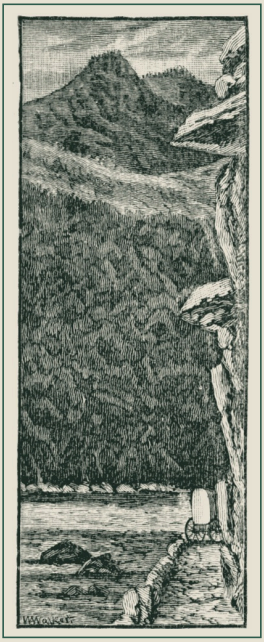
WAKING UP IN
BOONE

HORACE KEPHART

THE BACK OF BEYOND

Hazel Creek and the Great Smoky Mountains
from Our Southern Highlanders, *1913*



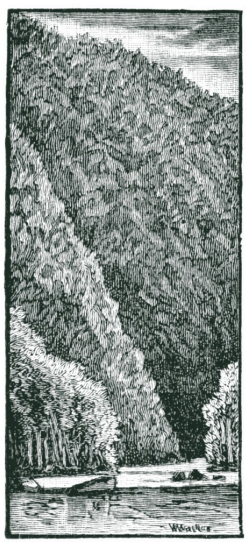
EARLY EXPLORERS · NO. 4

HORACE KEPHART

THE BACK OF BEYOND

Hazel Creek and the Great Smoky Mountains

Three chapters from
Our Southern Highlanders, *1913*



WAKING UP IN BOONE
Boone, North Carolina

The text is chapters II, III, and IV of Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1913). This edition follows the printing of 1916, which repeats the text of 1913. Kephart published a revised and enlarged edition in 1922.

The three chapters are printed complete, with Kephart's spelling, punctuation, and dialect. One misprint is corrected: "sting" for "sing." The footnotes are Kephart's. The photographs that appeared in the 1913 edition are not reprinted, except for the three noted below.

The engravings are from Wilbur G. Zeigler and Ben S. Grosscup, *The Heart of the Alleghanies; or, Western North Carolina* (Raleigh and Cleveland, 1883). The photographs are from *Our Southern Highlanders,* 1913. Text, engravings, and photographs are in the public domain in the United States.

Cover: *On the Little Tennessee.* Title page: *A Narrow Water-Way.* Chapter openers: Kephart's cabin on Sugar Fork, the Smokies from Mount Collins (photograph by Arthur Keith), and *The Final Struggle.* Back page: laurel and rhododendron.

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When I went south into the mountains
I was seeking a Back of Beyond.

HORACE KEPHART
Our Southern Highlanders, 1913

INTRODUCTION

Horace Kephart was born in Pennsylvania in 1862 and grew up in the Midwest. He trained as a librarian and became head of the St. Louis Mercantile Library. In 1904, after his health failed, he left his job and his family and came alone to the mountains of western North Carolina.

In November of that year he settled on Hazel Creek, on the North Carolina side of the Great Smoky Mountains, in a cabin at the Everett copper mine, which had been shut down by a lawsuit. The mine was about two miles from the post office at Medlin. He lived there, with time away, until 1907. He hunted, fished, wrote for outdoor magazines, and took notes on his neighbors and their speech. He later settled in Bryson City.

Our Southern Highlanders came out in 1913. Most of the book is about the people of the mountains: their speech, their homes and work, moonshining, and feuds. This volume reprints the three chapters in which Kephart writes mainly about the land. In the first he arrives on Hazel Creek. In the second he describes the Smokies, their forests, and the few people who had been along the crest. In the third he goes on a bear hunt with his neighbors on the high divide.

Kephart wrote as an outsider, and later writers have criticized parts of the book for dwelling on what was strange or lawless in mountain life. Most of that material is in the chapters not reprinted here. These three chapters include dialect as he heard it and a few remarks that reflect attitudes of 1913. They are printed without change.

Some names have changed. The Okona Lufty is the Oconaluftee River. Clingman Dome is Clingmans

Dome, and Collins is Mount Collins. Kephart later worked for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and helped choose the route of the Appalachian Trail through the Smokies. A peak on the state line northeast of Clingmans Dome was named Mount Kephart while he was still alive. He was killed in an automobile accident near Bryson City on April 2, 1931, three years before the park was established. Hazel Creek is now inside the park. The site of Medlin is a backcountry campsite on the Hazel Creek Trail.



Cabin on the Little Fork of Sugar Fork of Hazel Creek, in which the author lived alone for three years

CHAPTER II

"THE BACK OF BEYOND"

Of certain remote parts of Erin, Jane Barlow says: "In Bogland, if you inquire the address of such or such person, you will hear not very infrequently that he or she lives 'off away at the Back of Beyond.'... A Traveler to the Back of Beyond may consider himself rather exceptionally fortunate, should he find that he is able to arrive at his destination by any mode of conveyance other than 'the two standin' feet of him.' Often enough the last stage of his journey proceeds down some boggy *boreen*, or up some craggy hill-track, inaccessible to any wheel or hoof that ever was shod."

So in Appalachia, one steps shortly from the railway into the primitive. Most of the river valleys are narrow. In their bottoms the soil is rich, the farms well kept and generous, the owners comfortable and urbane. But from the valleys directly spring the mountains, with slopes rising twenty to forty degrees or more. These mountains cover nine-tenths of western North Carolina, and among them dwell a majority of the native people.

The back country is rough. No boat nor canoe can stem its brawling waters. No bicycle nor automobile can enter it. No coach can endure its roads. Here is a land of lumber wagons, and saddle-bags, and shackly little sleds that are dragged over the bare ground by harnessed steers. This is the country that ordinary tourists shun. And well for such that they do, since whoso cares more for bodily comfort than for freedom and air and elbow-room should tarry by

still waters and pleasant pastures. To him the backwoods could be only what Burns called Argyleshire: "A country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants."

When I went south into the mountains I was seeking a Back of Beyond. This for more reasons than one. With an inborn taste for the wild and romantic, I yearned for a strange land and a people that had the charm of originality. Again, I had a passion for early American history; and, in Far Appalachia, it seemed that I might realize the past in the present, seeing with my own eyes what life must have been to my pioneer ancestors of a century or two ago. Besides, I wanted to enjoy a free life in the open air, the thrill of exploring new ground, the joys of the chase, and the man's game of matching my woodcraft against the forces of nature, with no help from servants or hired guides.

So, casting about for a biding place that would fill such needs, I picked out the upper settlement of Hazel Creek, far up under the lee of those Smoky Mountains that I had learned so little about. On the edge of this settlement, scant two miles from the post-office of Medlin, there was a copper mine, long disused on account of litigation, and I got permission to occupy one of its abandoned cabins.

A mountain settlement consists of all who get their mail at the same place. Ours was made up of forty-two households (about two hundred souls)

scattered over an area eight miles long by two wide. These are air-line measurements. All roads and trails "wiggled and wingled around" so that some families were several miles from a neighbor. Fifteen homes had no wagon road, and could be reached by no vehicle other than a narrow sled. Quill Rose had not even a sledpath, but journeyed full five miles by trail to the nearest wagon road.

Medlin itself comprised two little stores built of rough planks and bearing no signs, a corn mill, and four dwellings. A mile and a half away was the log schoolhouse, which, once or twice a month, served also as church. Scattered about the settlement were seven tiny tub-mills for grinding corn, some of them mere open sheds with a capacity of about a bushel a day. Most of the dwellings were built of logs. Two or three, only, were weatherboarded frame houses and attained the dignity of a story and a half.

All about us was the forest primeval, where roamed some sparse herds of cattle, razorback hogs, and the wild beasts. Speckled trout were in all the streams. Bears sometimes raided the fields, and wildcats were a common nuisance. Our settlement was a mere slash in the vast woodland that encompassed it.

The post-office occupied a space about five feet square, in a corner of one of the stores. There was a daily mail, by rider, serving four other communities along the way. The contractor for this service had to furnish two horses, working turnabout, pay the

rider, and squeeze his own profit, out of $499 a year. In Star Route days the mail was carried afoot, two barefooted young men "toting the sacks on their own wethers" over this thirty-two-mile round trip, for forty-eight cents a day; and they boarded themselves!

In the group that gathered at mail time I often was solicited to "back" envelopes, give out the news, or decipher letters for men who could not read. Several times, in the postmaster's absence, I registered letters for myself, or for someone else, the law of the nation being suspended by general consent.

Our stores, as I have said, were small, yet many of their shelves were empty. Oftentimes there was no flour to be had, no meat, cereals, canned goods, coffee, sugar, or oil. It excited no comment at all when Old Pete would lean across his bare counter and lament that "Thar's lots o' folks a-hurtin' around hyur for lard, and I ain't got none."

I have seen the time when our neighborhood could get no salt nor tobacco without making a twenty-four-mile trip over the mountain and back, in the dead of winter. This was due, partly, to the state of the roads, and to the fact that there would be no wagon available for weeks at a time. Wagoning, by the way, was no sinecure. Often it meant to chop a fallen tree out of the road, and then, with handspikes, "man-power the log outen the way." Sometimes an axle would break (far upon the mountain, of course); then a tree must be felled, and

a new axle made on the spot from the green wood, with no tools but axe and jackknife.

Trade was mostly by barter, in which 'coon skins and ginseng had the same rank as in the days of Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone. Long credits were given on anticipated crops; but the risks were great and the market limited by local consumption, as it did not pay to haul bulky commodities to the railroad. Hence it was self-preservation for the storekeepers to carry only a slender stock of essentials and take pains to have little left through unproductive times.

As a rule, credit would not be asked so long as anything at all could be offered in trade. When Bill took the last quart of meal from the house, as rations for a bear hunt, his patient Marg walked five miles to the store with a skinny old chicken, last of the flock, and offered to barter it for "a dustin' o' salt." There was not a bite in her house beyond potatoes, and "'taters don't go good 'thout salt."

In our primitive community there were no trades, no professions. Every man was his own farmer, blacksmith, gunsmith, carpenter, cobbler, miller, tinker. Someone in his family, or a near neighbor, served him as barber and dentist, and would make him a coffin when he died. One farmer was also the wagoner of the district, as well as storekeeper, magistrate, veterinarian, and accoucheur. He also owned the only "tooth-pullers" in the settlement: a pair of universal forceps that he designed, forged, filed out, and wielded with barbaric grit. His wife

kept the only boarding-house for leagues around. Truly, an accomplished couple!

About two-thirds of our householders owned their homes. Of the remainder about three-fifths were renters and two-fifths were squatters, in the sense that these last were permitted to occupy ground for the sake of reporting trespass and putting out fires—or, maybe, to prevent them doing both. Nearly all of the wild land belonged to Northern timber companies who had not yet begun operations (they have done so within the past three years).

