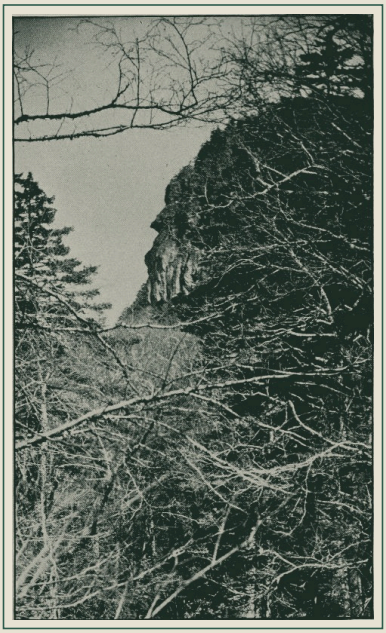
WAKING UP IN
BOONE

SHEPHERD M. DUGGER

THE BALSAM GROVES OF THE GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

A Tale of the Western North Carolina Mountains, 1892



EARLY EXPLORERS · NO. 6

SHEPHERD M. DUGGER

THE BALSAM GROVES OF THE GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

A Tale of the Western North Carolina Mountains

The story in five chapters,
Banner Elk, 1892



WAKING UP IN BOONE
Boone, North Carolina

The text is the story, chapters I through V, of Shepherd M. Dugger, *The Balsam Groves of the Grandfather Mountain: A Tale of the Western North Carolina Mountains* (Banner Elk: Shepherd M. Dugger, 1892; printed by J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia). It was transcribed from the Internet Archive's scan of a copy in the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and errors of the machine reading were corrected by hand.

Not reprinted: the preface, the poem "The Land of the Sky," and chapters VI through IX, which describe the railroad and the hotels of the region and reprint an extract from André Michaux's journal, a table of altitudes, and Zebulon B. Vance's account of the death of Elisha Mitchell. Two of Dugger's footnotes refer the reader to those chapters and are left out. His third footnote is kept. Dugger's spelling, punctuation, and dialect are kept. The verse was run together in the scan, and its division into lines follows the meter and rhyme.

The pictures are plates from the 1892 edition. Cover: *The Sphynx of the Grandfather Mountain, near Grandfather Hotel,* from a photograph by Nat. W. Taylor of Elk Park. Title page: *Vase with Rhododendron and Azalea.* Frontispiece: the author. Chapter openers: *The Banks of the Watauga; Coaching on Grandfather Mountain; Leaning Rock on Yonahlossee Road; Rollingbumb (Harrison Aldridge) Trapping a Bear in the Pass of Yonahlossee;* and *Linville Falls.* Back page: *Eseeola Inn.* Text and plates are in the public domain in the United States.

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The roads, streams, fountains, places, mountains, and distances are real.

SHEPHERD M. DUGGER
Preface, 1892



Shepherd M. Dugger. Frontispiece of the 1892 edition

INTRODUCTION

Shepherd Monroe Dugger was born in Johnson County, Tennessee, in 1854. While he was an infant his family settled on a farm where the town of Banner Elk now stands, a few miles west of Grandfather Mountain. He studied at Weaverville and at an academy in Jonesboro, Tennessee, read law at the University of North Carolina in 1880 and 1881, and in June 1881 became the first superintendent of schools in Watauga County. John Preston Arthur's *History of Watauga County* (1915) says that Dugger and his brother-in-law, J. Erwin Calloway, built the Grandfather Hotel, half a mile from Linville Gap, in 1885. The hotel burned in 1914.

In the late 1880s the Linville Improvement Company bought a large tract that included Grandfather Mountain and began to build the resort town of Linville. The company offered a prize of one thousand dollars for a book that would promote the region. Dugger entered *The Balsam Groves of the Grandfather Mountain.* It did not win, but his biographer in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* says it was the only entry the judges thought promotional enough to publish. Dugger published it himself at Banner Elk in 1892, and on the Fourth of July that year he gave a lecture at the company's new Eseeola Inn. The book was reprinted in 1895, enlarged in 1907, and issued in a fourth edition in 1934. Dugger died in 1938 and is buried in the Banner Elk cemetery.

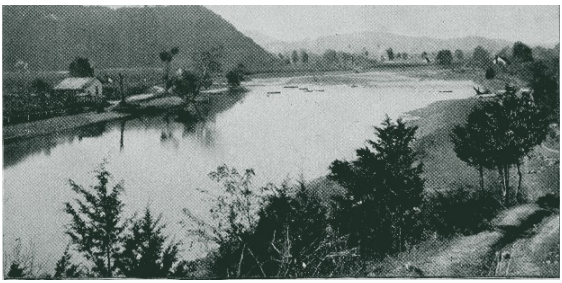
The first edition opens with a story in five short chapters, set in July 1860. The rest of the book describes the railroad, the hotels, and the mountains of the region. This volume reprints the story complete. A party from Valle Crucis spends a night in a one-room cabin on the

upper Watauga, climbs Grandfather from Linville Gap, rides down the Linville River to a plantation house in the valley, and holds a wedding at the foot of Linville Falls.

In his preface Dugger says the story is "founded on facts." The roads, streams, springs, and distances are real. The Reverend William West Skiles is also real. He was an Episcopal deacon who kept the mission at Valle Crucis from the 1840s until his death in December 1862. Dugger says the hunter Rollingbumb is a portrait that thousands of mountaineers would recognize, and the caption of one plate gives his name as Harrison Aldridge. He also says that his description of the Salmer place on the Linville will move a gentleman then living in Richmond, Virginia. He does not say whether the other characters had models.

Dugger wrote the love scenes in the ornate style of popular fiction of his day, with classical allusions and long comparisons. The comic scenes are broad, and the mountain people in them speak in dialect as he wrote it down. His descriptions of the mountain are plain and exact: the trail from Linville Gap, the cold spring under the cliff, the balsam and spruce forest, the way balsam was gathered from the blisters in the bark, and the way a bear trap was set. The text is printed without change.

Some names have changed. Mitchell's Peak is Mount Mitchell. The Pilate is Pilot Mountain, and White Top is Whitetop Mountain in Virginia. The Old Field of Toe became the town of Newland in 1911, when Avery County was formed from parts of Watauga, Mitchell, and Caldwell counties. Banner Elk, Linville, and Linville Falls are now in Avery County. Dugger gives the height of Grandfather as 5,996 feet. The modern figure for Calloway Peak, the highest point, is 5,946 feet.



The Banks of the Watauga, 1892

CHAPTER I

THE GRANDFATHER

A lowly thatched cottage in humble attire,
With chimney adaub and a broad open fire;
A string for its latch-key, three strangers within,
And far away moved from the city's loud din.

The lay of my land and the lays of my story are commingled in the zigzag windings of mountain topography.

The general direction of the Blue Ridge is from northeast to southwest, but on a sublime spot in North Carolina it swerves and runs north for the distance of three miles, and then turns again by an acute angle towards its terminus in the cotton-fields of Alabama.

The intelligent reader will now understand that the part of the Blue Ridge generally spoken of as the "South Side" here faces the west, and what would otherwise have been the "Western Slope" of the great water-shed catches the golden gleams of the rising sun.

This digression in the backbone of the Appalachians is also characterized by a deep saddlelike depression called "Linville Gap," in the centre of which the forest is now broken by a verdant meadow about a half a mile in length from east to west, and half as broad.

The pommel of this elegant land-saddle, rising to the south, forms the beautiful dome of Grandfather Mountain, five thousand nine hundred and ninety-six feet above the foam of the sea; while the rear of the equestrian fixture rises into the less elevated but equally pleasing heights of Dunvegan, culminating in twin towers of stone mantled with ivy and plumed with ferns.

From the beautiful green turf on the eastern declivity of the mead referred to gushes and trickles the first streamlets of the Watauga, which, being of the Indian vernacular, is said by some to mean "Beautiful River," by others, "River of Islands," and by still others, "River of Reeds."

On the western slope of the sweet-sodded meadow, and not more than a stone's cast from the sparkling source of the Watauga, rises the rippling river of Linville, which took its name from a family of that nomenclature who once occupied its banks.

The Cherokee name for Linville is Eseeola; and, while those conversant with Indian lore have not defined the word, it probably had its origin in the great cataract of that stream, now designated as "Linville Falls."

These two crystal rivers are so kindred at their sources that each could easily be turned into the other by a ditch; and yet they flow in opposite directions and retreat into different climes,—the Linville passing through the mingled waters of the Catawba, the Wateree, and the Santee to the Atlantic Ocean, while the Watauga finds its way through the channels of the Holston, the Tennessee, the Ohio, and the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Watauga, as it rushes and dallies to the northeast, rumbles and tumbles over ledges and boulders, under boughs of laurel and pine, receiving its pellucid tributaries from the green glades of the Grandfather on the right, and from the Ginseng and

Crawley region, in the foot-hills of Dunvegan, on the left. At the end of three precipitous miles from its rise, its united torrents have lost their leapings and blended into a sweetly murmuring stream that splits in twain a gradually widening valley, at the upper end of which once lived a man by the name of Tom Toddy, who obtained his bread by husbandry, and his meat from the spoils of his gun. His lone log cabin stood on the left bank of the "Beautiful River," leaving space between for a narrow yard and the dim road outside.

One lovely evening in the month of July, 1860, when Sol was shooting his last golden arrows across the mountain-tops from his rosy couch beyond the horizon, two men and a lady, well mounted on good steeds, called for admittance at this humble cottage.

Mr. Toddy knew the older gentleman to be the "Good" William West Skiles, an Episcopalian clergyman who kept a school at Valle Crucis (Vale of the Cross), ten miles below on the Watauga.

Of the two whose faces were not familiar in that quarter, the gentleman was Mr. Leathershine, who had been expelled from an institution of learning in the eastern part of the State, and afterwards received by Mr. Skiles at Valle Crucis, because it was supposed that in that sequestered spot there was no land for the culture of wild oats.

The beautiful young lady, Miss Lidie Meaks, was one of the faculty of St. Mary's School, in the city of Raleigh. She was a medium-sized, elegant figure,

wearing a neatly fitted travelling dress of black alpaca. Her raven black hair, copious both in length and volume and figured like a deep river rippled by the wind, was parted in the centre and combed smoothly down, ornamenting her pink temples with a flowing tracery that passed round to its modillion windings on a graceful crown. Her mouth was set with pearls adorned with elastic rubies and tuned with minstrel lays, while her nose gracefully concealed its own umbrage, and her eyes imparted a radiant glow to the azure of the sky. Jewels of plain gold were about her ears and her tapering strawberry hands, and a golden chain, attached to a timekeeper of the same material, sparkled on an elegantly rounded bosom that was destined to be pushed forward by sighs, as the reader will in due time observe. Modest, benevolent, and mild in manners, she was probably the fairest of North Carolina's daughters.

