before the coming of another night. And as they sat by their fire, when supper had been disposed of, Felix mentioned the fact that he could imagine how it must feel to be snow bound in a dreary place like that elevated plateau, with the prospect ahead of perhaps a week of fighting the cold wind to keep from freezing.

He was busily engaged in working upon the bighorn trophy. And it gave him more satisfaction than he could tell, just to know that he had secured such a magnificent trophy unaided. Every time he glanced up at it, when upon the wall at home, he would doubtless remember that mountain climb, and the camp under the ledge of rock.

"I've got something to tell you," remarked Tom, with a smile; "only before I open up I want you to promise not to try and hurry me; because, you see, I've got a lot of traps out, and they have to be attended to properly, or else I quit the business."

"Oh!" replied Felix, "I give you my promise, all right. Now, what are you going to tell me? Haven't found a wolf's den, have you, with some cubs in it? Perhaps, now, you've sighted one of those rare black foxes, that they say are worth all the way from seven hundred up to several thousand dollars a pelt! That would be fine news, wouldn't it, now?"

"Yes, if we needed the money, which I take it we neither of us do," replied Tom. "But this doesn't concern either a wolf's den, or the trading place of a silver fox. Can't you think of something else that has been on your mind more or less for a long time back?"

"Looky here, Tom, do you mean a grizzly?" demanded Felix, his face lighting up with eagerness and expectation.

The other just nodded his head.

"Then you've found out where he lives, when he's at home?" Felix went on.

"I think I have, anyhow, Felix."

"But you haven't said a word to me about it; how long have you known?" demanded the other, reproachfully.

"Let's see; we've been home here just ten hours, haven't we; well, call it about eleven, then; that would cover it," said Tom, with a chuckle.

"Oh! then you made the discovery while we were coming down the mountain; is that it, Tom?" Felix asked.

"Just what it is," replied his chum.

"Go on, and tell me about it; what did you see, the marks of his claws; or had he thrown a lot of bones out of his old den, to make room? Which was it, Tom?"

"Neither one, it happens," was the reply Tom made to this. "I just chanced to look up, when we were crawling along on our hands and knees in a particularly dangerous place, and saw something sticking out from a ledge above us, that I quickly recognized as the head of a grizzly! Perhaps the old fellow heard us passing, and came to his front door to see what the strangers looked like."

"And why didn't you tell me about it, so I could look up too?" asked Felix.

"Well, I had several reasons," answered the other, readily enough. "In the first place, I didn't dare sing out because, if you slipped just then, you stood a pretty good chance of being killed. And by the time we both got to where the climbing was safer, he had pulled his nose in out of sight. So I just marked that place, and thought I'd keep the news until tonight."

"All right; and when you're good and ready, not before, Tom, why, we'll pay our respects to Mr. Grizzly Bear."

"H'm! how about the day after tomorrow?" asked Tom.

"Suits me fine; do you really mean it?" asked his chum, eagerly.

"Wind and weather permitting, I think we might chance it, Felix. And I'll try and not let him know we're coming. Sort of a surprise party, you understand. I only hope the old chap's at home when we knock."

Felix came over, and clapped a hand affectionately on the shoulder of his cousin.

"You're the finest chum a fellow ever could have, and that goes," he said; "always thinking of doing something to make things move along for me. Once I get my grizzly, and after that I'm going to turn around, so as to try and fix things for your liking, see if I don't."

"Just as if you ain't always picking out the best flapjack in the lot for me; the juiciest piece of meat; the clearest cup of coffee. I guess when they started to making chums, they lost the pattern after they had you built up, Felix. And it makes me sick to think what a gap there'll be in my life after you go back East again."

"But you promised to make me a good long visit soon; and I'm going to hold you to your word. After this we've just got to see more or less of each other right along. I'm coming out here again, make your mind easy to that. Perhaps I'll take a notion to invest in a ranch near you, because, you know, my mother left me some money, more than I'll ever know what to do with."

"That would be the greatest thing I know of!" cried Tom; "and I'll see that you have chances enough, mark me."

And so they chatted on, as each carried his chosen work along; for Tom was busy with some of his best pelts, which did not quite look well enough to suit his eye, and he thought needed a little further manipulation before being tied up.

On the following day Tom cleaned up all work possible with the traps, visiting every one that was set, and bringing home quite a bundle of fresh skins, which he of course immediately stretched after their kind, some cased, and others split open, with the fur side out.

They were accumulating quite a collection of pelts by this time, and somehow both boys enjoyed the work very much. If they had had to do it for a living, possibly some of the pleasure would soon evaporate; but as long as it was just carried on as fun, it did not seem to pall upon them.

And sitting there by the fire evenings, they had easily settled what they meant to do with the main part of the skins. After picking out what they wanted to keep as a reminder of their great time in the foothills of the Rockies, they agreed that the balance should be turned over to Mrs. Crow, for the benefit of herself and family. As old friends of Sol Ten Eyck, they seemed to have first claim on any surplus; and then there was something so fine about the way the old halfbreed had kept strictly away from that part of the region which he looked on as Sol's preserves, that both lads believed he deserved to be rewarded.

"And," Tom Tucker had said, in conclusion, after one of these talks; "as Sol will never come up here again, I'm going to make over all he has, except the traps he values, and which we're to take home for him, to Charley Crow. He can call this shack one of his homes, and trap along the little stream where we've found the mink so plentiful."

Felix, on his part, had already thought about those Marlin guns he meant to send west as soon as he got home again; and his companion applauded the idea when he learned of it.

Tom worked hard that night trying to get everything in shipshape around the shack, so that they could take a day off with clear consciences; and Felix gave him a helping hand in stretching the many pelts; for with two days catch to be taken care of, and all in the faultless manner that marked Tom's work, it took considerable time to clean the slate.

But in due time Tom admitted that he could not think of anything else that needed attention; so during the balance of the evening they just rested.

In the morning they made a few simple preparations looking to the great event of the day. What one needs most of all, when about to start out after a grizzly, consists of a cool head, steady nerves, and a gun on which he can always depend. The harder this latter shoots the better; and if he can carry sixteen cartridges in the magazine, it will not be too many, for they are about the toughest beasts to kill on the face of the earth, barring none. And there have been hunters willing

to declare that some grizzlies can carry off as much lead, and still live right along, as would wind up the earthly career of a dozen lions or tigers.