Titles were confused, owing to careless surveys, or guesswork, in the past. Many boundaries overlapped, and there were bits of no-man's land here and there, covered by no deed and subject to entry by anyone who discovered them. Our old frontier always was notorious for happy-go-lucky surveys and neglect to make legal entry of claims. Thus Boone lost the fairest parts of the Kentucky he founded, and was ejected and sent adrift. In our own time, overlapping boundaries have led to bitter litigation and murderous feuds.

As our territory was sparsely occupied, there were none of those "perpendicular farms" so noticeable in older settlements near the river valleys, where men plow fields as steep as their own house roofs and till with the hoe many an acre that is steeper still. John Fox tells of a Kentucky farmer who fell out of his own cornfield and broke his neck. I have seen fields in Carolina where this might occur, as

where a forty-five degree slope is tilled to the brink of a precipice. A woman told me: "I've hoed corn many a time on my knees—yes, I have;" and another: "Many's the hill o' corn I've propped up with a rock to keep it from fallin' down-hill."[1]

Even in our new region many of the fields suffered quickly from erosion. When a forest is cleared there is a spongy humus on the ground surface that is extremely rich, but this washes away in a single season. The soil beneath is good, but thin on the hillsides, and its soluble, fertile ingredients soon leach out and vanish. Without terracing, which I have never seen practiced in the mountains of the South, no field with a surface slope of more than ten degrees (about two feet in ten) will last more than a few years. As one of my neighbors put it: "Thar, I've cl'ared me a patch and grubbed hit out—now I can raise me two or three severe craps!"

"Then what?" I asked.

"When corn won't grow no more I can turn the field into grass a couple o' years."

"Then you'll rotate, and grow corn again?"

"La, no! By that time the land will be so poor hit wouldn't raise a cuss-fight."

"But then you must move, and begin all over again. This continual moving must be a great nuisance."

[1]A friend of mine on the U. S. Geological Survey tested with his clinometer a mountain cornfield that sloped at an angle of fifty degrees.

He rolled his quid and placidly answered: "Huk-uh; when I move, all I haffter do is put out the fire and call the dog."

His apparent indifference was only philosophy expressed with sardonic humor; just as another neighbor would say, "This is good, strong land, or it wouldn't hold up all the rocks there is around hyur."

Right here is the basis for much of what strangers call shiftlessness among the mountaineers. But of that, more anon in other chapters.

In clearing new ground, everyone followed the ancient custom of girdling the tree trunks and letting them stand in spectral ugliness until they rotted and fell. This is a quick and easy way to get rid of the shade that otherwise would stunt the crops, and it prevents such trees as chestnut, buckeye and basswood from sprouting from the stumps. In the fields stood scores of gigantic hemlocks, deadened, that never would be used even for fuel, save as their bark furnished the women with quick-burning stovewood in wet weather. No one dreamt that hemlock ever would be marketable. And this was only five years ago!

The tillage was as rude and destructive as anything we read of in pioneer history. The common plow was a "bull-tongue," which has aptly been described as "hardly more than a sharpened stick with a metal rim." The harrows were of wood, throughout, with locust teeth (a friend and I made one from the green trees in half a day, and it lasted three sea-

sons on rocky ground). Sometimes no harrow was used at all, the plowed ground being "drug" with a big evergreen bough. This needed only to be withed directly to a pony's tail, as they used to do in ancient Ireland, and the picture of prehistoric agriculture would have been complete. After the corn was up, all cultivating was done with the hoe. For this the entire family turned out, the toddlers being left to play in the furrows while their mother toiled like a man.

Corn was the staple crop—in fact, the only crop of most farmers. Some rye was raised along the creek, and a little oats, but our settlement grew no wheat—there was no mill that could grind it. Wheat is raised, to some extent, in the river bottoms, and on the plateaus of the interior. I have seen it flailed out on the bare ground, and winnowed by pouring the grain and chaff from basket to basket while the women fluttered aprons or bed-sheets. Corn is topped for the blade-fodder, the ears gathered from the stalk, and the main stalks afterwards used as "roughness" (roughage). The cribs generally are ramshackle pens, and there is much waste from mold and vermin.

The Carolina mountains are, by nature, one of the best fruit regions in eastern America. Apples, grapes, and berries, especially, thrive exceeding well. But our mountaineer is no horticulturist. He lets his fruit trees take care of themselves, and so, everywhere except on select farms near the towns,

we see old apple and peach trees that never were pruned, bristling with shoots, and often bearing wizened fruit, dry and bitter, or half rotted on the stem.

So, too, the gardens are slighted. Late in the season our average garden is a miniature jungle, chiefly of weeds that stand high as one's head. Cabbage and field beans survive and figure mightily in the diet of the mountaineer. Potatoes generally do well, but few farmers raise enough to see them through the winter. Generally some tobacco is grown for family consumption, the strong "twist" being smoked or chewed indifferently.

An interesting crop in our neighborhood was ginseng, of which there were several patches in cultivation. This curious plant is native throughout the Appalachians, but has been exterminated in all but the wildest regions, on account of the high price that its dried root brings. It has long since passed out of our pharmacopœia, and is marketed only in China, though our own people formerly esteemed it as a panacea for all ills of the flesh. Colonel Byrd, in his "History of the Dividing Line," says of it:

> "Though Practice wilt soon make a man of tolerable Vigour an able Footman, yet, as a help to bear Fatigue I us'd to chew a Root of Ginseng as I Walk't along. This kept up my Spirits, and made me trip away as nimbly in my half Jack-Boots as younger men cou'd in their Shoes. This Plant is in high Esteem in China, where it sells for its Weight in Silver.... Its vertues are, that it gives an uncommon Warmth and Vigour to the Blood,

> and frisks the Spirits, beyond any other Cordial. It chears the Heart, even of a Man that has a bad Wife, and makes him look down with great Composure on the crosses of the World. It promotes insensible Perspiration, dissolves all Phlegmatick and Viscous Humours, that are apt to obstruct the Narrow channels of the Nerves. It helps the Memory and would quicken even Helvetian dullness. 'Tis friendly to the Lungs, much more than Scolding itself. It comforts the Stomach, and Strengthens the Bowels, preventing all Colicks and Fluxes. In one Word, it will make a Man live a great while, and very well while he does live. And what is more, it will even make Old Age amiable, by rendering it lively, chearful, and good-humour'd."

Alas that only Chinamen and eighteenth-century Cavaliers could absorb the virtues of this sovereign herb!

A successful ginseng grower of our settlement told me that two acres of the plant will bring an income of $2,500 to $5,000 a year, planting 100,000 to the acre. The roots take eight years to mature. They weigh from one and a half to four ounces each, when fresh, and one-third of this dried. Two acres produce 25,000 roots a year, by progression. The dried root, at that time, brought five dollars a pound. At present, I believe, it is higher. Another friend of mine, who is in this business extensively, tried exporting for himself, but got only $6.50 a pound in Amoy, when the U. S. consul at that port assured him that the real market price was from $12.60 to $24.40. The local trader, knowing American prices, pocketed the difference.

In times of scarcity many of our people took to the woods and gathered commoner medicinal roots, such as bloodroot and wild ginger (there are scores of others growing wild in great profusion), but made only a pittance at it, as synthetic drugs have mostly taken the place of herbal simples in modern medicine. Women and children did better, in the days before Christmas, by gathering galax, "hemlock" (*leucothoe*), and mistletoe, selling to the dealers at the railroad, who ship them North for holiday decorations. One bright lad from town informed me, with evident pride of geography, that "Some of this goes to London, England." Nearly everywhere in our woods the beautiful ruddy-bronze galax is abundant. Along the water-courses, *leucothoe*, which similarly turns bronze in autumn, and lasts throughout the winter, is so prolific as to be a nuisance to travelers, being hard to push through.

Most of our farmers had neither horse nor mule. For the rough work of cultivating the hillsides a single steer hitched to the "bull-tongue" was better adapted, and the same steer patiently dragged a little sled to the trading post. On steep declivities the sled is more practical than a cart or wagon, because it can go where wheels cannot, it does not require so wide a track, and it "brakes" automatically in going downhill. Nearly all the farmer's hauling is downhill to his home, or down farther to the village. A sled can be made quite easily by one man, out of wood growing on the spot, and with few iron fittings, or

none at all. The runners are usually made of natural sourwood crooks, this timber being chosen because it wears very smooth and does not fur up nor splinter.

The hinterland is naturally adapted to grazing, rather than to agriculture. As it stands, the best pasturage is high up in the mountains, where there are "balds" covered with succulent wild grass that resembles Kentucky bluegrass. Clearing and sowing would extend such areas indefinitely. The cattle forage for themselves through eight or nine months of the year, running wild like the razorbacks, and the only attention given them is when the herdsmen go out to salt them or to mark the calves. Nearly all the beasts are scrub stock. Jerseys, and other blooded cattle thrive in the valleys, where there are no free ranges, but the backwoodsman does not want "critters that haffter be gentled and hand-fed." The result is that many families go without milk a great part of the year, and seldom indeed taste butter or beef.

The truth is that mountain beef, being fed nothing but grass and browse, with barely enough corn and roughage to keep the animal alive through winter, is blue-fleshed, watery, and tough. If properly reared, the quality would be as good as any. Almost any of our farmers could have had a pasture near home and could have grown hay, but not one in ten would take the trouble. His cattle were only for export—let the buyer fatten them! It should be un-

derstood that nobody had any provision for taking care of fresh meat when the weather was not frosty.

On those rare occasions when somebody killed a beef, he had to travel all over the neighborhood to dispose of it in small portions. The carcass was cut up in the same way as a hog, and all parts except the cheap "bilin' pieces" were sold at the same price: ten cents a pound, or whatever they would bring on the spot. The butchering was done with an axe and a jackknife. The meat was either sliced thin and fried to a crackling, or cut in chunks and boiled furiously just long enough to fit it for boot-heels. What the butcher mangled, the cook damned.

Few sheep were raised in our settlement, and these only for their wool. The untamed Smokies were no place for such defenseless creatures. Sheep will not, cannot, run wild. They are wholly dependent on the fostering hand of man and perish without his shepherding. Curiously enough, our mountaineer knows little or nothing about the goat —an animal perfectly adapted to the free range of the Smokies. I am convinced that goats would be more profitable to the small farmers of the wild mountains than cattle. Goats do not graze, but browse upon the shrubbery, of which there is a vast superfluity in all the Southern mountains. Unlike the weak, timorous and stupid sheep, a flock of goats can fight their own battles against wild animals. They are hardy in any weather, and thrive

from their own pickings where other foragers would starve.

A good milch goat gives more and richer milk than the average mountain cow. And a kid yields excellent fresh meat in *manageable* quantity, at a time when no one would butcher a beef because it would spoil. I used to shut my eyes and imagine the transformation that would be wrought in these mountains by a colony of Swiss, who would turn the coves into gardens, the moderate slopes into orchards, the steeper ones into vineyards, by terracing, and who would export the finest of cheese made from the surplus milk of their goats. But our native mountaineers—well, a man who will not eat beef nor drink fresh cow's milk, and who despises butter, cannot be interested in anything of the dairy order.