The host received his three guests with the words, "We are poor, but you are welcome to such as we have." When they had dismounted and come near the door, Mrs. Toddy apologized for the size and inconvenience of the domicile by saying, "Come in, if you can get in." But Mr. Skiles, knowing the embarrassment that strange company brings upon the culinary labors of a one-room cabin, replied that they would enjoy the breezes of the yard, and view the entrancing beauties of the great evergreen

Grandfather, to whose lofty summit they were going on the morrow.

In plain view, on the northern slope of the mountain, was the upright, stupendous profile of a man carved in rock and plumed with ferns, and in the furrows of his face, worn by the lapse of time, clung and crept the most beautiful flowers and vines. Pointing towards this figure with his cane, the minister said, "See the old man of the mountains; when that is silvered with frost or blanched with snow it has the appearance of great age, and hence the pioneers called it the Grandfather, and the mountain of which it is a part Grandfather Mountain."

"Between the old man and the high top," said Miss Meaks, "is a beautiful green tower, as if supported within by a column of stone."

"Methinks," replied the clergyman, "that is called the Haystack, from its marked resemblance to a mound of hay."

The dame, who was preparing supper over the open fire within, was listening with awe to the high-flown conversation without, and, as she drew a shovelful of glowing coals from beneath the forestick to put under the oven of bread, she muttered, "I don't know how to cook for 'big-bugs.' I've got nothin' fit for 'quality,' and I wish they'd a-stayed at home."

At this instant the attention of the party was attracted by a passing hunter, by the name of Rollingbumb, who, having some business with Mr.

Toddy, stepped into the yard with a great wild turkey swung under his arm by a withe, which, passing diagonally up his breast, formed a cross with the leathern strap of his shot-pouch that hung on the other side. He was a square-shouldered man, six feet tall, with a long firelock rifle on his shoulder, while from beneath his buckskin moccasins peeped some blades of grass, as if to complain of being ill-used. His face was round, with great facilities for a beard, though, like Julius Caesar, he never wore one. His high forehead was half obscured by a brimless coon-skin cap, having the beautifully ringed tail of the animal attached to the hinder part, where it hung down his back, and rolled to and fro at the will of a gentle breeze. He wore a Turkey-red blouse, in native parlance, "hunting-shirt," the same being drawn close about him by the long corners, which were tied together in front just below the waistband of his homespun pants. Such was the development of hair about his chest and shoulders, that it grew up and hung out over his shirt-collar in black profusion like a fringe. This feature of his person was so significant that a deaf-mute, who made himself understood by motioning, told that Rollingbumb had killed a bear, by indicating that it was done by the man with a hairy neck.

Mr. Skiles approached the hunter and asked to see his game, whereupon he placed his thumb under the withe and, passing it quickly over his cap, laid the great bird on the ground. The minister ex-

amined the graceful beard, which was twelve inches in length; the lady, spreading to full width the tail, found it ornamented with a border which, in the arrangement and brilliancy of its colors, was like a miniature rainbow; but Leathershine examined the shot which had entered one side and passed out on the other.

Rollingbumb, who lived but a mile farther down the Watauga, now equipped himself to continue his journey homeward; but, before taking leave, he said pleasantly, in his rude dialect, "Strangers, what mout yer names be?" Leathershine, speaking quickly for the party, said in reply, "They mout be Jones, or they mout be Smith, or they mout be Vance." Rollingbumb, being a man of native intelligence, and therefore understanding the import of the sarcasm, turned his hawk eyes upon the critic and said, in a firm voice, "I'm an unlearnt man; but if you fool with me, sir, I'll knock you as flat as a pancake."

Mr. Skiles, being mortified at the conduct of his student, took the hunter by the hand and expressed regrets, both for himself and Miss Meaks, that he had been thus insulted, while Leathershine sat upon a stump and looked "like the boy the calf ran over."

A few moments later, supper being announced, Mr. Toddy sat at the head of the table and his wife at the opposite extremity of the small but hospitable board, with her back towards the fireplace, which was in the east end of the cabin. The two more dis-

tinguished guests occupied the side next the open door, while Leathershine, seated in front of them, cast "a lean and hungry look" on the bear meat before him.

After a blessing had been asked, the host said, "Help yourselves;" and the hostess, in her course of apologies for the plain repast and the rude table furniture, said, "Poor folks have poor ways." The minister assured them that they should ever be thankful to the Master for such as their table afforded; and, indeed, he was right, for, in addition to the flesh of Bruin, it contained corn-bread, milk, butter, Irish potatoes, green corn, and that choice variety of honey gathered from the linden tree.

While the evening meal was being enjoyed with a hearty relish, the children, three in number,—George, ten years old, with his younger brother and sister,—waited by the fire, and sang in perfect harmony the beautiful lines below, which their mother had often sung to them as a lullaby. From the best information we can gather, these ancient stanzas were composed in "Merry England," and transmitted, through successive generations, from British soldiers who were captured during the war for independence, and settled in the new republic after the terms of peace were concluded.

A sitting one cold winter's night,
  A drinking of sweet wine,
A courting of that pretty little Miss
  That stole that heart of mine.

She is like some pink or rose
  That blooms in the month of June,
Or like some musical instrument
  That is newly put in tune.

Oh, fare you well, my dearest dear,
  Oh, fare you well for a while;
I go away, but I'll come back again,
  If I go ten thousand miles.

Oh, who will shoe my feet, my dear,
  And who will glove my hands?
Or who will kiss my ruby lips,
  When you're in foreign lands?

Your brother will shoe your feet, my dear,
  Your mother will glove your hands;
And I will kiss your ruby lips
  When I return again.

Oh, don't you see that turtle-dove
  A flying from vine to vine?
A mourning the loss of its own true love,
  As I shall mourn for mine.

In due time Mrs. Toddy replenished the dishes with warm food, and, before reoccupying her seat at the table, she set the ovens away from the fire, shovelled up the dead coals with which the supper had been cooked and threw them behind the back log, just prior to sweeping the hearth.

Subsequently the guests, together with the family, formed a social circle around the blazing logs, which were not uncomfortable, and yet not needed, except to light the conversation, in a domicile where lamps were not a part of the furniture.

Some inquiries, made by the strangers, about the fauna of the country led the host to relate rare hunting tales of his own experience, of which we will give only one, as follows: He said that several years previous to that time, while spending a night in the woods of the Grandfather, he used a venison ham for a pillow, first placing some dry leaves between it and his head to protect his cheek from the raw flesh. When the gloom of midnight had mantled his couch of moss in darkness and Somnus scarcely lifted his chest with breathing, he was ousted by sharp claws passing over his bald scalp. As he sprang to his feet and grabbed his gun, a panther, that had now stolen his pillow, screamed forth the signal of a victorious departure.

It was now time to retire, and the house contained but three beds, all of which were in one room, the only room, and generally occupied by the family. But in those days the ladies constructed temporary bed-chambers by taking two large curtains, each about the size of a counterpane, and either hanging them from the joists or supporting them on frames, one along the side of the bed, and the other at right angles to it across the foot. These were generally made of large-flowered calico, and decorated with such ruffles and laces as the wealth and skill of the times could employ.

Such luxuriant sleeping fixtures, however, could be afforded only by the "bon-tons" of log-house so-

ciety, who were sometimes classed by their jealous inferiors among the "bigbugs."

Mrs. Toddy was not a "bon-ton," but she rendered one bed private, nevertheless, by hanging up two quilts in the manner that curtains were hung by those who could afford them.

This sleeping apartment, in the northwest corner of the cabin, was occupied by four persons,—Miss Meaks and her hostess at the head, and the two younger children, with their feet in the opposite direction, at the foot. This economical mode of sleeping, by which the tapering ends of human anatomy are fitted together like the teeth of a shark, is still practised in some remote neighborhoods around Grandfather Mountain.

Another bed, opposite the first, though not so close in the corner, was on a poorly tenoned 'stead, which sent its old-fashioned turned posts up to an extraordinary height, and, being loose in its mortise joints, had twice wrecked with its occupants and fallen sidewise onto the floor. For this reason a low bed, that was trundled endways from beneath the one that was concealed by the curtains, was prepared for Mr. Skiles and his student. But when the minister was apprized of the arrangement, he evaded the young man by inviting Mr. Toddy to share his bed, saying that he wanted to tell his friends that he had slept with a hunter whose midnight pillow had been stolen by a panther.

This kind and complimentary invitation being accepted, the original sleeping plan was disorganized, and Leathershine slept on the perilous bedstead with little George Toddy.

An hour later, when a stray splinter about the smouldering fire caught ablaze and cast a glimmering light upon the log joists above, the sleepless dame was soliloquizing about the hazardous bed. "If Mr. Toddy had slept with George," thought she, "he would have turned himself cautiously on the mattress, and thus saved the 'stead from falling; but now it would be most sure to tumble with the young man, in which event he would think that the cabin had been overturned by an earthquake, while her own chum and the bed-fellow of her husband would leap from their slumber in fright."



Coaching on Grandfather Mountain, 1892

CHAPTER II

HOSPITALITY

The skies with luminaries shine,
Yet seven thunders roar;
Fatality her works design,
Through cycles evermore.

When George Toddy awoke in the morning, the sweet-scented breakfast was cooking in the ovens over the glowing coals on the hearth, and the great wood fire was sweetly roaring to the strong suction of the flue above.

The little birds carolling from the trees had invited the minister from the couch of his morning dreams; and he had gone from the house to view the saffron streamers from the rising sun, or to see the speckled beauties through the crystal waters of the Watauga, or to give the lady of the cottage room and ease of mind.

The young lady, who was now dressing behind the curtain quilts, soon emerged and washed in the wooden basin on the block outside the door, wiped on the flaxen towel by the inside of the threshold, smoothed her hair with the horn comb, and, careful to ask for nothing that the cabin might not afford, she only inquired where she would be least in the way, and then took a seat in the corner.

It was now past George's time to be up, but he had been dreading to crawl over his new and sleepy partner who was in front. The head of the bed which they occupied was towards the fire, and the door opened back against it. Between the foot-board and the wall beyond was a space of about three feet, which gave room for a tub that sat in the corner.