So about the only thing the boys did was to look their guns over carefully, and make sure they had an abundance of ammunition along, together with such other things, like matches, hunting knives, and the like, as they were accustomed to carrying with them.

The day was everything they could wish; indeed, the weather seemed to be doing its best to behave. Felix used to say that it was trying to coax him into making another lone trip, so that it could suddenly veer around, and show him the other side of the picture. But he was not at all anxious to go wandering off again; and while Tom did not joke him about the matter, he was of the opinion that the events of that previous experience had sunk deeply into the mind of his chum.

Having made all preparations, therefore looking to pushing a vigorous campaign against the grizzly, if they were lucky enough to find him home, the boys shut the door of the dugout, and departed.

Felix looked back toward the old shack with something like affection.

"We haven't been here very long, Tom," he remarked, "but do you know, I've begun to just love that old place. And when I'm far away, perhaps at home in the East, let me tell you, many a time I'll just shut my eyes, and see it as we do now. Yes, and I'll never hear the crackle of a fire but what I'll be sure to picture the two of us sitting there, busy at our work."

Tom looked pleased.

"I'm right glad to hear you talk that way, partner," he remarked, earnestly, as he too glanced fondly back over his shoulder. "She's a homely little old shack, and sure not much to look at; but somehow or other she seems to suit me O. K. And when you say you'll always remember our days and nights up here in the Rocky Mountain country, you're just echoing what's in my mind. I never had a chum like you; and I never expect to again. It was a bully good idea that brought you out to visit our ranch, the luckiest day in my whole life."

Tom was usually not given very much to sentiment, as his cousin knew; and hence, when he did speak his mind after this fashion, it might be set down that he meant every word of it.

The subject turned to other points of the compass as they walked sturdily on in the direction of the mountain pass. With such glorious surroundings there need never be any want of things to talk about. Even the grand air that greeted them with the rising of the sun was invigorating enough to deserve frequent mention; while the impressive scenery by which they were surrounded was surely of a character to evoke admiration.

In this manner, then, they presently reached the rougher country that lay along the foot of the uplifts. Having come this way before, when going upon their bighorn hunt, and also returning from the same, it was in a measure familiar to both boys; still, they saw it now under new conditions, and discovered many features in the landscape that had eluded them on the previous occasion.

"Here we are at the canyon where we came out," said Felix, as they found high rocky walls beginning to shut them in on both sides.

CHAPTER XVI—THE TERROR OF THE ROCKIES

"You must know," said Tom, as they climbed over some of the many rocky obstacles in the canyon, left there by the last flood, when some cloud-burst had perhaps filled it dozens of feet high with a raging flood, "that this grizzly bear hunting is different sport from bagging an ordinary black."

"I'd always understood that," Felix answered. "You see, I've read a lot about the thing, and I'm pretty well posted on that subject. I know that the grizzly is the toughest animal in existence, barring none, and that many hunters who have shot big game in other parts of the world give him the palm, when it comes to being difficult to down."

"And that's why," continued the Western boy, "men who would hardly hesitate to openly face a panther, or a pack of wolves, and meet them on the level; will even climb a tree when expecting an attack from a full grown grizzly; because it is well known that the old fellow can't climb worth a cent."

"Yes, I've read even that about him," remarked Felix. "He's sure the terror of the Rockies; and the Indians used to always reckon a brave the greatest ever, when he could show the claws of a grizzly, and prove that he killed the beast in a square stand-up fight."

"Whew! I should say so, Felix. Why, nothing could tempt me to try such a fool game as that. When you see what awful claws the old fellow has, and the frightful muscle back of them, you'll

understand why it's never looked on as a piece of cowardice to get up in a tree, and then dare him to come on. Chances are even then, that if the tree is only a sapling, the bear'll drag it down, and get his man."

"Are you trying to throw a scare into me, Tom?" laughed the other.

"Oh! not at all," replied his cousin; "only I wanted you to know that as we're only a couple of boys after all, we had ought to take as much precaution as most old hunters would, when out to stalk a grizzly bear."

"That means climb a tree, I take it, eh, Tom?"

"Well, it would be wise; and my father would say it was the right thing to do," went on the ranch owner's son, firmly.

Felix frowned, as though there was something in the proposition that somehow went against his proud soul. And seeing this, his cousin was only the more urgent in his appeal.

"Remember, you promised me that you'd do anything I said in this game, Felix!"

"That's right, I did, and I will, Tom; but you don't know how mean it makes me feel to think of getting up in a tree, and then daring the bear to come on; only to fill him full of lead as he accepts the challenge."

"Oh! I can understand all that, my boy, and it does you credit; but after you see that monster at the foot of the tree, stretching himself, and shaking it in his mad effort to get at you, after being wounded a dozen times, you'll agree with me that anybody would be a fool to try and meet such an enemy on equal terms, when, if his rifle missed fire it would all be over with him."

"But this rifle never misses fire!" declared Felix. "All the same, I suppose I'll have to do it, though under protest. But see here, Tom, weren't you telling me just the other night about seeing some of your dad's cow punchers having a bully old time throwing ropes over a grizzly that was caught on the open, and badgering the old fellow every which way, before they pumped him full of lead? How does that agree with what you're saying now? Are cowboys braver than old hunters, that they take such chances?"

"Well, you must know that every one of us was mounted on a fleet pony; and that though the bear chased after us in every direction, he couldn't catch up. Then they got their ropes to flying, and he was rattled, so that before you could count fifty he had as many as four lariats holding him. When he tried to go one way he was dragged over by the other three ropes. And when they had had all the fun they wanted, they shot the old Mountain Charlie. Oh! no, a cowboy on his bronco is a different sort of a fellow from the time he's afoot. You just bet he couldn't climb up in a tree any too fast, if ever he met with a grizzly, and wounded him, when in the mountains."

"Oh! well, that makes it easier for me, I suppose," said the reluctant Felix; "but all the same it galls some."