The chickens ran wild and scratched for a living; hence were thin, tough, and poor layers. Eggs seldom were for sale. It was not of much use to try to raise many chickens where they were unprotected from hawks, minks, foxes, weasels and snakes.

Honey often was procured by spotting wild bees to their hoard and chopping the tree, a mild form of sport in which most settlers are expert. Our local preacher had a hundred hives of tame bees, producing 1,500 pounds of honey a year, for which he got ten cents a pound at the railroad.

The mainstay of every farmer, aside from his cornfield, was his litter of razorback hogs. "Old

cornbread and sowbelly" are a menu complete for the mountaineer. The wild pig, roaming foot-loose and free over hill and dale, picks up his own living at all seasons and requires no attention at all. He is the cheapest possible source of meat and yields the quickest return: "no other food animal can increase his own weight a hundred and fifty fold in the first eight months of his life." And so he is regarded by his owner with the same affection that Connemara Paddy bestows upon "the gintleman that pays the rint."

In physique and mentality, the razorback differs even more from a domestic hog than a wild goose does from a tame one. Shaped in front like a thin wedge, he can go through laurel thickets like a bear. Armored with tough hide cushioned by bristles, he despises thorns, brambles, and rattlesnakes, alike. His extravagantly long snout can scent like a cat's, and yet burrow, uproot, overturn, as if made of metal. The long legs, thin flanks, pliant hoofs, fit him to run like a deer and climb like a goat. In courage and sagacity he outranks all other beasts. A warrior born, he is also a strategist of the first order. Like man, he lives a communal life, and unites with others of his kind for purposes of defense.

The pig is the only large mammal I know of, besides man, whose eyes will not shine by reflected light—they are too bold and crafty, I wit. The razorback has a mind of his own; not instinct, but *mind*—whatever psychologists may say. He thinks.

Anybody can see that when he is not rooting or sleeping he is studying devilment. He shows remarkable understanding of human speech, especially profane speech, and even an uncanny gift of reading men's thoughts, whenever those thoughts are directed against the peace and dignity of pigship. He bears grudges, broods over indignities, and plans redresses for the morrow or the week after. If he cannot get even with you, he will lay for your unsuspecting friend. And at the last, when arrested in his crimes and lodged in the pen, he is liable to attacks of mania from sheer helpless rage.

If you camp out in the mountains, nothing will molest you but razorback hogs. Bears will flee and wildcats sneak to their dens, but the moment incense of cooking arises from your camp every pig within two miles will scent it and hasten to call. You may throw your arm out of joint: they will laugh in your face. You may curse in five languages: it is music to their titillating ears.

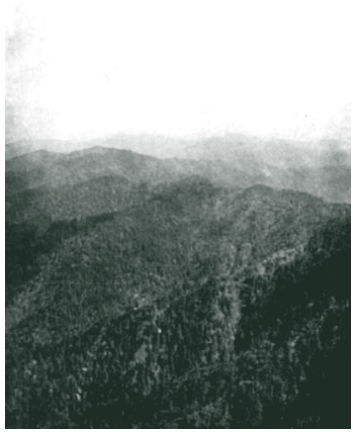
Throughout summer and autumn I cooked out of doors, on the woodsman's range of forked stakes and a lug-pole spanning parallel beds of rock. When the pigs came, I fed them red-pepper pie. Then all said good-bye to my hospitality save one slab-sided, tusky old boar—and he planned a campaign. At the first smell of smoke he would start for my premises. Hiding securely in a nearby thicket, he would spy on the operations until my stew got to simmering gently and I would retire to the cabin and get my fists in

the dough. Then, charging at speed, he would knock down a stake, trip the lug-pole, and send my dinner flying. Every day he would do this. It got so that I had to sit there facing the fire all through my cooking, or that beast of a hog would ruin me. With this I thought he was outgeneraled. Idle dream! He would slip off to my favorite neighbor's, break through the garden fence, and raise Ned instanter—all because he hated *me*, for that peppery fraud, and knew that Bob and I were cronies.

I dubbed this pig Belial; a name that Bob promptly adapted to his own notion by calling it Be-liar. "That Be-liar," swore he, "would cross hell on a rotten rail to git into my 'tater patch!"

Finally I could stand it no longer, and took down my rifle. It was a nail-driver, and I, through constant practice in beheading squirrels, was in good form. However, in the mountains it is more heinous to kill another man's pig than to shoot the owner. So I took craft for my guide, and guile for my heart's counsel. I stalked Belial as stealthily as ever hunter crept on an antelope against the wind. At last I had him dead right: broadside to me and motionless as if in a daydream. I knew that if I drilled his ear, or shot his tail clean off, it would only make him meaner than ever. He sported an uncommonly fine tail, and was proud to flaunt it. I drew down on that member, purposely a trifle scant, fired, and—away scuttled that boar, with a *broken* tail that would dangle and cling to him disgracefully through life.

Exit Belial! It was equivalent to a broken heart. He emigrated, or committed suicide, I know not which, but the Smoky Mountains knew him no more.



The Great Smokies from Mount Collins.
Photograph by Arthur Keith

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

For a long time my chief interest was not in human neighbors, but in the mountains themselves—in that mysterious beckoning hinterland which rose right back of my chimney and spread upward, outward, almost to three cardinal points of the compass, mile after mile, hour after hour of lusty climbing—an Eden still unpeopled and unspoiled.

I loved of a morning to slip on my haversack, pick up my rifle, or maybe a mere staff, and stride forth alone over haphazard routes, to enjoy in my own untutored way the infinite variety of form and color and shade, of plant and tree and animal life, in that superb wilderness that towered there far above all homes of men. (And I love it still, albeit the charm of new discovery is gone from those heights and gulfs that are now so intimate and full of memories).

The Carolina mountains have a character all their own. Rising abruptly from a low base, and then rounding more gradually upward for 2,000 to 5,000 feet above their valleys, their apparent height is more impressive than that of many a loftier summit in the West which forms only a protuberance on an elevated plateau. Nearly all of them are clad to their tops in dense forest and thick undergrowth. Here and there is a grassy "bald": a natural meadow curiously perched on the very top of a mountain. There are no bare, rocky summits rising above timber-line, few jutting crags, no ribs and vertebræ of the earth exposed. Seldom does one see even a naked ledge

of rock. The very cliffs are sheathed with trees and shrubs, so that one treading their edges has no fear of falling into an abyss.

Pinnacles or serrated ridges are rare. There are few commanding peaks. From almost any summit in Carolina one looks out upon a sea of flowing curves and dome-shaped eminences undulating, with no great disparity of height, unto the horizon. Almost everywhere the contours are similar: steep sides gradually rounding to the tops, smooth-surfaced to the eye because of the endless verdure. Every ridge is separated from its sisters by deep and narrow ravines. Not one of the thousand water courses shows a glint of its dashing stream, save where some far-off river may reveal, through a gap in the mountain, one single shimmering curve. In all this vast prospect, a keen eye, knowing where to look, may detect an occasional farmer's clearing, but to the stranger there is only mountain and forest, mountain and forest, as far as the eye can reach.

Characteristic, too, is the dreamy blue haze, like that of Indian summer intensified, that ever hovers over the mountains, unless they be swathed in cloud, or, for a few minutes, after a sharp rain-storm has cleared the atmosphere. Both the Blue Ridge and the Smoky Mountains owe their names to this tenuous mist. It softens all outlines, and lends a mirage-like effect of great distance to objects that are but a few miles off, while those farther removed

grow more and more intangible until finally the skyline blends with the sky itself.

The foreground of such a landscape, in summer, is warm, soft, dreamy, caressing, habitable; beyond it are gentle and luring solitudes; the remote ranges are inexpressibly lonesome, isolated and mysterious; but everywhere the green forest mantle bespeaks a vital present; nowhere does cold, bare granite stand as the sepulchre of an immemorial past.

And yet these very mountains of Carolina are among the ancients of the earth. They were old, very old, before the Alps and the Andes, the Rockies and the Himalayas were molded into their primal shapes. Upon them, in after ages, were born the first hardwoods of America—perhaps those of Europe, too—and upon them to-day the last great hardwood forests of our country stand in primeval majesty, mutely awaiting their imminent doom.

The richness of the Great Smoky forest has been the wonder and the admiration of everyone who has traversed it. As one climbs from the river to one of the main peaks, he passes successively through the same floral zones he would encounter in traveling from mid-Georgia to southern Canada.

Starting amid sycamores, elms, gums, willows, persimmons, chinquapins, he soon enters a region of beech, birch, basswood, magnolia, cucumber, butternut, holly, sourwood, box elder, ash, maple, buckeye, poplar, hemlock, and a great number

of other growths along the creeks and branches. On the lower slopes are many species of oaks, with hickory, hemlock, pitch pine, locust, dogwood, chestnut. In this region nearly all trees attain their fullest development. On north fronts of hills the oaks reach a diameter of five to six feet. In cool, rich coves, chestnut trees grow from six to nine feet across the stump; and tulip poplars up to ten or eleven feet, their straight trunks towering like gigantic columns, with scarcely a noticeable taper, seventy or eighty feet to the nearest limb.

Ascending above the zone of 3,000 feet, white oak is replaced by the no less valuable "mountain oak." Beech, birch, buckeye, and chestnut persist to 5,000 feet. Then, where the beeches dwindle until adult trees are only knee-high, there begins a sub-arctic zone of black spruce, balsam, striped maple, aspen and the "Peruvian" or red cherry.

I have named only a few of the prevailing growths. Nowhere else in the temperate zone is there such a variety of merchantable timber as in western Carolina and the Tennessee front of the Unaka system. About a hundred and twenty species of native trees grow in the Smoky Forest itself. When Asa Gray visited the North Carolina mountains he identified, in a thirty-mile trip, a greater variety of indigenous trees than could be observed in crossing Europe from England to Turkey, or in a trip from Boston to the Rocky Mountain plateau. As John Muir has said, our forests, "however slighted by man, must have

been a great delight to God; for they were the best He ever planted."

The undergrowth is of almost tropical luxuriance and variety. Botanists say that this is the richest collecting ground in the United States. Whether one be seeking ferns or fungi or orchids or almost anything else vegetal, each hour will bring him some new delight. In summer the upper mountains are one vast flower garden: the white and pink of rhododendron, the blaze of azalea, conspicuous above all else, in settings of every imaginable shade of green.