At length Leathershine awoke and, rubbing his hollow eyes, gave a sleepy groan. On his elbow

he raised himself and looked wonderingly at Miss Meaks, who kept her eyes steadily on the cooking. He now put on his "studying-cap" to solve the mystery of secret dressing under the one-room government, and the aperture behind the foot-board was selected as a place where that task might be successfully performed, provided he could land himself safely into it. So, leaving one cover on George, he rolled the rest up lengthwise on the front railing, leaving between a kind of trough, in which he lay full length on his back. Pressing his heels firmly against the straw mattress, and lifting his body with his hands, he drew himself forward, his knees going upward like a measuring-worm passing over a pair of trousers. One more measure and his long legs dangled across and beyond the foot-board.

While in this attitude, George discovered in the lower part of the under-garment that clothed the upper half of his person a large round hole, that seemed to have been made by an accidental fire in the laundry.

Leathershine was now in a position to pass safely over into the place by the tub where he could dress in seclusion; but when, in the zenith of his leap, his quick motion, exhilarated by high hopes of success, threw the hole over the bed-post, and as he kicked and dangled in the air, the bed wrecked, and all went thundering collaterally down to the floor.

Miss Meaks and Mrs. Toddy, thinking that a tree had fallen on the house, turned quickly and saw

Leathershine sprawling on his face with his palms extended. Mrs. Toddy, being conversant with log-cabin etiquette, ran out at the door, and Miss Meaks, catching on to the style, followed her example.

"Halloo, here!" exclaimed Leathershine, "is that the kind of chinch dens you sleep on?" said he, referring to the wreck.

"Help me set up the bed," said George, and, after he had repeated the appeal, the young man reluctantly assisted in replacing it upon its legs. The two now passed out of the door, and as they went towards the laughing river to wash in that clear, passing medium the ladies were re-entering the threshold of the cabin; and when they came near the hearth they discovered that the shock, created by the fall of the bed, had thrown from the chinks above the fire a number of articles, of which the pegging-awl was in the skillet of gravy, the hammer in the pan of cabbage, and the old man's last, being the mould of a very large foot, had broken through the lid into the oven of bread. Also, a lot of falling shoe-pegs had showered so thickly into the gravy and the cabbage that it was impossible to determine which one of those articles of food contained the greatest number of the wooden fastenings.

When the breakfast-table was ready to be occupied, the coffee-pot, which alone had escaped the wreck unharmed, sat on the floor beside Mrs. Toddy, who reached down and took it by the handle whenever the cups were to be refilled. At the close

of the repast, each person had left on his plate a nice little pile of pegs which he had picked from his teeth while masticating fried cabbage or bread overspread with gravy.

The host now took his firelock rifle from the rack, picked his flint, poured fresh powder in the pan, and then, placing the long hunting-piece upon his shoulder, started to guide his guests on the grand climb. While the flowers were yet cool with the dews of night and the long shadows of the morning were falling towards the west, the horses were being tied to the trees at the place where Grandfather Hotel now stands near Linville Gap.

Here their way was to the left by a rising foot-path, which was overhung with drooping violets and shaded with spreading boughs from evergreen and deciduous trees. Three beauteous miles through umbrageous leaves and fragrant wilds would take them to where morn casts her first queenly robe upon the mountain-top and Sol withdraws the last rosy curtain from the frowning rocks to his ocean bed.

When they had overcome two-thirds of the precipitous clamber, they came to a little benchlike spot of earth which was clothed with ferns, mosses, mitchella, and oxyria, and supporting a mixed growth of black spruce (*Abies nigra*) and balsam (*Abies Fraseri*), whose matted branches form a beautiful green canopy.

Looking east from this point, the old man of the mountains presents a bold and imposing figure, which in the magnitude and perfection of his features is superior to the Sphinx of the Nubian Desert, and always entrances the beholder into dreams of wonder and admiration. While Miss Meaks was admiring this mysterious profile, Leathershine offered her a large rhododendron bloom, which she received and fastened on her bosom with a pin. The young man, deeming that she wore it strictly for the sake of the giver, was seized with a sudden emotion which seemed to have no hope of reciprocation from a lady who was so far his superior both in intellectual and moral development.

The party now continuing their journey were soon confronted by a high, steep rock, which seemed to cross their way like a wall through which there is no entrance. At its base, however, the track turned to the right, and passing round by ascending curves and zigzags continued its course towards the top.

About midway up the cliff is an overhang like a cornice, below which the rock is perpendicular, but above this it retreats with the pitch of a Gothic roof. At the top of the upper half, rhododendrons annually hang out their scarlet florescent garments in gay profusion; but from the multiple crevices in the perpendicular part below grow beautiful grasses, ferns, and wild flowers, always kept green and moist by a little water escaping from above.

From the base of this cliff gushes and sparkles the coldest perennial spring, isolated from perpetual snow, in the United States. Its highest temperature is 42°, and half a pint from its unpolluted channel quenches the greatest thirst created by an exhaustive climb.

Our acquaintances were resting at this fountain, and, having no cup, they were drinking from a concave piece of bark pealed from an oval knot on a tree, when they saw two men approaching along the path by which they had ascended. The eyes of the unknown persons were steadily fixed upon the ground, for between the rocks of this particular place are numerous holes and crevices so dangerous to careless feet that every step requires investigation.

As they came into a spot of sunshine which fell through a narrow vista in the trees, the younger and better dressed of the two turned his eyes upward to see what part of the sky was then occupied by the glorious orb, when Miss Meaks discovered in his face what she thought to be the familiar features of a long-lost friend. The beautiful rhododendron bloom that embossed her bosom now rose and fell with a deep sigh that pushed forward the elegantly rounded prospect behind it; but when his brow returned to the shade of his brim, she doubted her impression, and said in silent soliloquy: "Impossible that he who knows not my love could be here. No more shall my heart leap and my lips tremble to the

deceitful refraction of light in woods like these. The warm palm I once refused will never return, alas! to reclaim me from my folly. Farewell, good-by, my Charlie; I shall never see you again until I drink the water of Lethe, and return from the Elysian fields not knowing that I ever did you wrong!"

The approaching couple had now come to a curve in the path which placed between them and the seated party the lap of a fallen tree and a little cluster of mountain maple, through whose tangled brush only glimpses of their moving forms could be seen. The one who was guiding the other now said, in a voice distinctly audible to those who were listening near, "The spring is under the big mossy rock before us."

"Ah!" rejoined the traveller, "when we get there, I will drink to her I once loved, but now only remember; and if the water is as icy cold as you say, it will be a most suitable beverage for the occasion; for then I will say, 'Here is to that cold heart that drove me wandering from my country; that stole the sweet sleep from my midnight pillow and gave me for it insomnia; the heart that charged me with all the flattery belonging to the untrue of my sex; and while this portion from the living fount of Grandfather shall quench the last smouldering spark of love for her that lingers in my bosom, may some messenger of the gods bear her the news that Charlie was true.'"



Leaning Rock on Yonahlossee Road, 1892

CHAPTER III

THE LOVERS

The rocks that brave the blasts of time
Without a pulse or motion,
Support the forms, reflect the sounds,
That tell the heart's commotion.

The words that close the previous chapter were understood by none of those at the spring save one, and she had changed her position to conceal some gracious drops that stole down over two roses that had thrice flourished and faded in a few brief moments. After the stranger had expatiated upon the destitution of his heart as set forth in the promised health, he hummed a love-tune, advanced rapidly, and suddenly emerged from behind the bramble not more than a rod from Miss Meaks. Here he raised his eyes, and drew back with shadows of confidence and doubt displacing each other upon his face as he tried to determine whether the form before him was really the object of his love, or her apparition. Observing on her part an inclination to rise, he advanced with an extended hand, and expressed his pleasure and surprise in a manner that could be appreciated only when accompanied by his noble person and voice.

He was a tall, commanding man, with a gracefully flowing moustache, aquiline nose, evenly set teeth, mobile chin, high forehead, and the elongated corners of his dark-brown eyes stretched away under dark brows around fair temples, from which beautiful black hair retreated above his ears.

The words that Miss Meaks uttered in return for his were only of that social cast which is characterized by the meeting of friends, but their confiding tone and feeling delivery inspired new confidence in his "heart's attorney," and added fresh fuel to

that smouldering spark which no draught could ever have extinguished.

Introductions now went round, revealing the fact that the arrivals were Mr. Charlie Clippersteel and his guide, Mr. Wiseman, the latter being from the foot of the great Roan, some twenty miles to the west. They had camped the previous night about two miles from the source of the Linville, on the banks of that stream, where they had left their blankets and a light tent.

The six persons now united at the spring were within the border of one of the most beautiful, the most bewildering, and the most extended evergreen forests in the whole South. Here the tall and densely growing balsam and spruce extend their branches in united clusters that support the snows of winter and exclude the rays of the summer sun. Beneath these are many ancient trunks of fallen trees which are completely concealed, and only revealed by a soft, deep, bright, yellowish green moss growing over them and following their shapes. Up through this rich carpet, from their roots in the decaying wood, grow delicate ferns and young balsams of a fern's height and higher that wave and tremble to feeble breezes that stray off from the stronger ones that moan in the trees above. This robe of green not only mantles the old logs, but spreads its soft covering unbroken from one object to another, hugging the spreading bases of the trees, and clothing the rising rocks and sticks that help to form the extending

landscape. This lovely scene extends up and over the mountain, broken only by great cliffs equally beautiful in the flowers of their crags, until it covers an area as large as the city of New York. Such were the exquisite beauties along the winding step-way by which our acquaintances were about to continue their ascent.

Mr. Skiles and the two country gentlemen now led the way, but were met and detained by a most wonderful man, while the three younger persons still lingered at the spring, where Leathershine was puffing with jealousy and whiffling around like a "fice in high rye." The reunited lovers gave him no recognition, and, observing that his "cake was dough," he joined the minister and the guides, who were entertained some distance away by what seemed to be a resurrected giant of prehistoric ages.

When Clippersteel observed that those in front were about to advance, he said: "Miss Lidie, I offer you my hand, as in the days of yore, to help you up the rocks and steps of a path which, my guide informs me, leads through flowery beds and mossy dales like these."

"I accept your offer with thanks, Mr. Charlie; but you are not ready to go: you have not drunk the health you promised," she said, handing him the concave bark with a smile.