"I don't see why it should," remarked Tom. "Just look back a little, and you'll see me taking a mean and cowardly advantage of that black I got, stepping up when he was sliding down that tree, and shooting him while his back was turned, so to speak."

Then Felix laughed a little, as though he might be convinced.

"I guess you're right, Tom," he observed. "It just occurred to me that when the wounded buck had me held up in the tree a prisoner, I was only too glad to fish up my Marlin, and give him his dose. Of course I didn't climb that tree in the beginning; he tossed me up there."

"Well, I don't suppose you could induce the grizzly to try that same thing; but if he did, you'd think it all right then to plug him, would you? I rather guess it don't amount to much difference after all, Felix, whether you climb first, or get pushed up a tree. The whole fact of the matter is, that a man isn't in the same class as a big buck or a wounded grizzly, when it comes to muscle; and he's just got to fall back on guns, and trees, and such, to even things up."

"Consider it settled then, Tom; I'll climb," concluded the Eastern boy; and with this his chum seemed content.

They were getting deeper into the mountains all the while, and Felix could even see where they had started to climb when heading upwards on that other occasion at the time they went after bighorns.

And Tom led the way over some of the same ground. It was more familiar to them now, and they did not have the same difficulty as before. Indeed, Felix remembered in many instances just where to place his foot; or to reach up and seize on a projecting knob in order to pull himself upward.

He began to look curiously ahead, wondering just where it could be that Tom had sighted the head of the grizzly thrust out, as the animal surveyed the descending hunters, who were bearing fresh meat. Indeed, he really wondered why Bruin had not seen fit to follow after the scent, and

make them drop their packs, or else fight for the spoils on the spot. Tom, upon being asked declared that ordinarily such might have been the programme of a grizzly, that fears nothing under the sun, in either the human or the animal kingdom; but that possibly His Majesty, as he called the beast, may have recently dined; and when one has no appetite, it seems the part of folly to go to any extraordinary exertion to secure food.

"But he may be on edge today, just the same," he added, after giving this information in answer to the question of his cousin.

"I hope so," replied Felix. "If I just do have to climb a tree, and ask a bear to step up and be shot, I want to see him at his worst. That's the only thing to give me an easy conscience."

Tom only smiled.

He had a pretty good idea some of these gallant notions would undergo a decided change in his chum before they were done with this business.

Five minutes later he remarked quietly:

"We're nearly there, Felix. Hold up a bit, and get your breath. Look up, and see if you can notice where that seam in the rocks has a black look."

"Oh! I get that, all right, Tom; is there where you saw his head sticking out?"

"That's the place; and chances are we'll find a regular trail leading up to the mouth of the den. What I'm going to look for the first thing is the tree. In hunting a grizzly that's an important part of the game; unless you happen to have a gully in front, that no bear could cross over. I've known of a good many hunters coming out here to get the hide of a grizzly; and they told my father that while the idea of doing such a thing struck them at first as cowardly, after they'd had a look at the monster they meant to tackle, the only thing that bothered them then was about the size of the tree. It seemed to them that they wanted one as tall as the redwoods in California."

Felix chuckled at this, but made no further remark. He had noticed that Tom no longer talked in his natural voice, but whispered. Even this circumstance seemed to add more or less to the gravity of the occasion. It told of hovering danger, and the need of ordinary caution, if they did not want to arouse the sleeping dragon, and have him rushing wildly out to assail them, before they were good and ready to give him a warm reception.

Tom kept on looking carefully around him every chance he got, as they pushed on slowly. Felix knew the wisdom of this, and that he would be doing the right thing to also get his surroundings firmly fixed in his mind, before the grand circus began. There could be no telling how much need of this there might be before the little mountain drama closed in the death of the bear.

He discovered in the first place that there was an occasional tree in sight, not of any great size, but with a trunk that would baffle any ordinary animal to bend down, Felix thought.

As the grizzly could not climb, a perch in one of these would place the hunters out of danger, and they could proceed to accomplish their work as they felt inclined.

How the bear was to be coaxed out, and to the tree, Felix of course did not as yet know; but he was quite willing to leave this to his chum. Tom understood all about the ways of grizzlies; he had heard them discussed since childhood, and seen many of the species brought in by hunters; for since they are a serious menace to the raising of cattle, there is a price on the head of every grizzly known to have his haunt within miles of a ranch.

Tom was moving about now, and appeared to be scanning the rock at his feet eagerly. Undoubtedly he was looking for the well worn trail which, he had told his chum, he expected to discover, leading upward toward that dark spot in the rocky wall, where, according to his figuring, the animal's den had its yawning mouth, although as yet they had not actually looked into it.

So Felix stood there, waiting, and holding his gun in his hands, wondering what he might be expected to do should the grizzly appear unexpectedly from some other quarter, heading toward his den.

And possibly because Tom had impressed the necessity of a tree so strongly on his mind Felix even made sure that there was one of these growing close at hand which he believed might be scaled in a hurry if there arose any need.

He saw that his companion was now examining the ground more closely than ever; and there was that about his manner to tell that he must have made a discovery of some sort.

A few seconds later the Western lad arose to his feet, and his face shone with satisfaction as he turned toward his friend.

"It's here, just as I said, Felix," he whispered; "and from the signs I'm pretty sure the old fellow is right now squatted in his den. Things look all right to me, and the next thing is to coax him out. Like you, I only hope he's hungry; but no matter whether he is or not, he's just got to come, and

that's all there is to it."

CHAPTER XVII—WHEN MUSIC WAS PLAYED OUT

Like a general arranging his plan of campaign, so Tom looked around him, up at the place where the den of the monster was believed to be, and then in search of the available tree.

"That's where we ought to perch," he remarked, pointing to a spot close by. "We can each have a tree, which is really better than both getting up in the same one; for while he's trying to get at me, you can pump him full of lead. I'm only going to dip in here in a case of necessity, because I want you to say you got him all by yourself."

"Up a tree," muttered Felix, disconsolately; but his chum paid no attention to the half protest, being satisfied that time would vindicate his course.

"Now, there are some trees up yonder, closer to the den, and they would answer in a pinch, if we had to run for it," Tom went on to remark.

"I don't just get on to what you mean," remarked the other; "I thought you expected to climb up, fix a comfortable seat, and then ask him to step out, and get acquainted."