It was the botanist who discovered this Eden for us. Far back in the eighteenth century, when this was still "Cherokee Country," inhabited by no whites but a few Indian-traders, William Bartram of Philadelphia came plant-hunting into the mountains of western Carolina, and spread their fame to the world. One of his choicest finds was the fiery azalea, of which he recorded: "The epithet fiery I annex to this most celebrated species of azalea, as being expressive of the appearance of its flowers; which are in general of the color of the finest red-lead, orange, and bright gold, as well as yellow and cream-color. These various splendid colors are not only in separate plants, but frequently all the varieties and shades are seen in separate branches on the same plant; and the clusters of the blossoms cover the shrubs in such incredible profusion on the hillsides that, suddenly opening to view from dark shades, we are alarmed with apprehension of the

woods being set on fire. This is certainly the most gay and brilliant flowering shrub yet known."

And we of a later age, seeing the same wild gardens still unspoiled, can appreciate the almost religious fervor of those early botanists, as of Michaux, for example, who, in 1794, ascending the peak of Grandfather, broke out in song: "*Monté au sommet de la plus haut montagne de tout l'Amérique Septentrionale, chante avec mon compagnon-guide l'hymn de Marsellois, et crié, 'Vive la Liberté et la République Française!'*"

Of course Michaux was wildly mistaken in thinking Grandfather "the highest mountain in all North America." It is far from being even the highest of the Appalachians. Yet we scarcely know to-day, to a downright certainty, which peak is supreme among our Southern highlands. The honor is conceded to Mount Mitchell in the Black Mountains, northeast of Asheville. Still, the heights of the Carolina peaks have been taken (with but one exception, so far as I know) only by barometric measurements, and these, even when official, may vary as much as a hundred feet for the same mountain. Since the highest ten or a dozen of our Carolina peaks differ in altitude only one or two hundred feet, their actual rank has not yet been determined.

For a long time there was controversy as to whether Mount Mitchell or Clingman Dome was the crowning summit of eastern America. The Coast and Geodetic Survey gave the height of Mount

Mitchell as 6,688 feet; but later figures of the U. S. Geological Survey are 6,711 and 6,712. In 1859 Buckley claimed for Clingman Dome of the Smokies an altitude of 6,941 feet. In recent government reports the Dome appears variously as 6,619 and 6,660. In 1911 I was told by Mr. H. M. Ramseur that when he laid out the route of the railroad from Asheville to Murphy he ran a line of levels from a known datum on this road to the top of Clingman, and that the result was "four sixes" (6,666 feet above sea-level). It is probable that second place among the peaks of Appalachia may belong either to Clingman Dome or Guyot or LeConte, of the Smokies, or to Balsam Cone of the Black Mountains.

In any case, the Great Smoky mountains are the master chain of the Appalachian system, the greatest mass of highland east of the Rockies. This segment of the Unakas forms the boundary between North Carolina and Tennessee from the Big Pigeon River to the McDaniel Bald.

Although some parts of the Smokies are very rugged, with sharp changes of elevation, yet the range as a whole has no one dominating peak. Mount Guyot (pronounced *Gee*-o, with *g* as in get), Mount LeConte, and Clingman Dome all are over 6,600 feet and under 6,700, according to the most trustworthy measurements. Many miles of the divide rise 6,000 feet above sea-level, with only small undulations like ocean swells.

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The most rugged and difficult part of the Smokies (and of the United States east of Colorado) is in the sawtooth mountains between Collins and Guyot, at the headwaters of the Okona Lufty River. I know but few men who have ever followed this part of the divide, although during the present year trails have been cut from Clingman to Collins, or near it, and possibly others beyond to the northeastward.

In August and September, 1900, Mr. James H. Ferriss and wife, naturalists from Joliet, Illinois, explored the Smokies to the Lufty Gap northeast of Clingman, collecting rare species of snails and ferns. No doubt Mrs. Ferriss is the only white woman who ever went beyond Clingman or even ascended the Dome itself. She stayed at the Lufty Gap while her husband and a Carolina mountaineer of my acquaintance struggled through to Guyot and returned. Of this trip Mr. Ferriss sent me the following account:

"We bought another axe of a moonshiner, and, with a week's provisions on our backs, one of the guides and I took the Consolidated American Black Bear and Ruffed Grouse Line for Mount Guyot, twenty miles farther by map measurement. The bears were in full possession of the property, and we could get no information in the settlements, as the settlers do not travel this line. They did not know the names of the peaks other than as tops of the Great Smokies—knew nothing of the character

of the country except that it was rough. The Tennesseeans seem afraid of the mountains, and the Cherokees of the North Carolina side equally so; for, two miles from camp, all traces of man, except surveyors' marks, had disappeared. In the first two days we routed eight bears out of their nests and mud wallows, and they seemed to stay routed, for upon our return we found the blackberry crop unharvested and had a bag pudding—'duff'—or what you call it.

"A surveyor had run part of the line this year, which helped us greatly, and the bears had made well-beaten trails part of the way. In places they had mussed up the ground as much as a barnyard. We tried to follow the boundary line between the two States, which is exactly upon the top of the Smokies, but often missed it. The government [state] surveyor many years ago made two hacks upon the trees, but sometimes the linemen neglected to use their axes for half a mile or so. It took us three and one-half days to go, and two and one-half to return, and we arose with the morning star and worked hard all day. The last day and a half, going, there was nothing to guide us but the old hacks.

"Equipped with government maps, a good compass, and a little conceit, I thought I could follow the boundary-line. In fact, at one time we intended to go through without a guide. A trail that runs through blackberry bushes two miles out of three is hard to follow. Then there was a huckleberry bush reaching

to our waists growing thickly upon the ground as tomato vines, curled hard, and stubborn; and laurel much like a field of lilac bushes, crooked and strong as iron. In one place we walked fully a quarter of a mile over the tops of laurel bushes and these were ten or twelve feet in height, but blown over one way by the wind. Much of the trail was along rocky edges, sometimes but six inches or so wide, but almost straight down on both sides for hundreds of feet. One night, delayed by lack of water, we did not camp till dark, and, finding a smooth spot, lay down with a small log on each side to hold us from rolling out of bed. When daylight came we found that, had we rolled over the logs, my partner would have dropped 500 feet into Tennessee and I would have dropped as far into North Carolina, unless some friendly tree top had caught us. Sometimes the mountain forked, and these ridges, concealed by the balsams, would not be seen. Then there were round knobs—and who can tell where the highest ridge lies on a round mountain or a ball? My woolen shirt was torn off to the shoulders, and my partner, who had started out with corduroys, stayed in the brush until I got him a pair of overalls from camp."

Even to the west of Clingman a stranger is likely to find some desperately rough travel if he should stray from the trail that follows the divide. It is easy going for anyone in fair weather, but when cloud settles on the mountain, as it often does without warning, it may be so thick that one cannot see a tree ten

feet away. Under such circumstances I have myself floundered from daylight till dark through heart-breaking laurel thickets, and without a bite to eat, not knowing whither I was going except that it was toward the Little Tennessee River.

In 1906 I spent the summer in a herders' hut on top of the divide, just west of the Locust Ridge (mis-called Chestnut Ridge on the map), about six miles east of Thunderhead. This time I had a partner, and we had a glorious three months of it, nearly a mile above sea-level, and only half a day's climb from the nearest settlement. One day I was alone, Andy having gone down to Medlin for the mail. It had rained a good deal—in fact, there was a shower nearly every day throughout the summer, the only semblance of a dry season in the Smokies being the autumn and early winter. The nights were cold enough for fires and blankets, even in our well-chinked cabin.

Well, I had finished my lonesome dinner, and was washing up, when I saw a man approaching. This was an event, for we seldom saw other men than our two selves. He was a lame man, wearing an iron extension on one foot, and he hobbled with a cane. He looked played-out and gaunt. I met him outside. He smiled as though I looked good to him, and asked with some eagerness, "Can I buy something to eat here?"

"No," I answered, "you can't buy anything here"—how his face fell!—"but I'll give you the best we have, and you're welcome."

Then you should have seen that smile!

He seemed to have just enough strength left to drag himself into the hut. I asked no questions, though wondering what a cripple, evidently a gentleman, though in rather bad repair, was doing on top of the Smoky Mountains. It was plain that he had spent more than one night shelterless in the cold rain, and that he was quite famished. While I was baking the biscuit and cooking some meat, he told his story. This is the short of it:

"I am a Canadian, McGill University man, electrician. My company sent me to Cincinnati. I got a vacation of a couple of weeks, and thought I'd take a pedestrian tour. I can walk better than you'd think," and he tapped the short leg.

I liked his grit.

"I knew no place to go," he continued; "so I took a map and looked for what might be interesting country, not too far from Cincinnati. I picked out these mountains, got a couple of government topographical sheets, and, thinking they would serve like European ordnance maps, I had no fear of going astray. It was my plan to walk through to the Balsam Mountains, and so on to the Big Pigeon River. I went to Maryville, Tennessee, and there I was told that I would find a cabin every five or six miles along the summit from Thunderhead to the Balsams."

I broke in abruptly: "Whoever told you that was either an impostor or an ignoramus. There are only four of these shacks on the whole Smoky range.

Two of them, the Russell cabin and the Spencer place, you have already passed without knowing it. This is called the Hall cabin. None of these three are occupied save for a week or so in the fall when the cattle are being rounded up, or by chance, as my partner and I happen to be here now. Beyond this there is just one shack, at Siler's Meadow. It is down below the summit, hidden in timber, and you would never have seen it. Even if you had, you would have found it as bare as a last year's mouse nest, for nobody ever goes there except a few bear-hunters. From there onward for forty miles is an uninhabited wilderness so rough that you could not make seven miles a day in it to save your life, even if you knew the course; and there is no trail at all. Those government maps are good and reliable to show the *approaches* to this wild country, but where you need them most they are good for nothing."

"Then," said he, "if I had missed your cabin I would have starved to death, for I depended on finding a house to the eastward, and would have followed the trail till I dropped. I have been out in the laurel thickets, now, three days and two nights; so nothing could have induced me to leave this trail, once I found it, or until I could see out to a house on one side or other of the mountain."

"You would see no house on either side from here to beyond Guyot, about forty miles. Had you no rations at all?"

"I traveled light, expecting to find entertainment among the natives. Here is what I have left."

He showed me a crumpled buckwheat flapjack, a pinch of tea, and a couple of ounces of brandy.

"I was saving them for the last extremity; have had nothing to eat since yesterday morning. Drink the brandy, please; it came from Montreal."

"No, my boy, that liquor goes down your own throat instanter. You're the chap that needs it. This coffee will boil now in a minute. I won't give you all the food you want, for it wouldn't be prudent; but by and by you shall have a bellyful."

Then, as well as he could, he sketched the route he had followed. Where the trail from Tennessee crosses from Thunderhead to Haw Gap he had swerved off from the divide, and he discovered his error somewhere in the neighborhood of Blockhouse. There, instead of retracing his steps, he sought a short-cut by plunging down to the headwaters of Haw Creek, thus worming deeper and deeper into the devil's nest. One more day would have finished him. When I told him that the trip from Clingman to Guyot would be hard work for a party of experienced mountaineers, and that it would probably take them a week, during which time they would have to pack all supplies on their own backs, he agreed that his best course would be down into Carolina and out to the railroad.