"Pardon me, my friend," said he; "it cost me four years in a foreign land to travel to the frigid zone of my heart, where the snows that ended the summer

of love were lighted only by the flitting meteors of the borealis race. But your unexpected presence here to-day, which I could not avoid, has placed that icy region again under the burning sun of the tropics. Already the snows have gone, and their place is occupied by the water lily, perfumed with the spices and the cloves and spreading its sweet petals upon my bosom. How can you drive such love as mine from its mortal habitation and leave my bosom empty with all but wondering pain? My heart is thirsty, and you are its living fountain. Let me drink and water a desert that will soon flourish with the green bay-tree and the balm of Gilead."

"O God," she cried, "pardon the weakness of woman," and burying her face in his bosom, her lachrymal lakes overflowed and anointed his garments with drops that were to him the myrrh of the soul. "It is pursuit," she said, "and not possession, that man enjoys, and now therefore the tender regard you have for me is ready to be cremated upon the pyre of my broken spirit, and nothing but an urn of ashes left to its memory."

"Never," replied Charlie, "never until God himself is buried, and the dark marble of oblivion erected for his tombstone, shall my person or my angel forsake fair Lidie Meaks."

When Clippersteel had thus vowed his eternal love and his lady had confessed her devotion, their friends had gone far out of sight up the mountain. The gorgon who had lately met them and excited

their curiosity was a native by the name of Skipper John Potter. He was exercising the occupation of gathering balsam of fir, which, being a much valued medicine, I will acquaint the reader with its production, as follows: The resin of the balsam tree (*Abies Fraseri*) is carried in the bark, and, when this becomes overcharged with the aromatic substance, it deposits its surplus just beneath the surface in small protuberances called blisters, because they resemble little bladders caused by fire or overwork upon the hands. These vary in size from a mere pimple to a bulk as large as a common marble, and the balsam is collected by tapping the larger ones at the bottom with a knife, and bringing a pressure to bear upon the top, while the thick fluid runs slowly from the incision and goes down into a little tin vessel, whose lip is firmly pressed against the bark below.

All over Grandfather is a scattered growth of black spruce (*Abies nigra*) which the natives call tamarack. It is so much like the more abundant balsam that casual observers pass them for one and the same; but the resin of the spruce is carried partly in the wood; is not medicinal, and does not blister the bark. Also, the needles of the foliage are flat and of a yellowish-green cast, while those of the balsam are round and emerald.

Skipper John Potter was a large man, six feet and a half tall, and his feet, which were always bare in summer, were huge and long in proportion. His big bony toes when fairly spread by his weight were

connected near their base by red membranes like those of a web-footed fowl. The garments of his person consisted of white homewoven linen pants a span shorter than his legs; a shirt of like material, with a broad turn-down collar, and a home-spun jean coat of a very short cut, as if made for the convenience of wading high water or to overtop the weeds of the forest. A retreating chin, a head flat on top and sheltered by a hat plaited of rye straw, characterized his upper extremity. His long, straight back was always leaned forward from a starting-point at his hips. He had evenly set teeth; and when he laughed, his mouth spread to his ears; while two good-humored streaks, one extending from each corner of the great vocal orifice, passed round and met on the back of his head. When he talked, it seemed that the thunders had been endowed with the powers of speech. He was too wise for a fool and too ignorant to create an offence. His knowledge was so limited that the lack of it was by him unmissed. He often misunderstood the meaning of words, and when he attempted to reproduce one that he had heard a superior use, he generally missed it entirely and got one of similar sound. For instance, when he heard John Smith say that he was going to have his land transferred, he told Tom Jones that John Smith was going to have his land transmogrified.

Those whose admiration had been excited by Skipper John had prevailed on him to go with them

on the journey; and as they toiled up the mountain, while Clippersteel and Miss Meaks were yet behind, Mr. Skiles placed his hands upon his hips and, leaning against a tree, exclaimed: "Oh, my spine!" when Skipper, embracing the opportunity to recommend his medicine, said in tones of thunder: "Ef you'll take a dost or two of my balsam, you'll have no spine."

The happy couple behind overtook those in front at a cliff called Harmon's Rock, because it gave shelter to Maiden Harmon, a respectable citizen of Sugar Grove, when on his annual trips to Grandfather to replenish his brain with inspiration and gather balsam for family physic through the ensuing year. From this point, a five minutes' walk took them to the top, where the radius of the entrancing panorama is led on by mountains, and hills, and vales, and streams, and crags, and ravines, until, like the stars that form the milky way, they lose their identity and blend into a circle of ethereal blue. So extended was the view on that beautiful day that the heavens lost their concave form, and stretched away over blue domes and fading valleys to a horizon in the dim distance of the inseparable land and sky. The beautiful clouds, the ships of the ethereal sea, in whose electric berths the giant thunders were sleeping, now sailed only mountain high over the valleys, presenting a side view to the tourists; and, as they caught the rays of the sun in their rigging or allowed his beams to pass through between them to

the beautiful earth below, the landscape was leopardized for miles around with a moving robe of light and shadow.

While the party was admiring the exquisite beauties of the scene, Clippersteel asked the more intelligent of his hearers if they had ever heard of the interesting diary kept by Andre Michaux when, in the eighteenth century, he journeyed in the Highlands of North Carolina. Both Mr. Skiles and Miss Meaks, and even our acquaintance, Leathershine, answered that they knew nothing either of that journal or its author.

"Andre Michaux," said Clippersteel, "was sent to this country in 1785 by the royal government of France to collect seeds, shrubs, and trees for the royal gardens; and at that time seems to have had an earnest loyalty. But after the French revolution broke out he evidently became a very zealous republican, a true Frenchman, as will appear from his ardent language upon the spot now occupied by ourselves; for thus reads a portion of the journal," said he, producing a memorandum:

"'1794. August 26.—Started for Grandfather Mountain, the most elevated of all those which form the chain of the Alleghanies and the Appalachians.
"'1794. August 27.—Reached the foot of the highest mountain.
"'1794. August 28.—Climbed as far as the rocks.
"'1794. August 29.—Continued my herborization.
"'1794. August 30.—Climbed to the summit of the highest mountain of all North America, and with my companion and guide sang the hymn of the Marseil-

laise, and cried, "Long live America and the Republic of the French! Long live Liberty! etc."'"

"But was he not mistaken as to the highest mountain?" inquired Mr. Skiles, profoundly.

"Indeed, he was in honest error, for the range of the Rockies was not known to him; and in those days, when the unknown heights of the North Carolina mountains were compared by the effect of their environments upon the aesthetic mind, or by the length of the rivers that trickle from their feet, Grandfather was conceded to be fair Luna's nearest neighbor and friend. In truth, there can be no better proof of its surpassing beauty, to-day, than the fact that a man of Michaux's taste gave vent to his greatest enthusiasm upon its summit; for he had travelled in Persia; he had seen the Alps, under whose frowns Caesar battled with the Gauls; he had journeyed from the White Mountains of New Hampshire to the Blacks in North Carolina, and his eyes had been cultured to the flowers of the king's garden."

Just at this instant a buffeting breeze lifted Skipper's light hat from his crown and gave him a lively southward race for its recovery; and every time that one of his big feet went forward, the heel of the other flew up behind and hit him on the hip, while his great hands were extended forward in pursuit of the structure of cereal straw.

Our two lovers, Lidie and her Charlie, now descended the northern slope of the mountain a short distance to an immense cliff, and occupied one of

the four or five natural steps that round off to the dangerous brink. This perpendicular rock, which faces the west, is about four hundred feet high, and in its crags grow ferns, and wild pinks, and on its brow clusters and blooms the little evergreen shrub, *Leiophyllum buxifolium*.

Here Lidie found in the recent resignation of her heart visions of roses blooming about the door of her future mansion, with humming-birds nestling in the vines, and the voice of him she loved falling upon her ears like apples of gold in the acoustic halls of peace. And how changed seemed the fortunes of him by her side, who but an hour ago was whirling in the storm that had blown him to despair. Yet all in his bosom was not peace. Even the narrow rulings of destiny gave him pain, for, had he not been delayed by the rains of a single day, he would never have won the diadem of his soul. "O great Jehovah," thought he, "can my happiness be real, or am I dreaming? If I am in the deceitful arms of Morpheus, may I never awake to sustain the regrets of my fancy; or, if I have fallen from some high cliff, where, bleeding with unconscious wounds, my dying hour is sweetened with these visions, may that hour last, and the red current flow throughout the countless ages of eternity."

His muse was here broken by a gentle female voice that said, "What cold wave of silence is passing over your brain?"

"I was tracing the wilds through which I came," was the reply.

These words were the prelude to a low, sweet, musical conversation, ornamented with smiles and softened by the tenderest emotions of the human heart.

No one to eavesdrop was near, and the trembling ferns could never blab the touching story; but the envying Echo, who steals the pathos from all sweet words and returns only the hollow bones of speech, deserves our notice.

> "She was a nymph, but only now a sound,
> Yet of her tongue no other use was found
> Than now she has, which never could be more
> Than to repeat what she had heard before.
>
> "This change impatient Juno's anger wrought,
> Who, when her Jove she o'er the mountains sought,
> Was oft by Echo's tedious tales misled,
> Till the shy nymphs to caves and grottos fled.
>
> "Her flesh consumes and moulders with despair,
> And all her body's juice is turned to air;
> So wondrous are the effects of restless pain,
> That nothing but her voice and bones remain.
>
> "Nay, even the very bones at last are gone,
> And metamorphosed to a thoughtless stone;
> Yet still the voice does in the woods survive;
> The form's departed, but the sound's alive."

Those conversant with mythology will remember that "Echo by chance met Narcissus in the woods, and so admired his beauty that she fell in love with him, courted and embraced him; but he broke away from her arms and fled. Narcissus afterwards fell so

deeply in love with his own beauty that the love of himself proved his ruin. His thirst led him to a fountain, whose waters were clear and bright as silver; and when he stooped to drink he saw his own image, and gazed at it, insomuch that he fell passionately in love with it. He continued a long time admiring this beloved picture; but at length the unhappy creature perceived that the torture he suffered was from the love of his own self.

> "'My love does vainly on myself return,
> And fans the cruel flame with which I burn;
> The thing desir'd I still about me bore,
> And too much plenty has confirm'd me poor.
> Oh, that I from my much-lov'd self could go;
> A strange request, yet would to God 'twere so.'

"In a word, the power of love was greater than he could resist, so that by degrees he wasted away and consumed, and at last, by the favor of the gods, was turned into a daffodil, a flower called by his own name."