"But perhaps he won't come," retorted Tom. "You never can tell about these grizzlies. Some days they're ready to just rush out, and tackle a whole army. Then again they have to be nearly dragged out, they're so full, and so lazy. But once you get 'em stirred up, they're always the fiercest ever."

"Do you expect to go up there, then, and have a look in?" asked Felix.

"We might have to, if he won't come when we start to shouting," answered the other. "Let us only get a peek at his nose, so you can touch him up, and I give you my word there won't be any trouble about coaxing him. You'll hear a roar that'll just about make your blood run cold, and then we've got a fight on our hands you'll never forget."

"But see here, Tom," urged Felix, "suppose, now, we go up there poking around and just when we're in a fix where we can't back down, the old rascal heaves in sight down the trail. He'd have us in a lovely hole now, wouldn't he? Then I guess we'd have to make it a stand-up fight. Trees wouldn't figure in it that time, eh?"

"But I'm dead sure he's in his den," declared the other.

"How d'ye make that out, Tom?"

"Why, see here, there's some dirt where he goes up and down. You can see that he's just worn a path with the many times he's gone in and out. Now, look close, and I can show you several prints of his big feet, with the claw marks sticking out ahead. And they all point *toward* the den, showing that the most recent tracks are the ones he made going in! Get that, Felix?"

"Sure I do; and I must say it looks just as you figure it all out, Tom; and if that's the case, our old chap is at home, all right."

"Then let's move up closer," said the other. "On the whole, I reckon we'll use the trees that lie up yonder. We can see into his hole from there, which we couldn't do down here."

They started to advance, slowly and cautiously, keeping a wary eye up in the quarter where danger lay. But nothing occurred to give them a start, and presently the boys had reached a point where they could see that Tom had hit the truth when he said the dark spot on the face of the cliff's base must be the entrance to the grizzly's den.

"That's where he enters, is it?" said Felix, looking closely at the aperture that simply yawned darkly before them, with the rock hanging overhead.

"Yes," Tom replied; "when he heard us talking, that other time, he must have walked over to this spot, where he could poke out his head, and look down."

"You don't see anything of him around, do you, Tom."

"Never a sign," came the answer. "Chances are, he's fast asleep inside."

"And now, do we pick out our trees, and squat in them waiting, for him to show up?"

"We'll see if a little music will coax the old gentleman to show his nose. Which tree do you want, Felix?"

"Don't see much choice between them; but I suppose I might as well take this, because it seems to be a trifle closer to the den than the other," replied the boy from the East, indicating his selection.

"But it's smaller in the bargain," complained Tom; "don't you think you'd better let me have that one?"

For answer the other commenced to climb; and as there was nothing else to be done Tom followed suit. He knew that Felix had a stubborn streak in his make-up; and in fact he liked him all the better for it, because, without such spice, in Tom's mind, a fellow would be like cake without the ginger in it, flat and commonplace.

"Well, here we are," commented Felix, after he had fixed himself comfortably, and raised his rifle to his shoulder several times, as though wishing to make certain that he could cover any advancing enemy without difficulty.

"How does it suit you?" asked Tom, grinning.

"Oh! I've sat on worse seats, one of 'em a wasps' nest," replied Felix.

"All right. Now, what'll we sing?" continued the other.

"Sing?" echoed Felix.

"Yes, to coax our grizzly to look out. Strike up any old song you like, and if I happen to know it, I'll join in; I can do that anyhow, because our audience ain't going to be particular. Fact is, the worst noise we make, the more chance of his coming out in a bad temper."

"All right, just as you say, Tom," laughed Felix, falling in with the humor of the idea.

Accordingly, Felix began to sing some school song, at the top of his voice, and his chum joined in with a pretty good bass. They went clean through with a verse, and roared out the chorus in good style, although Felix was laughing so hard at the end that the effect was terrific.

"If he can stand that howl, he's equal to anything," the latter remarked, as they finished; "see any signs of our friend yet, Tom?"

"Sorry to say I don't," replied the other; "though that ought to have fetched him hurrying out, to see what lunatic asylum had broken loose. Hit up another verse, my boy, and give him all the variations you can."

So they went through with it, yet there was not the first sign of the grizzly.

"That's queer," remarked Tom, when after they had completed their duet, not a single thing occurred; only the gaping mouth of the den mocked them, with vacancy behind it.

"Don't fancy the tune, perhaps?" suggested Felix, humorously.

"That might be so. The old fellow might have his favorites. Can you give him a change, Felix, something more solemn like. He must have a weak spot, if only we could hit on it. Strike up 'Plunged in a Gulf of Deep Despair,' or something that thrills you the same way."

Accordingly, as he liked to be obliging, and the situation appealed to his fine sense of humor, Felix did start a song that sounded very much like the "Dead March of Saul." Tom added all the touches possible; and had anybody chanced to be in the vicinity he must have thought he had struck a camp meeting.

"How's that?" asked Felix, when they had finished.

"Simply elegant, take it from me. Queer that we haven't thought to sing a little while we sat around the blazing fire nights," declared Tom.

"Well, if we did much of that sort of thing, we'd soon go hungry, Tom."

"Think so?" chuckled the other.

"Every animal would take to its heels, and never come within miles of our shack again," asserted Felix.

"Strikes me it don't seem to have any effect on *one* animal I know of, and that's our big friend in the hole yonder," Tom declared.

"Perhaps after all he isn't at home," his chum remarked.

"I'm dead sure he is, in spite of the fact that he doesn't show up," said Tom.

"Then grizzlies must be lacking in a musical education, that's all I can say," Felix observed.

"Sorry our efforts to amuse don't seem to be appreciated," Tom went on to observe with a grin. "Shall we try one more? Do you know, I think something inspiring, like 'Dixie' for example, might stir him up. Suppose we give him that, and follow with the 'Star Spangled Banner.' If one of those don't bring results, why something else has got to be done, that's flat."

Felix, entering into the spirit of the occasion, held his gun as though it were a guitar which he was picking; and presently, after a few extravagant motions, broke out in the invigorating strains of the well known Southern song, that in times of old, when the armies of the blue and the gray faced each other in battle array, did so much to inspire the latter to plunge into the fray.