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Of animal life in the mountains I was most entertained by the raven. This extraordinary bird was the first creature Noah liberated from the ark—he must have known, even at that early period of nature study, that it was the most sagacious of all winged things. Or perhaps Noah and the raven did not get on well together and he rid himself of the pest at first opportunity. Doubtless there could have been no peace aboard a craft that harbored so inquisitive and talkative a fowl. Anyway, the wild raven has been superlatively shy of man ever since the flood.

Probably there is no place south of Labrador where our raven (*Corvus corax principalis*) is seen so often as in the Smokies; and yet, even here, a man may haunt the tops for weeks without sight or sound of the ebon mystery—then, for a few days, they will be common. On the southeast side of the Locust Ridge, opposite Huggins's Hell, between Bone Valley and the main fork of Hazel Creek, there is a "Raven's Cliff" where they winter and breed, using the same nests year after year. Occasionally one is trapped, with bloody groundhog for bait; but I have yet to meet a man who has succeeded in shooting one.

If the raven's body be elusive his tongue assuredly is not. No other animal save man has anything like his vocal range. The raven croaks, clucks, caws, chuckles, squalls, pleads, "pooh-poohs," grunts, barks, mimics small birds, hectors, cajoles—yes,

pulls a cork, whets a scythe, files a saw—with his throat. As is well known, ravens can be taught human speech, like parrots; and I am told they show the same preference for bad words—which, I think, is quite in character with their reputation as thieves and butchers. However, I may be prejudiced, seeing that the raven's favorite dainties for his menu are the eyes of living fawns and lambs.

A stranger in these mountains will be surprised at the apparent scarcity of game animals. It is not unusual for one to hunt all day in an absolute wilderness, where he sees never a fresh track of man, and not get a shot at anything fit to eat. The cover is so dense that one still-hunting (going without dogs) has poor chance of spying the game that lurks about him; and there really is little of it by comparison with such huntings fields as the Adirondacks, Maine, Canada, where game has been conserved for many years. It used to be the same up there. The late W. J. Stillman, writing in 1877 of the Maine woods, said:

> "The most striking feature of the forest, after one has become habituated to the gloom, the pathlessness, and the apparent impenetrability of the screen it forms around him, is the absence of animal life. You may wander for hours without seeing a living creature.... One thinks of the woods and the wild beasts; yet in all the years of my wilderness living I can catalogue the wild creatures other than squirrels, grouse, and small birds (never plenty, generally very rare) which I have accidentally encountered and seen while wandering for hunting or mere pastime in the

> wild forest; one deer, one porcupine, one marten (commonly called sable), and maybe half a dozen hares. You may walk hours and not see a living creature larger than a fly, for days together and not see a grouse, a squirrel, or a bird larger than the Canada jay.... Lands running with game are like those flowing with milk and honey; and when the sporting books tell you that game is abundant, don't imagine that you are assured from starvation thereby. I have been reduced, in a country where deer were swarming, to live several days together on corn meal."

It is much the same to-day in our Appalachian wilderness, where no protection worthy the name has ever been afforded the game and fish since Indian times. There is a class of woods-loafers, very common here, that ranges the forest at all seasons with single-barrel shotguns or "hog rifles," killing bearing females as well as legitimate game, fishing at night, even using dynamite in the streams; and so, in spite of the fact that there is no better game harborage granted by Nature on our continent than the Carolina mountains, the deer are all but exterminated in most districts, turkeys and even squirrels are rather scarce, and good trout fishing is limited to stocked waters or streams flowing through virgin forest. The only game animal that still holds his own is the black bear, and he endures in few places other than the roughest districts, such as that southwest of the Sugarland Mountains, where laurel and cliffs daunt all but the hardiest of men.

The only venomous snakes in the mountains are rattlers and copperheads, the former common, the

latter rare. The chance of being bitten by one is about as remote as that of being struck by lightning —either accident *might* happen, of course. The mountaineers have an absurd notion that the little lizard so common in the hills is rank "pizen." Oddly enough, they call it a "scorpion."

From those two pests of the North Woods, black-flies and mosquitoes, the Smokies are mercifully exempt. At least there are no mosquitoes that bite or sting, except down in the river valleys where they have been introduced by railroad trains—and even there they are but a feeble folk. The reason is that in the mountains there is almost no standing water where they can breed.

On the other hand, the common house-fly is extraordinarily numerous and persistent—a daily curse, even on top of Smoky. I imagine this is due to the wet climate, as in Ireland. Minute gnats (the "punkies" or "no-see-ums" of the North) are also offensively present in trout-fishing time. And every cabin is alive with fleas. A hundred nights I have anointed myself with citronella from head to foot, and outsmelt a cheap barber-shop, to escape their plague. In a tent, and without dogs, one can be immune.

In most years there are very few chiggers, except on pine ridges. They are worse along rivers than in the mountains. The ticks of this country are not numerous, and seldom fasten on man.

The climate of the Carolina mountains is pleasantly cool in summer. Even at low altitudes (1,600 to 2,000 feet) the nights generally are refreshing. It may be hot in the sun, but always cool in the shade. The air is drier (less relative humidity) than in the lowlands, notwithstanding that there is greater rainfall here than elsewhere in the United States outside of Florida and the Puget Sound country. The annual rainfall varies a great deal according to locality, being least at Asheville (42 inches) and greatest on the southeastern slope of the Blue Ridge, where as much as 105 inches has been recorded in a year. The average rainfall of the whole region is 73 inches a year.[2]

In general the mornings are apt to be lowery, with fogs hanging low until, say, 9 o'clock, so that one cannot predict weather for the day. Heavy dews remain on the bushes until about the same hour.

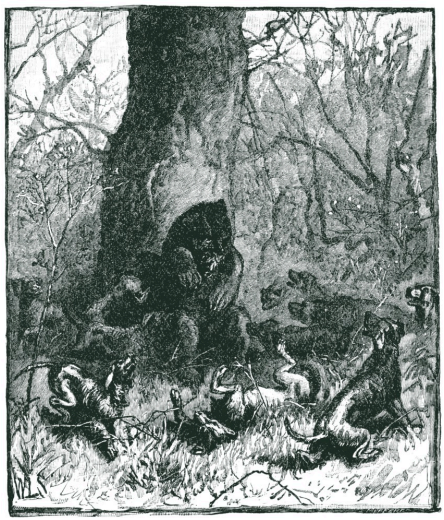
The winters are short. What Northerners would call cold weather is not expected until Christmas, and generally it is gone by the end of February. Snow sometimes falls on the higher mountains by the first of October, and the last snow may linger there until April (exceptionally it falls in May). Tornadoes are unknown here, but sometimes a hurricane will sweep the upper ranges. On April 19, 1900, a blizzard from the northwest struck the Smokies. In twenty minutes everything was frozen. At Siler's

[2] Average annual rainfall of New York City, 44 inches; of Glencoe, in the Scotch Highlands, nearly 130 inches.

Meadow seventeen cattle climbed upon each other for warmth and froze to death in a solid hecatomb. A herdsman who was out at the time, and narrowly escaped a similar fate, assured me that "that was the beatenest snowstorm ever I seen." In the valleys there may be a few days in January and February when the mercury drops to zero or a few degrees lower. On the high peaks, of course, the winter cold often is intense, and on the sunless north side of Clingman there are overhangs or crevices where a little ice may be found the year around.

Undoubtedly there is vast mineral wealth hidden in the Carolina mountains. A greater variety of minerals has been found here than in any other State save Colorado. But, for the present, it is a hard country to prospect in, owing to the thick covering of the forest floor. Not only is the underbrush very dense, but beneath it there generally is a thick stratum of clay overlaying the rocks, even on steep slopes. Gold has been found in numberless places, but finely disseminated. I do not know a locality in the mountains proper where a working vein has been discovered. At my cabin I did just enough panning to get a notion that if I could stand working in icy water ten hours a day I might average a dollar in yellow dust by it. The adjacent copper mine carries considerable gold. Silver and lead are not common, so far as known, but there are many good copper and iron properties. Gems are mined profitably in several of the western counties. The corundum,

mica, talc, and monazite are, I believe, unexcelled in the United States. Building stone is abundant, and there is fine marble in various places. Kaolin is shipped out in considerable quantities. The rocks chiefly are gneisses, granites, metamorphosed marbles, quartzites, and slates, all of them far too old to bear fossils or coal.



The Final Struggle, 1883

CHAPTER IV

A BEAR HUNT IN THE SMOKIES

"Git up, pup! you've scrouged right in hyur in front of the fire. You Dred! what makes you so blamed contentious?"

Little John shoved both dogs into a corner, and strove to scrape some coals from under a beech forestick that glowed almost hot enough to melt brass.

"This is the wust coggled-up fire I ever seed, to fry by. Bill, hand me some Old Ned from that suggin o' mine."

A bearded hunchback reached his long arm to a sack that hung under our rifles, drew out a chuck of salt pork, and began slicing it with his jackknife. On inquiry I learned that "Old Ned" is merely slang for fat pork, but that "suggin" or "sujjit" (the *u* pronounced like *oo* in look) is true mountain dialect for a pouch, valise, or carryall, its etymology being something to puzzle over.

Four dogs growled at each other under a long bunk of poles and hay that spanned one side of our cabin. The fire glared out upon the middle of an unfloored and windowless room. Deep shadows clung to the walls and benches, charitably concealing much dirt and disorder left by previous occupants, much litter of our own contributing.

At last we were on a saddle of the divide, a mile above sea-level, in a hut built years ago for temporary lodgment of cattle-men herding on the grassy "balds" of the Smokies. A sagging clapboard roof covered its two rooms and the open space between

them that we called our "entry." The State line between North Carolina and Tennessee ran through this uninclosed hallway. The Carolina room had a puncheon floor and a clapboard table, also better bunks than its mate; but there had risen a stiff southerly gale that made the chimney smoke so abominably that we were forced to take quarters in the neighbor State.

Granville lifted the lid from a big Dutch oven and reported "Bread's done."

There was a flash in the frying-pan, a curse and a puff from Little John. The coffee-pot boiled over. We gathered about the hewn benches that served for tables, and sat *à la Turc* upon the ground. For some time there was no sound but the gale without and the munching of ravenous men.

"If this wind 'll only cease afore mornin', we'll git us a bear to-morrow."

A powerful gust struck the cabin, by way of answer; a great roaring surged up from the gulf of Defeat, from Desolation, and from the other forks of Bone Valley—clamor of ten thousand trees struggling with the blast.

"Hit's gittin' wusser."

"Any danger of this roost being blown off the mountain?" I inquired.

"Hit's stood hyur twenty year through all the storms; I reckon it can stand one more night of it."