The hapless ghost of Echo now lurked in the solid face of a cliff that was neighbor to the one occupied by our lovers, and, envying them because she was not Lidie, and Charlie her long lost Narcissus, she mimicked their conversation as follows:

"Down in yonder lonesome woods is a flowery bed of green, where I am soon to be tried by the ordeal of forbearance. Already on that sacred spot nature's tear-drops are falling thick and fast; for, in presence of those on yonder height, how can I give thee the cold 'good-by' that they will expect, or the

warm 'adieu' they would not understand? Oh, gracious Pan, thou god of the beautiful woods, conceal thy uncomely form by the spring on our return; blow the sweet melody of thy cithern through the trees and entertain our companions till we pass on to that solemn shade. There, under the sighing pines on a mossy carpet kneeling, I will lay the blue-veined violets of confidence on the roses of my truelove's promise, and, binding them with the tendrils of the woodbine, will leave her to join her friends in that lonely dell and my guide to overtake me by the brook of Klonteska."

"Not so, Charlie; if you depart so soon from the paths I travel, your vows and your actions will not seem to flow in the same gentle stream."

"Pardon me, my dear Lidie; my words to you have always been tuned to the emotions of my heart, and there is no discord in the sweet chime of faith and feeling which I now enjoy. Fain would I have withheld my promise to meet a comrade traveller on the great Roan to-morrow, could I have foretold the events of to-day. But the cause of my delay, sent in a note by my guide, will obtain his pardon, for, on the night before we clambered together the eternal snows of Mont Blanc, I dropped into the ventricles of his sympathizing heart the secret of my wanderings. When we beheld the wild flowers growing so near the glacier (*mer de glace*) that they leaned their almost frozen corollas against the accumulated ice and snow of ages, I said, 'These delicate blossoms

are sickly from the low temperature which the glacier imparts; and as they woo in vain this congealed mass to melt and warm them into a brighter existence, even so did I implore the angel of my joys to enter the gate ajar of my heart and give me a life of bliss by her side.' Only yesterday he knew that the sweet home of love once in my bosom, where all the happy dreams of life had been cherished, was but an empty urn, from whose future every hope of joy on earth had vanished."

"Oh, speak not thus, Charlie; disturb not the clear, sweetly flowing river of the present by turning in a troubled current from the stream of memory."

Here the conversation was broken by the remainder of the party arriving from the top, and as Mr. Skiles neared the awe-inspiring brink he drew back and exclaimed, "Oh, what a dangerous abyss!" Whereupon Skipper John informed them "that Rollingbumb once killed a bear on top of that 'abscess,' and, tumbling him over the brink, all of his bones were broken by the fall."

All were soon seated upon the rock, where they looked well to the west, and, while talking of the many attractive objects in that direction, they determined that, as Mr. Skiles was out on a week's vacation, they would continue their journey to Linville Falls, which are from Linville Gap about eighteen miles.

From the base of the great precipice which they occupied the mountain continues its descent by

steep declivities, and so precipitous are they that a person might stand at many points and grasp the topmost branches of trees that have their roots in crags far below. A bewildering mile this rugged green extends, and then scatters and terminates in the deciduous trees of a fertile slope that leads down to the Linville Valley. Here the landscape is dotted with the conical tops of giant hemlocks (*Abies Canadensis*) towering above and spreading beneath, so as to partly obstruct the view of the intervening birch and completely obscure the undergrowing rhododendron.

Through this tangled mass lay the first five miles of the narrow road soon to be travelled by the party on their way to the beautiful cataract.

Retracing their steps to the top, Clippersteel gave his guide a liberal sum to start, without further delay, to the Roan with an appropriate note to his friend.

They now turned upon their heels and took a last glance at the dim and distant outline that once bounded the vision of Michaux, who had long since passed to silence and pathetic dust in far-off Madagascar.

To the southwest of Grandfather, the great Blacks —the highest American mountains east of the Mississippi—present themselves in a line of blue domes at right angles to the vision, and often support the clouds that empty their liquid burdens or gather new lading upon their lofty crests. The renowned

Mitchell's Peak is the highest of this group, and on its summit the Rev. Elisha Mitchell, D.D., is buried; and whether the virgin snows mantle his grave with their trackless undefiles, or æolian breezes whisper between it and smiling moons, or the serene sunshine steals the noontide zephyr from the umbrageous firs, or the great storm king anchors his sable ship of gloom upon it, and turns loose the guns of thunder from its fiery portals, he sleeps the same under the sod of eternal fame.

From the top of Grandfather almost the entire northwest is crossed by the long line of the Clinch Range, through whose depressions, in beautiful autumn weather, glimpses can be seen of the more distant mountains in Kentucky and West Virginia.

To the northeast is White Top, on which three States—North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee—corner and join. It is a massive oval mountain, showing the side view of an oblong bald, with a background of evergreen on land slightly more elevated than that denuded of trees.

The most distant mountain seen in the east is the dim Pilate in Stokes County, North Carolina. It culminates in a hazy tower of stone, which in shape and proportion, as presented by the visual angle, is like a large gravestone set in the top of an Indian mound or a knoll.

Midst the cotton-fields of South Carolina rises to view the immortal King's Mountain, on whose summit, October 7, 1780, the gallant Americans, under

Colonels Campbell and Sevier, killed and captured the entire British command under Ferguson.

Near the south end of the Blacks, the beholder observes the bald of Hickory-Nut Gap, three miles beyond which is Round Knob Hotel, where the already beautiful scenery is greatly enhanced by the most intricate railroad contrivance in the South.

The reader will understand that I have mentioned only a few of

> A thousand mountains and a million hills,
> With intervening rivers and rills,
> And tints that blue and clouds that fly,
> Within the scope o' the natural eye.

Our acquaintances, having completed the panorama a second time, now turned their backs upon the summit with such parting compliments as "Good-by, Grandfather!" "Farewell, ye sweet groves! I will love you when I am far away." Arriving at the spring, the concave bark, full to the brim, was circulated with free politeness; and Clippersteel, being the last to drink, raised it to his lips and said, "Here is to De Leon, who searched for this 'fountain of youth,' which he never found; may his soul be at peace and the sympathies of all mankind with his memory."

They soon descended to Linville Gap, and, after an appropriate parting with the guide from the Watauga, Mr. Skiles said to Mr. Clippersteel, "Get on my horse; we will ride and walk alternately, and neither of us will be tired at night." The person thus

addressed declined at first to set the devout man on foot, but being assured by him that he would not be discomfited by the change, the offer was accepted. Mr. Skiles, however, was prevailed on to ride first, and Leathershine having hastened to mount Miss Meaks, as if he owned that right by previous attendance, all went down the merry Linville.

Miss Meaks ventured to ride by Mr. Skiles, but Leathershine was so goaded with jealousy, and so anxious to get the advantage of his formidable rival, that every time the narrowness of the road crowded them into single file, he pressed his horse in by hers and tendered his undying love. In vain did she use silent contempt, in vain she changed the conversation.

"Please, Mr. Clippersteel," said she, "lead my horse over this difficult road." Delighted at the opportunity to be of service, he took the rein, when Leathershine, being close by the lady's side, placed his open hand beside his mouth, as if to turn the full force of his breath upon the object of his love, and leaning quite over whispered in her ear.

"Get up and ride, Mr. Clippersteel," said the minister, alighting from his steed.

Charlie first conducted Miss Meaks's horse a little to the front, Leathershine being immediately on the opposite side, and then, stepping back to Mr. Skiles's steed, placed his foot in the stirrup.

Leathershine, seeing that he was about to be superseded by one who seemed to be in more popular

favor, took Miss Meaks's horse by the rein, and giving his ankle a twist spurred him in the side, at the same time hurrying his own, and the two went in a sweeping gallop around a curve of the road.

"Thar," roared Skipper, "he's got yer gal an' gone with 'ur."

As Clippersteel lit in the saddle, he heard his intended say, "Let loose my rein. What do you mean?" and being impelled by a sudden feeling of rescue and revenge, he gave the horse a thud with his spurless heel, and went thundering down the road like a tornado, leaving the minister and Skipper in the desolated country behind.



Rollingbumb (Harrison Aldridge) trapping a bear in the pass of Yonahlossee, 1892

CHAPTER IV

TRAPPING A BEAR

In verse I'll not disclose what did betide,—
The scene's too varied, wild, and warm, and wide.

From the dome of Grandfather, a high arm leads off, south of west and parallel with the Linville, for the distance of two miles, and then drops abruptly down into a deep pass called Grandmother Gap, beyond which rises Grandmother Mountain, the queen-consort of the reigning Grandfather.

Along the centre of this elegant spur is a succession of three beautiful cones, which are only a few feet lower than the highest point and rear their gray crests through dark mantles of rhododendron and firs.

In the year 1890, a Baltimore bard, who signs his name "Chuckey Joe," named one of these peaks —the one nearest the main top—"Yonahlossee," which, in the language of the Cherokee Indians, means "Passing bear." This name was suggested by the fact that bruin's favorite trail crosses the great mountain, through the depression, between this height and the next one towards the southwest.

In the fall of the year, when Rollingbumb did much trapping for bear in this pass, he made his head-quarters down in the deciduous woods, on the northern slope of the mountain, in a rock cavern which had been formed by a large slab of stone sliding down over a cliff and leaning up against it, leaving beneath a long chamber with a triangular opening at each extremity. When this was occupied by the hunter, he closed the three-cornered thresh-

olds by building a blazing fire in one and suspending the skins of wild beasts in the other.

The rock that formed the shelter, and also the cliff that extended from either end of the cavern, were grown over with mosses and lichens, while clinging here and there in the crevices were beautiful ferns, orchids, and wild pinks.

Only a few rods away, the east end of the cliff led down to a hollow, in which great bowlders, that had come down from higher altitudes, were piled one upon another. Some of these were carpeted with a soft moss, and the remainder had on top of them an accumulation of soil that supported wild turnip, dog-tusk violets, beth, mandrake, leeks, ferns, seneca, spikenard, angelica, ginseng, wild-gooseberry bushes, and many other plants and shrubs that flourished and bloomed in the most brilliant profusion.

Beneath this rich robe and the bowlders which it mantled was a subterranean brook, whose invisible falls and cascades rumbled like "muffled drums," as their waters passed on to some crystal outburst below.

When Rollingbumb passed out from between the adamantine walls of his sylvan chamber and concealed his gigantic steel-traps beneath the leaves and moss of bruin's passway, the grabs at the ends of the chains were not fastened to immovable objects, as might be supposed, because, in that event, a monstrous bear, when captured, would have been

better able to extricate himself than when the great sharp-fanged transitory prison was allowed to move to the bent of every overpowering exertion of its captive.