But then, this was not a Southern bear; and at any rate, the music produced no result save to amuse the singers.

"Well, I must say he's a hard customer to please," laughed Tom.

"Or to make mad either," remarked Felix. "Why, after hearing how we murdered that noble tune, I should think any self respecting bear would rush out, foaming at the mouth, and proceed to rub the assassins in the dust. He just goes on snoozing, and paying not the least attention. Shall we give it up, Tom?"

"Well, let's try if he's got any patriotism about him. Give him one stanza of the other song. If that doesn't make him look out, then we'd better put our horns away, and quit singing. We're dead failures as a drawing card, seems to me."

"You were right," observed Felix, a few minutes later, when, after they had done their level best rolling out the chorus, "And the Star Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave, o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave," not a single sign of an encore did they receive.

"He don't seem to mind it in the least," remarked Tom, grimly. "Perhaps now the old fellow may be stone deaf. I should think he must be, to stand for all that stuff, and never whimper once."

"But that couldn't be," declared Felix, "because he must have heard us talking that other time, when you saw him peeking over at us. I'm not so sure as you are that he's in just now."

"Well, here goes to prove it," said Tom, as he made a move as though intending to leave his tree; but when Felix also started to vacate, the other called out: "No, I want you to stay just where you are, and keep tabs on the opening. If you see the first sign of anything moving, you want to give me the tip right away, so I can run back to my tree."

"But what are you going to do?" asked Felix anxiously, for if there was anything dangerous to be accomplished, he did not see why Tom should not let him share in the enterprise.

"Just wait and see," was all the satisfaction he received. "And don't forget you gave me your solemn word to obey. I'm the captain of the ship just now, and the crew has got to do what the skipper says."

"But if you're going to take chances, I'd like to be along, Tom."

"Only one of us can do the little job; the other's business is to stay there, on guard, and give the alarm if anything shows up. And I've detailed you for that part of the programme, Felix."

So, unwilling though he was, the other had to sit there, rifle in hand, and try to figure out just what Tom meant to do, in order to bring the inmate of the den to his front door, in case he was at home.

The ranch boy had been keeping his eyes well about him, and knew just where he could find what he wanted. First of all, he crept up to the frowning aperture, and looked in. Felix felt his heart in his throat, so to speak, with a sudden fear lest his chum take a reckless notion to enter that gaping hole; he was even on the point of calling out, and begging Tom not to incur such unnecessary chances, when he saw the other moving away again.

Evidently, whatever reason Tom had for going there to the mouth of the cave, he was perfectly satisfied; for, as he caught the eye of his chum, he nodded, and made suggestive motions, as if to say that he was more than ever convinced that the animal was somewhere inside, though possibly at some distance back from the opening.

Felix now watched him with deepest interest. If he had figured on how Tom meant to draw the grizzly forth, he could not have struck on the right answer to the question, for suddenly he gave an exclamation, and said as if to himself:

"Now, what's he gathering wood for? It sure doesn't seem like time for our noon lunch? And what would Tom want to camp here for in front of the place? Now he's got an armful, and—why, of course, he's going to stack it up in front of that hole. That's the ticket, Tom; smoke the old rascal out?" and he ended in calling aloud to his chum.

The other only turned, and nodded his head as he made his way cautiously up to where the black hole gaped silently. Here he tossed his bundle of small wood, and then went back for more.

Felix had gripped his gun a little nervously while all this was going on, ready to take up his part of the game should occasion arise; but even when the brush from under the trees was thrown down, the inmate of the den did not deign to show himself, and offer any objection. Felix concluded that there must be a mistake, and that the grizzly was away from home; or else the old fellow was so gorged with a recent dinner that he just could not bother moving, because some

foolish boys chose to play pranks outside of his house.

Now Tom had returned with a second armful of wood, which he piled up on the other lot. Then Felix saw him stuffing a crumpled piece of newspaper under the pyramid, and he understood why Tom had put that in his pocket so carefully before leaving the shack.

Everything seemed ready, and he wished Tom would hurry, and come away from his dangerous quarters, for the bear might rush out at any second. So Felix breathed a little easier when he saw the other moving off, and noticed little spirals of blue smoke beginning to weave themselves in and out of the piled up brush and wood.

CHAPTER XVIII—A HARD CUSTOMER

"That's bound to settle it, one way or the other!" declared Tom, after he had climbed up into his tree again, and resumed his former position of squatting in a crotch, gun in hand.

"You mean about his being home, or away I reckon?" remarked Felix, who was feeling fifty per cent easier in his mind, now that his chum had carried out his little programme without being rushed by the bear.

"That's the idea," replied the other, keeping his eyes on the spot where the fire he had kindled was burning fairly well.

"Plenty of smoke, if there is only a little flame," observed Felix.

"I wanted it that way; and so I picked out some green stuff that would make a whole lot of smell, but not burn too lively, you see, Felix."

"Whee! I got a whiff of it right then; and say, if our friend is at home, and can stand that smell, why, he's welcome to stay where he is the rest of the winter, for all of me. It beats anything I ever whiffed," and the Eastern boy held his fingers to his nose while speaking, to emphasize his words.

Tom grinned, as if he really felt proud of that fire. A hot blaze would have caused very little smoke; and after all might not have accomplished the end they had in view.

"Wait!" he said, with a chuckle; "you'll see."

A few more minutes passed. Felix noticed several things, for he had come to pay considerable more attention to small matters than before meeting this cousin who had been brought up in the open, and imbibed many of the instincts that govern the actions of Indians and veteran woodsmen, among which observation stands at the head.

He saw, for instance, that the breeze was blowing straight toward the face of the cliff where that hole lay; and as it came in rather strong gusts now and then, it undoubtedly served to carry pretty much all of the pungent, highly scented smoke into the yawning aperture.

And Felix also knew that it would drive this odor a long way ahead into the recesses of the cave. If Bruin were at home, he could not help getting a whiff of it presently, and smoke always serves to make a bear both suspicious and angry. Where shouts of derision, and the singing of songs had failed, a more silent and powerful agency would succeed.

And it did.