"A man couldn't walk upright, outside the cabin," I asserted, thinking of the St. Louis tornado, in which I had lain flat on my belly, clinging to an iron post.

The hunchback turned to me with a grave face. "I've seed hit blow, here on top o' Smoky, till a hoss couldn't stand up agin it. You'll spy, to-morrow, whar several trees has been wind-throwed and busted to kindlin'."

I recalled that several, in the South, means many —"a good many," as our own tongues phrase it.

"Oh, shucks! Bill Cope," put in "Doc" Jones, "whut do you-uns know about windstorms? Now, *I've* hed some experiencin' up hyur that'll do to tell about. You remember the big storm three year ago, come grass, when the cattle all huddled up a-top o' each other and friz in one pile, solid."

Bill grunted an affirmative.

"Wal, sir, I was a-herdin', over at the Spencer Place, and was out on Thunderhead when the wind sprung up. Thar come one turrible vyg'rous blow that jest nacherally lifted the ground. I went up in the sky, my coat ripped off, and I went a-sailin' end-over-end."

"Yes?"

"Yes. About half an hour later, I lit *spang* in the mud, way down yander in Tuckaleechee Cove—yes, sir: ten mile as the crow flies, and a mile deeper 'n trout-fish swim."

There was silence for a moment. Then Little John spoke up: "I mind about that time, Doc; but I disre-

member which buryin'-ground they-all planted ye in."

"Planted! *Me?* Huh! But I had one tormentin' time findin' my hat!"

The cabin shook under a heavier blast, to match Bill's yarn.

"Old Wind-maker's blowin' liars out o' North Car'lina. Hang on to yer hat, Doc! Whoop! hear 'em a-comin'!"

"Durn this blow, anyhow! No bear 'll cross the mountain sich a night as this."

"Can't we hunt down on the Carolina side?" I asked.

"That's whar we're goin' to drive; but hit's no use if the bear don't come over."

"How is that? Do they sleep in one State and eat in the other?"

"Yes: you see, the Tennessee side of the mountain is powerful steep and laurely, so 't man nor dog cain't git over it in lots o' places; that's whar the bears den. But the mast, sich as acorns and beech and hickory nuts, is mostly on the Car'lina side; that's whar they hafter come to feed. So, when it blows like this, they stay at home and suck their paws till the weather clars."

"So we'll have to do, at this rate."

"I'll go see whut the el-e-ments looks like."

We arose from our squatting postures. John opened the little clapboard door, which swung violently backward as another gust boomed against the

cabin. Dust and hot ashes scattered in every direction. The dogs sprang up, one encroached upon another, and they flew at each other's throats. They were powerful beasts, dangerous to man as well as to the brutes they were trained to fight; but John was their master, and he soon booted them into surly subjection.

"The older dog don't ginerally raise no ruction; hit's the younger one that's ill," by which he meant vicious. "You, Coaly, you'll git some o' that meanness shuck outen you if you tackle an old she-bear to-morrow!"

"Has the young dog ever fought a bear?"

"No; he don't know nothin'; but I reckon he'll pick up some larnin' in the next two, three days."

"Have these dogs got the Plott strain? I've been told that the Plott hounds are the best bear dogs in the country."

"'Tain't so," snorted John. "The Plott curs are the best: that is, half hound, half cur—though what we-uns calls the cur, in this case, raelly comes from a big furrin dog that I don't rightly know the breed of. Fellers, you can talk as you please about a streak o' the cur spilin' a dog; but I know hit ain't so—not for bear fightin' in these mountains, whar you cain't foller up on hossback, but hafter do your own runnin'."

"What is the reason, John?"

"Waal, hit's like this: a plumb cur, of course, cain't foller a cold track—he just runs by sight; and he

won't hang—he quits. But, t'other way, no hound 'll raelly fight a bear—hit takes a big severe dog to do that. Hounds has the best noses, and they'll run a bear all day and night, and the next day, too; but they won't never tree—they're afeared to close in. Now, look at them dogs o' mine. A cur ain't got no dew-claws—them dogs has. My dogs can foller ary trail, same's a hound; but they'll run right in on the varmint, snappin' and chawin' and worryin' him till he gits so mad you can hear his tushes pop half a mile. He cain't run away—he haster stop every bit, and fight. Finally he gits so tired and het up that he trees to rest hisself. Then we-uns ketches up and finishes him."

"Mebbe you-uns don't know that a dew-clawed dog is snake-proof——"

But somebody, thinking that dog-talk had gone far enough, produced a bottle of soothing-syrup that was too new to have paid tax. Then we discovered that there was musical talent, of a sort, in Little John. He cut a pigeon-wing, twirled around with an imaginary banjo, and sang in a quaint minor:

Did you *ever* see the devil,
With his *pitchfork* and ladle,
And his *old* iron shovel,
And his old gourd head?
O, I *will* go to meetin',
And I *will* go to meetin',
Yes, I *will* go to meetin',
In an old tin pan.

Other songs followed, with utter irrelevance—mere snatches from "ballets" composed, mainly, by the mountaineers themselves, though some dated back to a long-forgotten age when the British ancestors of these Carolina woodsmen were battling with lance and long-bow. It was one of modern and local origin that John was singing when there came a diversion from without—

La-a-ay down, boys,
  Le's take a nap:
Thar's goin' to be trouble
  In the Cumberland Gap—

Our ears were stunned by one sudden thundering crash. The roof rose visibly, as though pushed upward from within. In an instant we were blinded by moss and dried mud—the chinking blown from between the logs of our shabby cabin. Dred and Coaly cowered as though whipped, while "Doc's" little hound slunk away in the keen misery of fear. We men looked at each other with lowered eyelids and the grim smile that denotes readiness, though no special eagerness, for dissolution. Beyond the "gant-lot" we could hear trees and limbs popping like skirmishers in action.

Then that tidal wave of air swept by. The roof settled again with only a few shingles missing. We went to "redding up." Squalls broke against the mountainside, hither and yon, like the hammer of Thor testing the foundations of the earth. But they were below us. Here, on top, there was only the

steady drive of a great surge of wind; and speech was possible once more.

"Fellers, you want to mark whut you dream about, to-night: hit'll shore come true to-morrow."

"Yes: but you mustn't tell whut yer dream was till the hunt's over, or it'll spile the charm."

There ensued a grave discussion of dream-lore, in which the illiterates of our party declared solemn faith. If one dreamt of blood, he would surely see blood the next day. Another lucky sign for a hunter was to dream of quarreling with a woman, for that meant a she-bear; it was favorable to dream of clear water, but muddy water meant trouble.

The wind died away. When we went out for a last observation of the weather we found the air so clear that the lights of Knoxville were plainly visible, in the north-north west, thirty-two miles in an air line. Not another light was to be seen on earth, although in some directions we could scan for nearly a hundred miles. The moon shone brightly. Things looked rather favorable for the morrow, after all.

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"Brek-k-k-*fust*!"

I awoke to a knowledge that somebody had built a roaring fire and was stirring about. Between the cabin logs one looked out upon a starry sky and an almost pitch-dark world. What did that pottering vagabond mean by arousing us in the middle of the night? But I was hungry. Everybody half arose on

elbows and blinked about. Then we got up, each after his fashion, except one scamp who resumed snoring.

"Whar's that brekfust you're yellin' about?"

"Hit's for you-uns to help *git*! I knowed I couldn't roust ye no other way. Here, you, go down to the spring and fetch water. Rustle out, boys; we've got to git a soon start if you want bear brains an' liver for supper."

The "soon start" tickled me into good humor.

Our dogs were curled together under the long bunk, having popped indoors as soon as the way was opened. Somebody trod on Coaly's tail. Coaly snapped Dred. Instantly there was action between the four. It is interesting to observe what two or three hundred pounds of dog can do to a ramshackle berth with a man on top of it. Poles and hay and ragged quilts flew in every direction. Sleepy Matt went down in the midst of the mêlée, swearing valiantly. I went out and hammered ice out of the wash-basin while Granville and John quelled the riot. Presently our frying-pans sputtered and the huge coffee-pot began to get up steam.

"Waal, who dreamt him a good dream?"

"I did," affirmed the writer. "I dreamt that I had an old colored woman by the throat and was choking dollars out of her mouth——"

"Good la!" exclaimed four men in chorus; "you hadn't orter a-told."

"Why? Wasn't that a lovely dream?"

"Hit means a she-bear, shore as a cap-shootin' gun; but you've done spiled it all by tellin'. Mebbe somebody'll git her to-day, but *you* won't—your chanct is ruined."

So the reader will understand why, in this veracious narrative, I cannot relate any heroic exploits of my own in battling with Ursus Major. And so you, ambitious one, when you go into the Smokies after that long-lost bear, remember these two cardinal points of the Law:

(1) Dream that you are fighting some poor old colored woman. (That is easy: the victuals you get will fix up your dream, all right.) And—

(2) Keep your mouth shut about it.

There was still no sign of rose-color in the eastern sky when we sallied forth. The ground, to use a mountaineer's expression, was "all spewed up with frost." Rime crackled underfoot and our mustaches soon stiffened in the icy wind.

It was settled that Little John Cable and the hunchback Cope should take the dogs far down into Bone Valley and start the drive, leaving Granville, "Doc," Matt, and myself to picket the mountain. I was given a stand about half a mile east of the cabin, and had but a vague notion of where the others went.

By jinks, it was cold! I built a little fire between the buttressing roots of a big mountain oak, but still my toes and fingers were numb. This was the 25th of November, and we were at an altitude where

sometimes frost forms in July. The other men were more thinly clad than I, and with not a stitch of wool beyond their stockings; but they seemed to revel in the keen air. I wasted some pity on Cope, who had no underwear worthy of the name; but afterwards I learned that he would not have worn more clothes if they had been given him. Many a night my companions had slept out on the mountain without blanket or shelter, when the ground froze and every twig in the forest was coated with rime from the winter fog.

Away out yonder beyond the mighty bulk of Clingman Dome, which, black with spruce and balsam, looked like a vast bear rising to contemplate the northern world, there streaked the first faint, nebulous hint of dawn. Presently the big bear's head was tipped with a golden crown flashing against the scarlet fires of the firmament, and the earth awoke.

A rustling some hundred yards below me gave signal that the gray squirrels were on their way to water. Out of a tree overhead hopped a mountain "boomer" (red squirrel), and down he came, eyed me, and stopped. Cocking his head to one side he challenged peremptorily: "Who are you? Stump? Stump? Not a stump. What the deuce!"

I moved my hand.

"Lawk—the booger-man! Run, run, run!"

Somewhere from the sky came a strange, half-human note, as of someone chiding: "*Wal*-lace, *Wal*-lace, *Wat*!" I could get no view for the trees. Then the voice flexibly changed to a deep-toned

"Co-*logne*, Co-*logne*, Co-*logne*," that rang like a bell through the forest aisles.