When bruin suddenly finds his paw in steel shackles, against which all his weapons of carnivorous warfare are powerless, he invariably turns at right angles from his trail, and seldom goes more than two or three rods before the grabs become intangled, as seen in the cut, and he comes to an abrupt halt. But after biting off all the shrubbery within the length of his cable, and turning everything around him topsy-turvy, he generally disengages himself, and then, snorting with rage and jingling his metallic fetters, he continues his clumsy flight, making signs that can be followed as readily as the path of a whirlwind, until the grabs catch under a root or over a bough, and he is hindered as before.

Thus clambering through his painful and provoking prison bounds, he seldom gets more than a fourth of a mile from his trail, when the hunter, going to his traps and finding one of them missing, follows it up, and slays poor bruin in the manner illustrated.

On the opposite side of the Linville from the Grandfather is the spring-flowered and autumnal tinted Flat-Top Mountain, which also runs parallel with that beautiful stream, and has a splendid pinnacle west of the centre. It is noted for its fertile soil, for the abundance and variety of its wild herbs,

and for its beautiful groves of oak, chestnut, sugar-maple, and other deciduous trees.

The last scene of our story occurred at the point where a line would pass if drawn from the top of Yonahlossee, through the valley of the Linville, to the pinnacle of the Flat-Top.

The party had passed the place where Clippersteel and his guide had camped the night before, and Skipper, having been paid to carry the tent and blankets, had them rolled up and laid on his shoulder. The minister gazed after the flying steeds with a dumfounded face, while Skipper stood by, with an obelisk of mud on the big toenail of his left foot, and said in an ecstatic voice, that might have been heard by the man in the moon, "I'll bet ye a gill of balsam ag'inst a dollar that them fellers 'll fight over that gal, yit."

When Clippersteel passed round the curve behind which his true love and her captor had gone, he saw them going at full speed, so far down a long stretch of road that the laurel hangings seemed to crowd in almost to its closing. In his hot pursuit, he snatched a branch from a rhododendron and, larruping the horse with the broad leaves, the animal leaped forward with increased alacrity; and Leathershine, observing that the management of two horses was unequally matched against the skill and speed of a single rider, dropped the rein, and, continuing his flight, was soon lost to view under the overhanging boughs of the forest road.

Lidie Meaks was an expert in the overland accomplishment of horseback riding, and would have prevented this equestrian tornado, but Leathershine getting the horses under speed before she apprehended his intentions, all her skill was required to keep the saddle and evade the lowering boughs.

When Leathershine dropped the rein, she checked the speed of the horse and caracoled in the road, but her spirits were borne down with fear lest her Charlie would believe that the fires of jealousy burning upon the youngster's heart had been blown by the bellows of her own bosom. Guided, however, by a clear conscience, she galloped towards her champion, and when she met him each saw on the other's face spots of sunshine and shadow, like those produced on a harvest-field by the passage of broken clouds. Comprehending her fears and knowing her innocence, Charlie said, in a tranquil voice, "Be of good cheer, my dear Lidie, for in the game of snatch we are often taken by the one we least admire."

"Thank you," she said, panting for breath and regaining a smile; "and believe me," she continued, "I never saw that fellow until a week ago; and although he seemed to be fond of my company, I never thought of his presuming to claim my regard until this hour, during which he has kept my horse crowded into the woods and my ears inflated with wind."

"Had not the coward fled," said Clippersteel, "I would have tested the thickness of his cranium."

"Let me implore you," answered Lidie, "for the sake of the good man whose pupil he is, that you treat him as beneath your notice, and I will stay beyond his ken."

"Hello," shouted Skipper, arriving with the tent on his shoulder and the pyramid of mud on his toenail; "you've got yer gal back, I see."

Lidie turned her head to conceal the humorous expression which the remark created upon her visage; and Charlie answered him with a look that was half laughter.

Mr. Skiles now inquired after his student, and, being informed of his flight, he said, solemnly and reverently, "I have often prayed God to gather his wild oats into the garner of repentance."

After Clippersteel had apologized to the clergyman for driving his horse through the nimble storm of passion's fleet despair, the journey was continued, and, though the fugitive was often looked for, only the tracks of his horse were seen.

Close beside them and often crossing their way was the rippling river of Linville, singing its song of joy to the youthful Linville Valley, or murmuring its sweet story to the myriads of speckled beauties that played on its sparkling sands. Here it is that the angler casts his rod over the home of the piscatorial tribe and brings forth his elegant prize, fluttering his finny prattle against the rhododendron boughs that

hang like green-spangled awnings over the glassy pools.

Late in the afternoon, when the green leaves were rustled by a bracing zephyr, the dim highway —so little used that it was partly grown over with wild herbs—was leading the party through a forest of large trees with but little undergrowth. Here was a lone rhododendron blooming at the foot of a tall oak, yonder a cluster of azalia that fired the forest with its flaming flora.

Suddenly they came to a fence, and going straight forward, while the road turned to the left, they passed through a gate into a broad, beautiful meadow, which was divided into two nearly equal parts by the pathway that led through it before them. To the left of this little meadow passage the mead rolled its green sward gently down to the Linville River, beyond which was a hill of laurel and pine that led up by steeps and land-saddles that wove themselves into a more distant prospect of elegant ridges.

On the opposite side of the grassy track was a cosey carpet of horizontal turf that led back to a hill of equal green, which, being a part of the same enclosure, swept down and blended into the level that terminated its descent.

Directly before them, and about the centre of the large enclosure, arose, as if by magic, an elegant white mansion. Of its two fronts, one overlooked the rolling sward that divided it from the river on

the south, while the other caught in the modillions of its Corinthian entablature the first kisses of the rising sun.

Surrounding it was a commodious yard, enclosed by a picket fence of such low structure that it gave almost a complete view of the pinks, roses, and other perennial blossoms that adorned the within.

Two gravelled walks, one leading from each front through the beautiful flowers, terminated at as many gates, of which the one on the east stood ajar to receive those who were about to enter its portal.

This was the residence of Colonel Salmer,[1] a gentleman of fortune, who had swapped the song of the mocking-bird in South Carolina for the nesting place of the snow-bird in the beautiful land of the sky.

From a window within, the lord of the mansion recognized Mr. Skiles as the shepherd of the little flock to which he belonged, and, going out to meet him, received his hand with a cordial clasp. The Colonel was then introduced to Mr. Clippersteel and Miss Meaks, while Skipper John looked upon the formality with surprise, and evidently believed it to be some angelic performance, the sanctity of whose mysteries none but those in close communion with the Deity could understand.

[1]During the war between the States, this mansion was burned by Colonel Kirk's men when on their raid to Camp Vance. The property is now owned and occupied by Geo. E. Watkins, formerly of the U. S. Navy, who has built an elegant dwelling near the spot where the first one stood.

An inquiry about Leathershine being now in order, it was ascertained that he had been there an hour before, but, having learned through Colonel Salmer that a Mr. Franklin lived near the falls, he had gone thither to spend the night.

The arrivals were now conducted to seats in the south portico, which commanded an elegant view of many objects, the least comely of them all being the dim road; for here I may say that, from where we saw it last, it led down to where the fence made a right angle, and then turning between that enclosing structure and the river continued thus until it passed the house.

Skipper being helped to a chair leaned his stupendous form against one of the supporting columns that stood nearest the steps. His great wide mouth swung open like a fly-trap made of two clapboards, and his knees extended quite up to the sides of his flat head, while resting on a round of the chair below were two massive feet, whose hard bottoms, seared by long and severe exposure, bade everlasting defiance to the chestnut-burr and the thorn.

The landlord, thinking that he had seen him before, scrutinized him with a curious eye, and only wondered what manner of man had been brought to his house; but when his light-hearted wife tripped through the hall and burst into his presence, she drew back like an unarmed man meeting a grizzly on the great solitudes of the West. Her eyes twinkled beneath a scowl as she scanned him with a recov-

ering glance. She then advanced with shy steps, and gave the minister her hand and received an introduction to his friends.

By this time Clippersteel had perceived that a rusty pair of number sixteen feet, supporting a form of proportionate size and bearing, would be unwelcome visitors between the lily-white sheets of Mrs. Salmer's sleeping apartments; and as soon as he could politely excuse himself he prepared his tent-bearer a resting-place by spreading the tent below the house, by the laughing river.

When Clipper had placed Skipper securely in the little pavilion and returned to the portico, Mr. Skiles and Miss Meaks had been conducted to their rooms, and Mrs. Salmer had withdrawn to the culinary department. But the Colonel, remaining in what Skipper called the "portikiazer," invited his returning guest to a seat, and asked him how he liked the country.

"It is beautiful indeed," was the answer; "and what estimate would you set upon it, if a hundred farms in this valley were prepared and occupied like yours?"

"It would be the Eden of the world, sir, and the pittance for which the land could now be bought would scarcely be recognized in the estimation of its value."

"I concur in your opinion; and I venture to say further, that the fifteen miles of country that I have seen this evening, embracing yonder stream from here to its source, is worth more for the real com-

forts of life than ten times its area elsewhere in the most fertile fields of the South."

"Experience has taught me that your position is true, and, while my friends call it monkish in me to have withdrawn from the allurements of city life to this tranquillizing retreat, I answer them with the following beautiful story of Cincinnatus:

"When that model of Roman genius and integrity had received a letter from the senate, asking him, for the sake of the republic, to return to the dictatorship, which he had resigned, he replied as follows:

"'If you could see the nice cabbage that I have planted to-day, you would never say republic to me again.' In like manner I say to my friends, 'If you were to drink from the cool, pellucid water of my spring; feast on the rich milk from the fat cattle that graze my fields; breathe the sweet air from the Balsam Groves of the Grandfather, and view their glorious aspect, and see the red roses that have taken the place of blanched lilies on the cheeks of my wife and darling boy, you would never say city to me again.' "

The spring of which the Colonel spoke was reached by a diagonal path passing through and beyond the front yard to the right, where the smoothness of the landscape was broken by some rocks that jutted from the slope, and seemed to wall the subterranean channel through which the little stream came from some higher source. Here was the dairy, which was made of hewn logs neatly joined together and painted white. Its form was that

of an oblong square. The plates crowning the side walls and the roof supported by them, passed over and beyond the end wall next the hill, forming an extended gable that sheltered both the spring and the entrance to the little edifice.

Large slabs of stone walled in the crystal fountain, and extended their collateral joinings on the side towards the approach, forming a seat for two persons.