One, two, three more minutes passed away. Then Felix heard something that gave him a thrill, and caused him to turn quickly in the direction of his comrade, perched in the adjoining tree.

Tom nodded his head, and simply remarked:

"What did I tell you? That fetched him; and he's waking up!"

It had undoubtedly been a rumbling roar that came to the ears of the two boys. Bruin had at last become aware of the fact that there was smoke rolling into his snug retreat; and instinct warned him that smoke never came without there being some sort of fire in connection with it.

Again they heard the heavy thrilling sound, and it was now more distinct than before, which told them that the grizzly must be advancing hurriedly toward the opening. Doubtless this was the only exit he had; and alarmed lest he be caught in a trap by the fire, he was now shambling along, bent upon seeking the open air before it was too late.

"Ready!" called Tom.

Hardly had he spoken than Felix saw the smouldering stuff at the mouth of the cliff den thrown violently aside, as a huge bulk almost filled the hole. Then there came into view the very largest grizzly Tom had ever seen, as he hastened to declare, with boyish vigor.

"Wow! but ain't he just a jim dandy, though? Big as a house nearly; and say, did you ever see a

madder thing in all your life. He hears me talking right now, because he's looking this way. Bet you his eyes are that full of smoke he can't see as well as he might, and he's rubbin' 'em with his paws, would you believe it? Hey! you, we made that fire! What d'ye mean upsetting it that way? Think you own the earth, don't you? Well, come on, and have it out with us. Dare you to knock the chip off my shoulder! Bah! you're nothing but a big bag of wind! Who cares for you?"

Just as though the grizzly could really understand what Tom howled at him, he immediately started toward the trees where they were ensconced.

"Oh! my, ain't he mad as hops, though?" jeered Tom. "Look at him shake his head, would you, Felix? He knows we did it, and he means to let us understand he won't put up with such a racket as smoking him out. Now, don't be in too big a hurry to start firing. Take my word for it, you'll have plenty of chances to fill him up with lead before he caves under. Shake the limb, and holler at him, if you want him to pay attention to you."

That was just what Felix did want. He was afraid that the bear would know Tom had started the fire, and ignore the other boy. So he too commenced to taunt the old fellow, as boys know how to do so well.

The result was just as Tom had predicted; for having his attention thus diverted, the bear now changed his course a little, and came directly toward the tree that bore such strange fruit in the shape of the second human enemy.

What the grizzly thought, at being so rudely disturbed in his after-dinner nap by all this shouting, and the smell of smoke in his den, Felix could only guess, for by his actions alone could the animal tell.

There certainly could hardly have been a madder bear than that one was. He acted as though bent upon teaching these impudent boys a much needed lesson. When they felt like playing any of their annoying tricks, they had better keep away from his particular sleeping place, if they did not want to get hurt.

"Get one in before he reaches your tree!" called out Tom; who seemed to know what the tactics of the grizzly would be after this had occurred, and that possibly Felix might not be able to fire with such sure aim, once his haven of refuge were being violently shaken, as it would be.

So the Eastern boy, who had all along kept his Marlin leveled at the advancing grizzly, sought to aim in a vulnerable spot; or at least what would be reckoned as such with any other wild animal than a grizzly or an African rhinoceros.

When he fired he heard the most dreadful roar that ever assailed his ears. But to his surprise, the bear did not stop his advance in the slightest degree, no matter how the small bullet "mushroomed" when it came in contact with his body.

Felix hastily got his gun in shape to shoot again, and this he was able to do before the animal succeeded in reaching the tree.

Another roar, more wicked than the preceding one, told that this bullet had also lodged in the body of the fierce brute; but as before, it failed to have any appreciable effect on the grizzly, save to arouse his slumbering passions the more.

"Hold on tight, now, Felix!" shrilled Tom, no doubt itching to use his gun, and ready to do so if he thought the situation began to look desperate for his chum. "He's going to try and shake you out of that tree like a wild plum! Get a firm grip and don't try to shoot yet awhile, till he quits!"

The big animal reared up on his hind quarters, and as he did so Felix could see signs of blood about him, which told that his bullets had not missed connections, even if they did not bring him down.

The beast endeavored to reach the form of the boy, whom instinct told him was responsible for his wounds; because he connected that puff of smoke, and sharp report, with the acute pain that racked him.

Of course Felix was perched too far up in the tree for that, and the most the eager grizzly could do was to come within six feet of him.

Then the monster hugged the tree as though about to try and ascend. Indeed, the boy above felt a spasm of fear lest this was just what he meant to attempt; and as he had seen black bears climb, he found it hard work to believe that the grizzly was deficient in this accomplishment.

All at once the tree began to sway violently to and fro, with increasing speed. Having been warned in time, Felix had secured himself against being thrown out, although at one time he began to actually fear lest the savage monster below might succeed in breaking the tree off at its base; he was so big and powerful that few things of an ordinary nature would be beyond his capacity. And now that he was enraged to the very limit, doubtless he might accomplish wonders.

But fortunately that did not happen, and Felix breathed a sigh of relief when, after testing his

strength for a minute or two, the grizzly backed off, to look up at him out of his wicked little eyes, and growl as he dropped back upon all fours again.

"Bully boy!" shouted Tom. "He wanted too, all right, but he couldn't quite spell able. Now, try him again, Felix; and watch out for one of his rushes. Quit shooting when he tries that racket, and just hold on. You can wear the old critter out; and say, that gun does send 'em in like fun. I could see him quiver all over each time you pulled trigger. But you'll get him yet, don't fear!"

Just as Tom said that last word Felix fired a third time, trying to pick out a better place to send his bullet. Truth to tell he was more than anxious to finish the game old bear, which he knew must be suffering horribly already.

Although he was confident that he planted his lead in the identical spot he wanted, still the only appreciable effect was to send the monster furiously at the tree again.

Never did Felix expect to see such baffled fury. After finding that all his terrible strength was not sufficient to shake the clinging boy from his perch, or bear down the tree under his weight, as he had doubtless done many a stout sapling, when wishing to feast off berries growing beyond his reach, (if grizzlies do partake of such things, as their black cousins have always done,) the baffled animal actually started to gnaw at the bark of the tree, as though in this manner he believed he might weaken it sufficiently to attain his ends.