Two names uttered distinctly from the air! Two scenes conjured in a breath, vivid but unrelated as in dreams: Wallace—an iron-bound Scottish coast; Cologne—tall spires, and cliffs along the Rhine! What magic had flashed such pictures upon a remote summit of the Smoky Mountains?

The weird speaker sailed into view—a raven. Forward it swept with great speed of ebon wings, fairly within gunshot for one teasing moment. Then, as if to mock my gaping stupor, it hurtled like a hawk far into the safe distance, whence it flung back loud screams of defiance and chuckles of derision.

As the morning drew on, I let the fire die to ashes and basked lazily in the sun. Not a sound had I heard from the dogs. My hoodoo was working malignly. Well, let it work. I was comfortable now, and that old bear could go to any other doom she preferred. It was pleasant enough to lie here alone in the forest and be free! Aye, it was good to be alive, and to be far, far away from the broken bottles and old tin cans of civilization.

For many a league to the southward clouds covered all the valleys in billows of white, from which rose a hundred mountain tops, like islands in a tropic ocean. My fancy sailed among and beyond them, beyond the horizon's rim, even unto those far seas that I had sailed in my youth, to the old times and the old friends that I should never see again.

But a forenoon is long-drawn-out when one has breakfasted before dawn, and has nothing to do but sit motionless in the woods and watch and listen. I got to fingering my rifle trigger impatiently and wishing that a wild Thanksgiving gobbler might blunder into view. Squirrels made ceaseless chatter all around my stand. Large hawks shrilled by me within tempting range, whistling like spent bullets. A groundhog sat up on a log and whistled, too, after a manner of his own. He was so near that I could see his nose wiggle. A skunk waddled around for twenty minutes, and once came so close that I thought he would nibble my boot. I was among old mossy beeches, scaled with polyphori, and twisted into postures of torture by their battles with the storms. Below, among chestnuts and birches, I could hear the *t-wee, t-wee* of "joree-birds" (towhees), which winter in the valleys. Incessantly came the *chip-chip-cluck* of ground squirrels, the saucy bark of the grays, and great chirruping among the "boomers," which had ceased swearing and were hard at work.

Far off on my left a rifle cracked. I pricked up and listened intently, but there was never a yelp from a dog. Since it is a law of the chase to fire at nothing smaller than turkeys, lest big game be scared away, this shot might mean a gobbler. I knew that Matt Hyde could not, to save his soul, sit ten minutes on a stand without calling turkeys (and he *could* call them, with his unassisted mouth, better than

anyone I ever heard perform with leaf or wing-bone or any other contrivance).

Thus the slow hours dragged along. I yearned mightily to stretch my legs. Finally, being certain that no drive would approach my stand that day, I ambled back to the hut and did a turn at dinner-getting. Things were smoking, and smelt good, by the time four of our men turned up, all of them dog-tired and disappointed, but stoical.

"That pup Coaly chased off atter a wildcat," blurted John. "We held the old dogs together and let him rip. Then Dred started a deer. It was that old buck that everybody's shot at, and missed, this three year back. I'd believe he's a hant if 't wasn't for his tracks—they're the biggest I ever seen. He must weigh two hunderd and fifty. But he's a foxy cuss. Tuk right down the bed o' Desolation, up the left prong of Roaring Fork, right through the Devil's Race-path (how a deer can git through thar I don't see!), crossed at the Meadow Gap, went down Eagle Creek, and by now he's in the Little Tennessee. That buck, shorely to God, has wings!"

We were at table in the Carolina room when Matt Hyde appeared. Sure enough, he bore a turkey hen.

"I was callin' a gobbler when this fool thing showed up. I fired a shoot as she riz in the air, but only bruk her wing. She made off on her legs like the devil whoppin' out fire. I run, an' she run. Guess I run her half a mile through all-fired thickets. She piped '*Quit—quit*,' but I said, 'I'll see you in hell afore

I quit!' and the chase resumed. Finally I knocked her over with a birch stob, and here we are."

Matt ruefully surveyed his almost denuded legs, evidence of his chase. "Boys," said he, "I'm nigh breechless!"

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None but native-born mountaineers could have stood the strain of another drive that day, for the country that Cope and Cable had been through was fearful, especially the laurel up Roaring Fork and Killpeter Ridge. But the stamina of these "withey" little men was even more remarkable than their endurance of cold. After a small slice of fried pork, a chunk of half-baked johnny-cake, and a pint or so of coffee, they were as fresh as ever.

What soldiers these fellows would make, under leadership of some backwoods Napoleon who could hold them together!—some man like Daniel Morgan of the Revolution, who was one of them, yet greater!

I had made the coffee strong, and it was good stuff that I had brought from home. After his first deep draught, Little John exclaimed:

"Hah! boys, that coffee hits whar ye hold it!"

I thought that a neat compliment from a sharpshooter.

We took new stands; but the afternoon passed without incident to those of us on the mountain tops. I returned to camp about five o'clock, and was

surprised to see three of our men lugging across the "gant-lot"[3] toward the cabin a small female bear.

"Hyur's yer old nigger woman," shouted John.

The hunters showed no elation—in fact, they looked sheepish—and I suspected a nigger in the woodpile.

"How's this? I didn't hear any drive."

"There wa'n't none."

"Then where did you get your bear?"

"In one of Wit Hensley's traps, dum him! Boys, I wish t' we *hed* roasted the temper outen them trap-springs, like we talked o' doin'."

"Was the bear alive?"

"Live as a hot coal. See the pup's head!"

I examined Coaly, who looked sick. The flesh was torn from his lower jaw and hung down a couple of inches. Two holes in the top of his head showed where the bear's tusks had tried to crack his skull.

"When the other dogs found her, he rushed right in. She hadn't been trapped more'n a few hours, and she larned Coaly somethin' about the bear business."

"Won't this spoil him for hunting hereafter?"

"Not if he has his daddy's and mammy's grit. We'll know by to-morrow whether he's a shore-enough bear dog; for I've larned now whar they're crossin'—

[3] *Gant-lot*: a fenced enclosure into which cattle are driven after cutting them out from those of other owners. So called because the mountain cattle run wild, feeding only on grass and browse, and "they couldn't travel well to market when filled up on green stuff: so they're penned up to git *gant* and nimble."

seed sign a-plenty and it's spang fraish. Coaly, old boy! you-uns won't be so feisty and brigaty after this, will ye!"

"John, what do those two words mean?"

"*Good* la! whar was you fotch up? Them's common. They mean nigh about the same thing, only there's a differ. When I say that Doc Jones thar is brigaty among women-folks, hit means that he's stuck on hisself and wants to show off——"

"And John Cable's sulkin' around with his nose out o' jint," interjected "Doc."

"Feisty," proceeded the interpreter, "feisty means when a feller's allers wigglin' about, wantin' ever'body to see him, like a kid when the preacher comes. You know a feist is one o' them little bitty dogs that ginerally runs on three legs and pretends a whole lot."

All of us were indignant at the setter of the trap. It had been hidden in a trail, with no sign to warn a man from stepping into it. In Tennessee, I was told, it is a penitentiary offense to set out a bear trap. We agreed that a similar law ought to be passed as soon as possible in North Carolina.

"It's only two years ago," said Granville to me, "that Jasper Millington, an old man living on the Tennessee side, started acrost the mountain to get work at the Everett mine, where you live. Not fur from where we are now, he stepped into a bear trap that was hid in the leaves, like this one. It broke his leg, and he starved to death in it."

Despite our indignation meeting, it was decided to carry the trapped bear's hide to Hensley, and for us to use only the meat as recompense for trouble, to say nothing of risk to life and limb. Such is the mountaineers' regard for property rights!

The animal we had ingloriously won was undersized, weighing scant 175 pounds. The average weight of Smoky Mountain bears is not great, but occasionally a very large beast is killed. Matt Hyde told us that he killed one on the Welch Divide in 1901, the meat of which, dressed, without the hide, weighed 434 pounds, and the hide "squared eight feet" when stretched for drying. "Doc" Jones killed a bear that was "kivered with fat, five inches thick."

Afterwards I took pains to ask the most famous bear hunters of our region what were the largest bears they had personally killed. Uncle Jimmy Crawford, of the Balsam Mountains, estimated his largest at 500 pounds gross, and the hide of another that he had killed weighed forty pounds after three days' drying. Quill Rose, of Eagle Creek, said that, after stripping the hide from one of his bears, he took the fresh skin by the ears and raised it as high as he could reach above his head, and that four inches of the butt end of the hide (not legs) trailed on the ground. "And," he added severely, "thar's no lie about it." Quill is six feet one and one-half inches tall. Black Bill Walker, of the middle prong of Little River (Tennessee side), told me "The biggest one I ever saw killed had a hide that measured ten feet

from nose to rump, stretched for drying. The biggest I ever killed myself measured nine and a half feet, same way, and weighed a good four hundred net, which, allowin' for hide, blood, and entrails, would run full five hunderd live weight."

Within the past two years two bears of about 500 pounds each have been killed in Swain and Graham counties, the Cables getting one of them. The veteran hunters that I have named have killed their hundreds of bears and are men superior to silly exaggeration. In the Smoky Mountains the black bear, like most of the trees, attains its fullest development, and that it occasionally reaches a weight of 500 pounds when "hog fat" is beyond reasonable doubt, though the average would not be more than half that weight.

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We spent the evening in debate as to where the next drive should be made. Some favored moving six miles eastward, to the old mining shack at Siler's Meadow, and trying the headwaters of Forney's Creek, around Rip Shin Thicket and the Gunstick Laurel, driving towards Clingman Dome and over into the bleak gulf, southwest of the Sugarland Mountains, that I had named Godforsaken—a title that stuck. We knew there were bears in that region, though it was a desperately rough country to hunt in.

But John and the hunchback had found "sign" in the opposite direction. Bears were crossing from Little River in the neighborhood of Thunderhead and Briar Knob, coming up just west of the Devil's Court House and "using" around Block House, Woolly Ridge, Bear Pen, and thereabouts. The motion carried, and we adjourned to bed.

We breakfasted on bear meat, the remains of our Thanksgiving turkey, and wheat bread shortened with bear's grease until it was light as a feather; and I made tea. It was the first time that Little John ever saw "store tea." He swallowed some of it as if it had been boneset, under the impression that it was some sort of "yerb" that would be good for his insides. Without praising its flavor, he asked what it had cost, and, when I told him "a dollar a pound," reckoned that it was "rich man's medicine"; said he preferred dittany or sassafras or goldenrod. "Doc" Jones opined that it "looked yaller," and he even affirmed that it "tasted yaller."

"Waal, people," exclaimed Matt, "I 'low I've done growed a bit, atter that mess o' meat. Le's be movin'."

It was a hard pull for me, climbing up the rocky approach to Briar Knob. This was my first trip to the main divide, and my heart was not yet used to mountain climbing.