After a delicious supper of savory dishes, its elegant serving by the accomplished landlady, the sending of a portion of the same to Skipper, who lived in the tent, and the interesting and varied conversation participated in during the consumption of the repast, Clippersteel and his beloved went down to the spring and occupied the seat above referred to.

The tiny streamlet, trickling from its source through the apartments of the dairy, chirped like young birds claiming their mother's protection at night, as Clippersteel said to his intended, "Look towards those willows by the rippling stream; see how the glow-worms and fire-flies streak and spangle the twilight."

"I was just asking myself," she replied, "whether or not our lives would end so beautifully as the closing of this day."

"Only those who live after us can tell the solution of that problem. Useful lives and beautiful days often have endings quite different from the zeniths

of their glory; and the changes that take place in the skies of a single day may elegantly illustrate the human career. For instance, I have seen the sun burn his way through twelve hours of ethereal blue, and then set in a cloud that soon obscured the sky with darkness and gloom, and the red lightning, darting its fiery shuttle through the loom of thunder, wove a curtain that mantled the earth in terror and death. Then I have seen days that were dark and dreary, when the bellowing thunder drove the wild beast to his shelter in the rocks, and the pelting rain thrown by the angry hand of the storm demolished the crops of the land and left the sinewy hands of toil empty with hunger and pain. Then the clouds drifted away, and Sol impressed his goodnight kisses upon the mountain-tops in token that he would rise from a saffron bed on the morrow. Again, there has been many a succession of beautiful days accompanied by as many glorious eves, when Venus and the moon, contesting for the prize of beauty, hung their golden scale in the west to weigh the admiration that each received from the world, and the chestnut sunshine that painted the blooming fields was broken only by gentle showers, that struck not the earth with madness, but gave it a warm kiss, from whose loving impress there sprang up a beautiful robe of green."

"What a profusion of beautiful words you utter, Charlie. You have painted three pictures of human life from the cradle to the grave. May our lot be

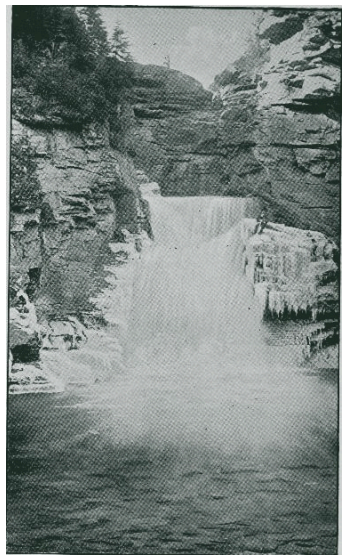
neither the first nor the second, but let it be like the continuation of beautiful days. May our lives be a season of perpetual sunshine to the heart, when the mind neither reverts to the past nor reaches to the future, but is content with the pleasures of the present; and if tears must come, may they fall in the prepared soil and ripen the fruits of the soul; and at the end we will not contest for the prize, but will be content to share alike the glories of the world to come."

"You have a tenderness about you, my dear Lidie, and a nobleness of heart which I never heard expressed before. Your sweet words, dropping like vocal roses from the gardens of language, heighten, if possible, the joy of the thought that you are soon to be mine. Your silvery accents, to which the trickling streamlet beside us plays a sweet accompaniment, tell me to rob life no longer of the bliss for which I sigh; and now, as you have no parents' consent to obtain, no sisters to invite, but only a lone brother far in the West, I propose that our nuptials be performed at the great falls, tomorrow."

Lidie, remaining silent for a time, heaved a sigh, and then said, "I fear that Prudence would censure my acceptance, for I am in the far-off mountains, without a wedding garment, or even a few friends to celebrate the occasion."

"The foaming falls will lend you from their white spray a queenly robe, the benign woods will deck it with flowers more gorgeous than the artist can

paint, and the harmonious melody produced by the combined musical agents of flood and forest will do honor to the occasion."



Linville Falls, 1892

CHAPTER V

THE WEDDING

The falls that pour their foaming floods,
And set the wind in motion,
That wave the boughs and flaunt the curls
On heads of true devotion,
Could they but sing the song of pain
That's mingled in my story,
Their name would fill the vaulted skies,
And be enrolled in glory.

The beautiful homestead depicted in the last chapter is now in Mitchell County, but at the time of our story it was in the county of Watauga, and more than twenty miles from the court-house. However, it was only eight miles south of a place that was and is called the "Old Field of Toe," a muster-ground in use before the war, where lived a magistrate who was deputized to issue marriage licenses.

When Clippersteel had conducted his lady in out of the night air from the seat by the spring, he consulted the landlord for a few moments, after which he wrote a note to the justice, enclosing a license-fee, and then passed out and down towards the tent.

As he tripped down through the lawn with the peert and nimble spirit of Hymen playing in his bosom, he sang the following lines:

Lovely Emma, sweet Emma,
  Would you think it unkind,
If I were to sit by you
  And tell you my mind?
My mind is to marry,
  And never to part;
The first time I saw you
  You wounded my heart.

Chorus.

Oh, her breath smells as sweet
  As the dew on the vine;
God bless you, lovely Emma,
  I wish you were mine.

He was now near the little white pavilion, where Skipper's deep slumbers were betokened by the loud, nocturnal winding of his nasal horn. His peculiar errand, and the feeling engendered by it, had intensified that inherited superstition which dwells even in the bosom of the wise. Forms of fear gathered in the quiet willows by the stream, and the nasal voice of Skipper sounded like groans from some cavern of the earth in which the bones of dead men were mouldering.

> "On the lawny sands and shelves
> Trip the peert fairies and the dapper elves."

With his heart slightly unnerved and dancing to the music of Hymen's lute, Clippersteel bounded into the tent and stirred the snoring man from his lethargy.

"Have you ever been to the 'Old Fields of Toe'?" inquired he.

"Yes, sar," answered Skipper, pressing the knuckles of his front fingers against his eyes; "I went thar to the big balluginary "(battalion) "muster."

It was now agreed between Clipper and Skipper that, if the latter should have the license in the tent by daylight on the morrow, he was to receive, as a partial compensation, enough money to buy him a new fur hat, which in those days meant a high stiff hat, plushed with fur on the outside, and having a crown flat on top.

This was the style of masculine head-gear that a gentleman had on when a jester accosted him with the following interrogation:

"Halloo, stranger; are your cows all dead?"

"No, sir," replied the man; "and why do you ask that question?"

"Why, sir," replied the merry-Andrew, "I see that you have your wife's churn on your head."

In case of a successful trip on the part of Skipper, he was to receive, also, sufficient money to purchase himself a pair of boots, of which the fronts were to be red, from the tops down nearly to the ankles.

Skipper was soon plodding his way through the valleys and over the heights, and, as the moping owl complained to the fair moon that rolled up the eastern sky, he meditated upon the future as follows: "I'll stick a feather from the red rooster's tail in my fur hat, and put my red-topped boots on the outside of my pants, and go to see Peggy Sigemore, and Betz Kite, who kicked me and called me an old balsam climber, will wish that she had me for a beau."

As these happy thoughts of sudden distinction passed through his mind, he was so transported with joy that he answered the hoot of the owl with the following hymn, which he sang to long metre:

"The squir'l he has a bushy tail,
  The possum's tail is bare,
A rabbit has no tail at all,
  But a little bit-a-bunch of hair.

"The raccoon up the chestnut-tree,
The possum in the holler,
A purty gal at our house,
As fat as she can waller."

Next morning, when twilight still spread her dusky pinions over the land, and the moon, hanging just above the western horizon, cast a pale glare on the saffron-gild from the sun, Clippersteel re-entered the tent, where his precursor, having returned, was again wrapped in the restoring arms of Morpheus. In his right hand, which rested on his brow, was the marriage document, while around one of his great toes, at the other extremity of his long person, was a bandage of green leaves tied on with a string of hickory bark and bloodied from a wound within. Seeing that all was well, he left the man for an hour to his peaceful slumbers, and then returned with a waiter heavy laden with hot coffee and wholesome food, and as he entered the tent Skipper arose, and, extending his hand, said:

"I got 'um, goody; her's yer licengers."

"And here," said Clippersteel, "is your money," passing him a handful of silver dollars. Skipper smiled behind his ears, and his short coat danced up and down to the roaring chuckle that inflated his ribs.

"Did a snake bite your toe?" inquired Clippersteel.

"No, sar," replied Skipper; "I stump' the nail off 'en it," and, putting his hand in his pant's pocket, he drew out the great bloody toe armor, and, handing

it to Clippersteel, said, "Thar it is. I'll give ye that to remember who brought yer licengers."

"Thank you, Skipper," was the reply; "it is a nice souvenir, and I shall ever keep it among my most valued treasures." Skipper thought that he had never before heard a toe-nail called a "susandear," but, not doubting the authenticity of the word, he adopted it into his vocabulary, and ever afterwards applied the name to toe-nails that had been knocked off by accident.

The blue sky that adorned the wedding-day was decked with a bright sun that had risen a few degrees above the horizon when the party filed through the gate, by the tent, and turned down the murmuring stream. Riding in front was the lone Mr. Skiles. Next in order was the bride and groom, the latter occupying a horse procured from a Mr. Dellinger, who was neighbor to the host and hostess. Third in rank was Mrs. Salmer and the Colonel, who were mounted on two splendid bays from their own stalls, while the rear was brought up by a servant riding a long-eared donkey and bearing on his arm a large basket of lunch.

Skipper, who had gone in advance, was so elated by his connection with the affair that he told every yeoman he met by the way what was going to take place at the falls; and these early settlers, whose amusements were few and far between, looking upon the outdoor wedding as a public affair, dropped their ploughs and hoes in the fields, and

putting on their best garments went towards the scene.

In consequence of the above, Mr. Skiles soon found an equestrian partner in the person of a Mr. Buchanan, who had quit the irksome monotone of his plough for the exhilarating pastime of nuptial festivities.

Before the equestrians reached the falls, Skipper, whom they had passed on the way, had gathered to his side a company of twenty persons or more, made up of both sexes, in about equal numbers. The women wore homespun dresses, which they had made for themselves, by carding, spinning, and weaving the fleece of the sheep, and, finally, cutting and fitting the fabric to their persons. Their headgear consisted of plain calico bonnets, while their waists and bosoms were set about with fillets of red ribbon that flaunted to the gales of the woods.

Each man was armed with his long firelock rifle, which, when stood upon its breech, extended from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. These were carried as a means of killing the abundant deer and other game that frequently crossed the roads and paths.