"Now, watch your chance, and give him another!" cried the deeply interested Tom, who was closely observing every little phase of this strange fight, so one-sided Felix thought.

As he had by this time put his hand to the plow, Felix did not mean to back out. He must have that grizzly pelt, if it took every ounce of ammunition he carried on his person. And since the beast was so badly wounded that he might eventually die anyway, he ought to be finished.

But somehow Felix did not feel as though he would ever want to go through the experience again; not that he was afraid; but it seemed too much like butchery to him, with the chances always against the animal. And those feelings did him credit, too, even if they marked his decline as a big-game hunter, for as such he could not consider that his quarry had any right to live at all.

This time when he fired he believed that the bear was weakening. Tom must have thought along the same lines for he immediately called out in an exultant tone; for Tom being a stockman's son, only considered the grizzly as a possible enemy of his father's herds; and on account of previous losses from a similar source he bore the grizzly tribe only the hardest of feelings.

Again did the wounded beast try to vent his fury upon the inoffensive tree, biting and clawing at it in the utmost fury, as though possessed of the one insane idea that in some fashion it had conspired to keep the object of his anger beyond reach of his teeth and claws.

Between spells Felix sent in a fifth, and then a sixth shot. After that he would have to reload, since he had exhausted the contents of his gun's magazine, with the grizzly still on deck, though weakening.

"He's got his, I reckon!" said Tom, as the other was working with feverish haste to insert another set of six cartridges through the opening meant for this purpose, as well as to eject the empty cases after firing. "Better give him another to wind him up, though, Felix!"

The seventh shot did bring the unequal combat to an end, for the gallant old grizzly rolled over, and became still.

Tom immediately dropped down from his perch, and went over to where the bear lay.

"Now, if we only had the old kodak along, we could take your picture, standing with one foot on the fallen game!" he remarked, as Felix joined him.

"I'm glad we haven't," said the other, simply and Tom looked a bit puzzled, although by the way he nodded his head presently it was evident that he had something like an inkling of the truth.

"Well, he *was* a game old sport, all right," he declared; "and that pelt will be something worth while. Reckon I'll have to get you to help me take it off, because it's too big a job for one fellow."

Of course, after a little while, Felix got over the sensation of regret in connection with the shooting of the monster. He realized that a grizzly is really of no known use in the world and must be a source of great annoyance to any stockman; so that he need not regret having slain this fellow.

But one would be quite enough for him. Somehow, the sport was not all it had been cracked up to be. Possibly it was because they had been compelled to locate in those trees; but then, Felix learned afterwards that those who hunt grizzlies frequently, have so great a respect for their savage fury, as well as their ability to carry off lead, that they think it no disgrace to place themselves out of the animal's reach before opening the battle.

It was late that evening before the two tired Nimrods reached home; but at any rate the last great ambition on the part of Felix had been attained; he had killed a grizzly, and all unaided.

From that time on he felt that he would be satisfied to pursue the even tenor of his way, and not allow vaulting ambition to draw him into fresh fields of adventure after big game.

CHAPTER XIX—BREAKING CAMP—CONCLUSION

After that the days just glided along, each one seeming to bring something in its train that would occupy considerable of their attention.

Tom kept up his trapping, and Felix became himself deeply interested in learning more and more about the habits of the sly little bearers of the prized fur; for which there was such a growing demand in the world of civilization, that men were visiting hitherto unexplored sections of the world in search of new supplies, since the old fields showed signs of giving out.

He spent some time in the partly frozen marsh, examining the homes of the muskrats; and after that had Tom tell him all he knew about the ways in which the mink lived, both at home, and when abroad searching for food.

They had no trouble in getting all the venison they wanted; and once, when their larder began to decline, on account of a spell of bad weather, who should come to the dugout but Jo Crow, bearing the choice portions of a young buck, which his father had sent over to the Little Doctor, as a slight token of his gratitude for services rendered.

Just as though that small debt had not been wiped out, Felix remarked, when he was so hospitably received in the Crow cabin, fed, and then assisted in recovering his stolen property.

But then Tom knew that young Jo must have fond recollections of that smooth tasting Java, and he made sure to treat the boy to many cups of coffee at each meal, while he stopped over night with them.

And when, after a heavy storm, they found a chance to make the first use of the snow shoes they had brought along, the boys proved that they knew how to utilize the advantages this means of locomotion gave them over the animals of the forest.

Once Tom, when on his way back from his traps, was pursued by a pack of hungry wolves; but he had what he was pleased to term a "picnic" with them. He would stop and let them come within a certain distance, when several shots from his repeating rifle lessened their number considerably. After that he would start on again, all the while slipping fresh cartridges into his gun so as to have a full equipment, in case of an emergency.

As the animals still kept after him, Tom repeated his former tactics, and knocked a couple more wolves over. He would have liked to keep dotting the snow with their forms, because he hated the breed violently; but by this time they scented trouble, and hauled off.

So Tom even went back, and secured the pelts of the last two, adding them to the lot he was taking home.

"You see," he remarked to Felix that night, as they sat around the fire, speaking of what had happened during the day, "that's a great advantage one gets by knowing how to use snow shoes. The varmints floundered through the drifts, while I just skipped over them as if I had wings. Why, I could have circled the pack at times, if I'd wanted. And they were savage with hunger, all right, too, because only for that they wouldn't have kept so hard after me."

"But I'd have thought they'd stop to make a meal off those you shot at first," remarked Felix.

"I see you're on to wolf habits, all right and good," chuckled Tom. "Well, a bunch of 'em did hold over, to have a sort of wake with the remains; but I guess the rest of the lot felt that it wouldn't go around. They kept after me, that's all I know. P'raps they had their minds set on a nice tender juicy Tucker for supper; but if they'd known how tough he was, they might have hauled off sooner, and two of the bunch would be alive yet," and he glanced at the skins he had stretched on the big frames meant for such purpose.

"And next winter perhaps those same hides will be keeping some chauffeur warm, as he guides his car along Fifth Avenue in New York," said Felix, humorously.

"That's putting 'em to good uses, anyway," remarked the wolf-killer, calmly.