The boys were anxious for me to get a shot. I was paying them nothing; it was share-and-share alike; but their neighborly kindness moved them to do their best for the outlander.

So they put me on what was probably the best stand for the day. It was above the Fire-scald, a brulé or burnt-over space on the steep southern side of the ridge between Briar Knob and Laurel Top, overlooking the grisly slope of Killpeter. Here I could both see and hear an uncommonly long distance, and if the bear went either east or west I would have timely warning.

This Fire-scald, by the way, is a famous place for wildcats. Once in a blue moon a lynx is killed in the highest zone of the Smokies, up among the balsams and spruces, where both the flora and fauna, as well as the climate, resemble those of the Canadian woods. Our native hunters never heard the word lynx, but call the animal a "catamount." Wolves and panthers used to be common here, but it is a long time since either has been killed in this region, albeit impressionable people see wolf tracks or hear a "pant'er" scream every now and then.

I had shivered on the mountain top for a couple of hours, hearing only an occasional yelp from the dogs, which had been working in the thickets a mile or so below me, when suddenly there burst forth the devil of a racket.

On came the chase, right in my direction. Presently I could distinguish the different notes: the deep bellow of old Dred, the hound-like baying of Rock and Coaly, and little Towse's feisty yelp.

I thought that the bear might chance the comparatively open space of the Fire-scald, because there

were still some ashes on the ground that would dust the dogs' nostrils and throw them off the scent. And such, I believe, was his intention. But the dogs caught up with him. They nipped him fore and aft. Time after time he shook them off; but they were true bear dogs, and, like Matt Hyde after the turkey, they knew no such word as quit.

I took a last squint at my rifle sights, made sure there was a cartridge in the chamber, and then felt my ears grow as I listened. Suddenly the chase swerved at a right angle and took straight up the side of Saddle-back. Either the bear would tree, or he would try to smash on through to the low rhododendron of the Devil's Court House, where dogs who followed might break their legs. I girded myself and ran, "wiggling and wingling" along the main divide, and then came the steep pull up Briar Knob. As I was grading around the summit with all the lope that was left in me, I heard a rifle crack, half a mile down Saddle-back. Old "Doc" was somewhere in that vicinity. I halted to listen. Creation, what a rumpus! Then another shot. Then the warwhoop of the South, that we read about.

By and by, up they came, John and Cope and "Doc," two at a time, carrying the bear on a trimmed sapling. Presently Hyde joined us, then came Granville, and we filed back to camp, where "Doc" told his story:

"Boys, them dogs' eyes shined like new money. Coaly fit agin, all right, and got his tail bit. The

bear div down into a sink-hole with the dogs a-top o' him. Soon's I could shoot without hittin' a dog, I let him have it. Thought I'd shot him through the head, but he fit on. Then I jumped down into the sink and kicked him loose from the dogs, or he'd a-killed Coaly. Waal, sir, he wa'n't hurt a bit—the ball jest glanced off his head. He riz an' knocked me down with his left paw, an' walked right over me, an' lit up the ridge. The dogs treed him in a minute. I went to shoot up at him, but my new hulls [cartridges] fit loose in this old chamber and this one drap [dropped] out, so the gun stuck. Had to git my knife out and fix hit. Then the dad-burned gun wouldn't stand roostered [cocked]; the feather-spring had jumped out o' place. But I held back with my thumb, and killed him anyhow.

"Fellers," he added feelingly, "I wish t' my legs growed hind-side-fust."

"*What* fer?"

"So 's 't I wouldn't bark my shins!"

"Bears," remarked John, "is all left-handed. Ever note that? Hit's the left paw you wanter look out fer. He'd a-knocked somethin' out o' yer head if there'd been much in it, Doc."

"Funny thing, but hit's true," declared Bill, "that a bear allers dies flat on his back, onless he's trapped."

"So do men," said "Doc" grimly; "men who've been shot in battle. You go along a battlefield, right atter the action, and you'll find most o' the dead faces pintin' to the sky."

"Bears is almost human, anyhow. A skinned bear looks like a great big-bodied man with long arms and stumpy legs."

I did not relish this turn of the conversation, for we had two bears to skin immediately. The one that had been hung up over night was frozen solid, so I photographed her standing on her legs, as in life. When it came to skinning this beast the job was a mean one; a fellow had to drop out now and then to warm his fingers.

The mountaineers have an odd way of sharing the spoils of the chase. They call it "stoking the meat," a use of the word *stoke* that I have never heard elsewhere. The hide is sold, and the proceeds divided equally among the hunters, but the meat is cut up into as many pieces as there are partners in the chase; then one man goes indoors or behind a tree, and somebody at the carcass, laying his hand on a portion, calls out: "Whose piece is this?"

"Granville Calhoun's," cries the hidden man, who cannot see it.

"Whose is this?"

"Bill Cope's."

And so on down the line. Everybody gets what chance determines for him, and there can be no charges of unfairness.

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It turned very cold that night. The last thing I heard was Matt Hyde protesting to the hunchback:

"Durn you, Bill Cope, you're so cussed crooked a man cain't lay cluss enough to you to keep warm!"

Once when I awoke in the night the beech trees were cracking like rifle-shots from the intense frost.

Next morning John announced that we were going to get another bear.

"Night afore last," he said, "Bill dremp that he seed a lot o' fat meat layin' on the table; an' it done come true. Last night I dremp me one that never was knowed to fail yet. Now you see!"

It did not look like it by evening. We all worked hard and endured much—standers as well as drivers—but not a rifle had spoken up to the time when, from my far-off stand, I yearned for a hot supper.

Away down in the rear I heard the snort of a locomotive, one of those cog-wheel affairs that are specially built for mountain climbing. With a steam-loader and three camps of a hundred men each, it was despoiling the Tennessee forest. Slowly, but inexorably, a leviathan was crawling into the wilderness and was soon to consume it.

"All this," I apostrophized, "shall be swept away, tree and plant, beast and fish. Fire will blacken the earth; flood will swallow and spew forth the soil. The simple-hearted native men and women will scatter and disappear. In their stead will come slaves speaking strange tongues, to toil in the darkness under the rocks. Soot will arise, and foul gases; the streams will run murky death. Let me not see it! No; I will

"'... Get me to some far-off land
Where higher mountains under heaven stand ...
Where other thunders roll amid the hills,
Some mightier wind a mightier forest fills
With other strains through other-shapen boughs.'"

Wearily I plodded back to camp. No one had arrived but "Doc." The old man had been thumped rather severely in yesterday's scrimmage, but complained only of "a touch o' rheumatiz." Just how this disease had left his clothes in tatters he did not explain.

It was late when Matt and Granville came in. The crimson and yellow of sunset had turned to a faultless turquoise, and this to a violet afterglow; then suddenly night rose from the valleys and enveloped us.

About nine o'clock I went out on the Little Chestnut Bald and fired signals, but there was no answer. The last we had known of the drivers was that they had been beyond Thunderhead, six miles of hard travel to the westward. There was fog on the mountain. We did some uneasy speculating. Then Granville and Matt took the lantern and set out for Briar Knob. "Doc" was too stiff for travel, and I, being at that time a stranger in the Smokies, would be of no use hunting amid clouds and darkness. "Doc" and I passed a dreary three hours. Finally, at midnight, my shots were answered, and soon the dogs came limping in. Dred had been severely bitten in the shoulders and Rock in the head. Coaly was bloody about the mouth, where his first day's wound had reopened. Then came the four men, empty-

handed, it seemed, until John slapped a bear's "melt" (spleen) upon the table. He limped from a bruised hip.

"That bear outsharped us and went around all o' you-uns. We follered him clar over to the Spencer Place, and then he doubled and come back on the fur side o' the ridge. He crossed through the laurel on the Devil's Court House and tuk down an almighty steep place. It was plumb night by that time. I fell over a rock clift twenty feet down, and if 't hadn't been for the laurel I'd a-bruk some bones. I landed right in the middle of them, bear and dogs, fightin' like gamecocks. The bear clim a tree. Bill sung out 'Is it fur down thar?' and I said 'Purty fur.' 'Waal, I'm a-comin',' says he; and with that he grabbed a laurel to swing hisself down by, but the stem bruk, and down he come suddent, to jine the music. Hit was so dark I couldn't see my gun barrel, and we wuz all tangled up in greenbriers as thick as ploughlines. I had to fire twiste afore he tumbled. Then Matt an' Granville come. The four of us tuk turn-about crawlin' up out o' thar with the bear on our back. Only one man could handle him at a time —and he'll go a good two hunderd, that bear. We gutted him, and left him near the top, to fotch in the mornin'. Fellers, I'm bodaciously tired out. This is the time I'd give half what I'm worth for a gallon o' liquor—and I'd promise the rest!"

"You'd orter see what Coaly did to that varmint," said Bill. "He bit a hole under the fore leg, through

hide and ha'r, clar into the holler, so t' you can stick your hand in and seize the bear's heart."

"John, what was that dream of yours?"

"I dremp I stole a feller's overcoat. Now d'ye see? That means a bear's hide."

Coaly, three days ago, had been an inconsequential pup; but now he looked up into my eyes with the calm dignity that no fool or braggart can assume. He had been knighted. As he licked his wounds he was proud of them. "Scars of battle, sir. You may have your swagger ribbons and prize collars in the New York dog show, but *this* for me!"

Poor Coaly! after two more years of valiant service, he was to meet an evil fortune. In connection with it I will relate a queer coincidence:

Two years after this hunt, a friend and I spent three summer months in this same old cabin on top of Smoky. When Andy had to return North he left with me, for sale, a .30-30 carbine, as he had more guns than he needed. I showed this carbine to Quill Rose, and the old hunter said: "I don't like them power-guns; you could shoot clar through a bear and kill your dog on the other side." The next day I sold the weapon to Granville Calhoun. Within a short time, word came from Granville's father that "Old Reelfoot" was despoiling his orchard. This Reelfoot was a large bear whose cunning had defied our best hunters for five or six years. He got his name from the fact that he "reeled" or twisted his hind feet in walking, as some horses do, leaving a

peculiar track. This seems rather common among old bears, for I have known of several "reelfoots" in other, and widely separated, regions.

Cable and his dogs were sent for. A drive was made, and the bear was actually caught within a few rods of old Mr. Calhoun's stable. His teeth were worn to the gums, and, as he could no longer kill hogs, he had come down to an apple diet. He was large-framed, but very poor. The only hunters on the spot were Granville, with the .30-30, and a northern lumberman named Hastings, with a Luger carbine. After two or three shots had wounded the bear, he rose on his hind feet and made for Granville. A .30-30 bullet went clear through the beast at the very instant that Coaly, who was unseen, jumped up on the log behind it, and the missile gave both animals their death wound.

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The bears' home: laurel and rhododendron, 1913

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