In the party was a moustached man, middle-aged and handsome, by the name of Clark, who seemed to have descended from some professional family that had strayed into the far-off mountains and retrograded from their former learning and dignity.

Beside him was his daughter, Miss Ada, a blooming girl of sweet sixteen, whose form was cast in neat proportion's mould. Her queenly hands, tapering and fair as the lily, were gloved with a pair of red mits of her own knitting, which exposed the ends of the fingers and the first joints of the thumbs.

Her golden hair was like a shower of primrose petals falling, and her cheeks were finished with the artistic touches of Aurora's rosy hand. Her eyes were like the corolla leaves of the blue-veined violet, her nose was a posy to her face, and her pearly teeth sparkled with nectarean dew. "She was a flower born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air."

In those days it was customary for a gentleman to propose his escort to a lady in the following manner. Walking up to her side, he said, "Do you love chicken?" which nowadays would be equivalent to asking if she were a Methodist.

If she answered "Yes," he then presented his arm with the words, "Have a wing," whereupon she put her arm through his. But if the answer was "No," he was refused, or, in the parlance of the times, she had "kicked" him. Such scenes usually occurred in large crowds that were going the distance of ten miles or more, to or from church, on the Sabbath day, and the fellow who got "kicked" was always greatly derided by most of those who witnessed the chagrin of his disappointment.

On the present occasion, when all were bound for the falls, a fellow, with the blood-red top-knot of an imperial woodpecker in his hat-band, stepped up to the side of Miss Ada; but just as he would have propounded the Methodist question, her father gave him a disapproving glance, by which his heart failed him, and he passed on to the side of a bunty girl with a flaxen head and a frisky air, and, looking her in the face with a grin, he said, "Aggie, do you love chicken?"

"I don't love roosters," was the pert reply.

The answer being new and thoroughly original, the fellow was for a time completely dumfounded for something to say, but finally he got his mouth off, and said, "Will you let one walk with you to the wed'en?"

"Yes, if he don't crow too loud," she replied.

The heterogeneous gathering was now on the west bank of the river, at the top of the cataract, where the stream passed transversely over a saddle of rock, and dropping off, at the lower skirt, fell the height of a tall tree into a pool of matchless depth and beauty. But since that time the ledge has broken down, so that the water leaps and cascades alternately through a curved and partly concealed grove, and finally terminates in a clear fall of only about thirty feet, as seen in the cut.

The pool, however, which is about fifty yards wide and twice as long, with the corners slightly rounded, has lost none of its original beauty, unless it is in the

diminished magnitude of the white breakers that ruffle its dark bosom. The long way of this beautiful lake is at right angles to the fall, and its outlet is through a narrow channel at the east end.

The party, having satiated their æsthetic vision from the top, now started for a landing at the bottom, and there never was a wilder way than theirs. The little track wound, and still winds, through and under laurel and ivy, around and over cliffs, and then turns down a slope of forty-five degrees, and runs as straight as a gun-barrel for the distance of fifty yards. This visible section of the path, canopied by the lapping boughs of the rhododendron and calmia, is crossed by many rocks and tree roots, which, having been divested of soil by clambering feet, look like the rounds of a long ladder leading down to the subterranean falls and glittering stalactites of a cave. At the foot of this shaded vista, the way turning down the stream to the right passes up into and down through crevices, where the overhanging rocks, being of the Methodist persuasion, sprinkle the heads of the passers-by with clean water. And, indeed, it seems quite thoughtful in these stones to prepare the traveller at this point for death, because the next fifty yards of his path are the most dangerous that the writer has witnessed in all North Carolina. Here the south side of the pool is bounded by a perpendicular rock that walls an unknown depth of water, and then rises from ten to thirty feet above its surface; and we do not exagger-

ate in the least, when we say that the track is on the very brink of this ledge, and in some places barely wide enough for the feet. The fears of the tourist are to some extent removed by the laurel hangings above and a fringe of light vegetation on the brow of the rock below, but the latter would not support the weight of a falling babe, and the former might be missed by the clutch of one who had lost his footing. If ever a lady tumbles over this precipice, she will most probably be lost, and a gentleman could save himself only by good swimming.

Our wedding party, now quadrupled by the country people, followed this hazardous track to where it spreads into a bench of rock about as wide as the floor of a bedroom and several times as long. If we imagine this seat occupied by a giant of suitable size, his calves will rest against the perpendicular wall of the pool and his feet will be washed by its breakers. Before him, the white torrent pours down into the boiling pot, while immediately on the right of the foaming cataract rises a great ledge of stone, from whose summit a Niagara leaper might make a most beautiful dive into the pool, one hundred feet below.

This ledge is only the upper end of a long wall that extends down the stream and rears its battlements in front of a low oval knob, in the rear of which is a scattered growth of dead and living pine, with scarcely anything beneath except short bunches of calmia.

The back of our imaginary giant is supported by the smooth face of a cliff about thirty feet high, which breaks at the top into a succession of ivy-mantled crags that rise almost perpendicularly for several hundred feet, to where they are crowned with a grove of Carolina pine (*Abies Caroliniana*). While these crags are exceedingly beautiful in elevation, they are also equally picturesque in their longitudinal extension far down the stream, where the rocks rear their gray crests above their evergreen mantles, and, with their surroundings, blend into a scene as wild and varied as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and repose.

The country gentlemen, having leaned their rifles against the cliff, stood with their women folks, anxiously awaiting the expected event. In due time the bride and groom, attended by Colonel and Mrs. Salmer, were arrayed for marriage.

Their backs were in the neighborhood of the guns, while their faces were towards the great pouring column, whose white wings and boiling pedestal sent forth a breeze that set all the near flora and other equally movable objects in motion, —bush, weed, and flower, as well as ribbons, tresses, whiskers, and moustaches, and even the leaves of the minister's book were all dancing to the wind of the falls. As Mr. Skiles composed the fluttering pages beneath his thumbs, he drew so near and spoke so loud, in order to be heard above the roar of the waters, that his manner, elsewhere, would have

been suitable only to those who were partially deaf. The charming bride, with dove-like eyes, looked steadily upon the minister; and, as he proceeded with the beautiful Episcopal service, there never was a bliss more wild and warm and boundless than that which thrilled her heart. "If any man," said the clergyman, "can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak or else hereafter forever hold his peace."

To the great surprise of all present, a sneering voice, on a different key from the thundering of the falls, was heard to say, "I object." This came from none other than Leathershine, who had resolved to avenge his defeat by vexing the occasion with this obnoxious objection, based, as we shall see, upon an odious falsehood; and, the better to accomplish his design, he had concealed himself in the green of the steeps, so as to appear at a time when the groom could not contravene his purpose nor do him violence.

"What is the ground of your objection?" inquired the minister.

"She is engaged to me" was the reply.

No one can describe the trembling pallor that seized the person of poor Lidie Meaks. With eyes full of overflowing fondness, she looked upon him she loved, as if to say, "I am innocent."

Her chin dropped upon the flowers that adorned her bosom; every nerve and muscle of her frame lost its energy, and she sank at the feet of the groom,

not in the fashion of one who falls under the influence of excessive excitement, but like a pure woman borne down by the weight of a calumny perpetrated upon a warm life that no sin had ever tarnished.

The copious pool, so near the fainting bride, was yet so far that not a drop of its pellucid contents could be had with which to bathe her brow.

But the groom quickly produced from his pocket a little bottle of brandy, which he carried, as a precaution, in case of accidents, and spreading a portion of its contents over her pallid face, the signs of restoration soon became apparent. The country folks had gathered round like the people of a city rushing to the scene of an accident, when those at disadvantage look over the shoulders of those in front to get a view of the within.

By this time Leathershine had run down the lake, and was ascending the heights at a point below, when Clippersteel, darting through the crowd, snatched a rifle from its leaning-place, and was aiming a shot that would have despatched the retreating coward, had not Mr. Clark grabbed the muzzle of the gun and borne it downward until he had gone out of sight.

A few minutes later the infamous dude mounted his horse, and, riding directly to Valle Crucis, packed his trunk and fled before Mr. Skiles had returned.

The tumult was now ended; the bride was able to sit upon a shawl which had been offered by a good

mountain matron; and an hour later the marriage service was closed with the following prayer:

"O eternal God, creator and preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life, send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy name; that, as Isaac and Rebecca lived, faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made (whereof this ring given and received is a token and pledge), and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Hanging on a limb, at the top of the cataract, was the basket of lunch, and those for whose comfort it had been prepared, now climbing in single file for its rich morsels, were followed by the riflemen, with their ruddy consorts and lasses.

As the mountaineers were departing for their homes, Mr. Clark and his daughter accepted a cordial invitation from Mrs. Salmer to take lunch.

The dinner was taken to a convenient spot, where a number of large rocks laid round in circular form, and spread within their circumference on the cloths in which it had been folded.

Skipper, having now remained with his older friends, looked on from a distance, as if uncertain as to how near the food his welcome extended; but when Clippersteel observed his doubtful attitude, he took him by the arm and seated him on a

bowlder, suitable to his size, within the circle. His valuable service to Mr. Clippersteel and the wound upon his great toe having elicited general sympathy, Mrs. Salmer helped him to the first round, as she did the rest, and then bade all wait on themselves.

Under the cloths, in the corner nearest to Skipper, was a flat rock that so pressed its bosom against the white covering as to form a neat little elevation, which was occupied by a large, highly-flavored cake, of a rich, yellowish cast, the same being cut from the centre to every second or third convolution that ornamented its circumference.

When Skipper had quickly gulped down what had been given him, he took a piece of cake, when Mrs. Salmer, looking upon him with a degree of allowance, thought, "Poor, ignorant fellow doesn't know which end of the meal to begin at."

The Adam's-apple on Skipper's neck had not played up and down more than twice, when he seized a second piece of the rich composition, and then a third; and the lady in charge, becoming alarmed lest none should be left for the rest, laid a drum-stick on a biscuit, and said,—

"Here, Mr. Potter" (calling his surname), "have this nice chicken and biscuit."

"Oh, no," said he; "eat that yerself; this punkin bread's good enough fur me."

Those who had previously suppressed their hilarity at Skipper's mistakes were now unable to conceal their glee, and all burst into such explosions of

laughter that great mouthfuls of masticated bread and butter flew against the surrounding rocks like showers of shot from a fowling-piece.

Mr. Clippersteel settled with his lovely wife in the city of Raleigh, where he had formerly resided, and the murmurs heard in that family were like the voice of a sunlit tide embracing the tinted shells of the shore in love.

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Eseeola Inn, Linville, 1892

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