Only the next day Felix had a chance to see for himself what a great advantage those same snow shoes gave a hunter over his quarry. The snow was deep enough to come to his knees on the level, and besides, in many places it had drifted considerably. Then there had come a slight thaw, that caused the surface to become coated with ice. Through this the small hoofs of a deer would break with every jump; while the boys could glide along on the broad netting of their snow shoes without disturbing the crust.

Thinking he would take a little turn around, Felix started out while Tom was off looking after his traps again. He did not intend going any great distance from the shack, and hardly expected

finding game; but then there was never any telling when one might run across a deer, for they were fairly plentiful.

And hearing a floundering noise some distance ahead, he suddenly discovered a full grown young buck making off at full speed.

Under ordinary conditions it would have been the utmost folly for Felix to even dream of overtaking that alarmed deer; but he wished to test the speeding qualities of his snow shoes.

The tables were turned by the presence of the deep snow, since the deer could not run as fast as ordinary, while the powers of locomotion on the part of the boy had been trebled, at least.

And so he had by degrees gradually come up on the fleeing buck. The animal was snorting, and plunging desperately in the endeavor to get away; just as though he realized that the mortal enemy of his race was close behind. Breathing so rapidly that it looked like clouds of steam arising from his nostrils, he kept on in his wild run.

When Felix had gained a position where he could see the exposed flank of the deer he came to a sudden halt. And no sooner had his rifle spoken than there was an end to the chase, for the buck was floundering on the snow.

Those were days neither of the boys would ever forget. But the weeks were slipping past, and they began to figure on the time, now close at hand, when they must break camp, and set their faces once more towards civilization.

It would be with more than a little regret too, even though both of them must rejoice to again see the dear ones who were at home; for they had certainly enjoyed this vacation period in the Rockies more than words could tell.

Tom had looked over his trophies, and decided on what few they wanted to take away with them. These were, for the most part, pelts calculated to remind them of certain adventures which had befallen them in their camp life.

For instance, there was that bobcat skin, which had once been sported by the animal whose vicious growl had greeted them on that first evening of their arrival at the dugout; then Felix had the pelts of the wolves he had shot, after they had given him such a lovely little scrimmage, before letting him get to the shelter of the shack with his burning torch; and the big grizzly hide, that occupied a place of honor in the collection also.

Besides, there were a few choice mink skins; a fox that Tom particularly wanted, because he had tried for three weeks to trap the wary Reynard before he managed it; and some muskrat skins that Felix wanted to show his folks at home.

The bighorn head adornment had been beautifully prepared; and together with the head of the big buck, must be carried on the sledge they meant to drag behind them, when they went out of the mountain country, headed south.

All the remainder of the catch, together with quite a supply of store provisions they handed over to Charley Crow and his boy Jo, when at the invitation of the inmates of Old Sol's shack the two came over to see them for the last time.

And how that dusky boy's eyes did dance when he saw that among the lot there chanced to be some of that glorious coffee, that had quite taken his heart by storm.

Felix was not one to easily forget; and later on he did send out a bulky package to his cousin Tom, which, upon investigation was found to contain three good reliable Marlins for Charley Crow and his boys, just as hard hitting guns as the one Felix himself carried, only of much less value, because the material was along different lines. And besides, there were a dozen cans of pulverized coffee for Jo, that would be sure to make him the happiest Shoshone Indian boy on or off the reservation.

They looked their last on the old shack one morning when the weather seemed to promise well for a day or two; said goodbye to every familiar object, and with one farewell glance around, as though to secure a mental photograph of the picture to do them for all time, turned their backs on the spot that had given them the very finest time of their lives.

Felix knew that he had benefited greatly from his outing, and indeed he felt fully able to return home with the New Year, to resume his studies. Those happy weeks spent in camp had brought the ruddy hue of health back to his cheeks, just as his wise father had expected would be the case; his step was elastic; and his eye bright; while as for appetite, he declared he would eat them out of house and home, unless a curb were put upon it presently.

As the snow was in pretty fair shape, they made good progress that day, and hoped by another to be where they could take advantage of the frozen river to finish their journey on the ice, bringing up at the ranch of Tom's father.

This programme was faithfully carried out, even though it did turn bitter cold that night, so that

they had to keep a fire blazing every hour, in order to ward off the fate of being frozen stiff; for their camp happened to be exposed to the breeze more than Tom would have liked, had he been given any choice.

Arriving at the river, they met the man who had come from the ranch under the former agreement. He had been waiting two days, and made himself as comfortable as the conditions allowed; and it was the smoke of his fire that directed the two boys to his hideout. As he had a pair of snow shoes with him, they were able to continue their journey along the snow-covered surface of the frozen river; and in due time reach the ranch.

Here the sight of their trophies, and the story of all that had befallen them during their two months' stay in the country of the Rockies interested the cowmen greatly, and for several nights they plied the boys with innumerable questions concerning the various happenings that went to make up the experience.

When Felix arrived home early in January, his father was delighted with his improved appearance; and doubly proud of the spoils which the young fellow displayed, to supplement his stories of the events clustering around the camp in the big game country.

And it was easily arranged that later on he should again go out to be with his cousin; indeed, as the good doctor had no need to continue his practice, since he was well supplied with this world's goods, he declared it to be his intention to give up his business, and accompany Felix, for he had always wanted to see what ranch life was like.

Toward Spring a letter came from Tom in the faraway Wyoming country, saying that he had had a chance to get up to the reservation, where Charley Crow and family were finishing the winter, taking the splendid present Felix had sent with the party; and that there was great rejoicing in the Crow family. Those wonderful guns, as well as the enticing coffee from Java's distant shores, quite overwhelmed the astonished Shoshones, and they never knew when to stop sending their thanks to Felix.

But as the boy remembered that occasion, when, after wandering through the snow forest, hungry, cold, and weary, he sighted the smoke of that humble cabin of Charley Crow, and what a warm welcome had awaited him there, he felt that after all he had only begun to pay back the great debt he owed these dusky people of the fur country.

The End

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOYS; OR, CAMPING IN
THE BIG GAME COUNTRY ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

**Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™
electronic works**

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project

Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a

format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this

work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.