

GRANDPA'S BEAR.

"Grandpa Colonel, tell us a story."
"Well, well! Suppose I tell you about a bear."

"Sixty or more years ago, in the days when California was only poor, faroff Mexican California and nothing more and I was a very young officer in Uncle Sam's little army, I once found myself stationed at a certain inland town, if a collection of adobe or mud huts deserved the name, situated about sixty miles distant from the then scarcely larger village of Yerba Buena, the now mighty city of San Francisco."

"We were doing garrison duty, a single company under old Captain Jack B., an easy going commander, who gave us little to do and plenty of time to do it in."

"So, as the hours hung somewhat heavily upon our hands, Captain Jack and I—the only officers at the post—took to hunting and shooting, with now and then a little fishing by way of change to vary the monotony of our soldier life. Countless flocks of wild geese, brant and lesser waterfowl came by thousands to banquet upon the wild oat fields and make their reedy homes among the wide marshes which separate the firmer land about Sonoma from the spreading bays that terminate in the Golden Gate."

"We had goose for dinner, brant for breakfast and cold duck for supper and lunch till old Jack declared his belief that he should quack if we ate any more such fare."

"One morning I had been very successful at duck shooting, and when I tired of the sport I proceeded to shoulder my piece and secure my game for the homeward tramp of three or four miles."

"As I lost sight of the shooting grounds and began to enter the live oak groves scattered here and there along the higher ridges bordering the marshy edges of the bay I found myself suddenly enveloped in one of those dense mists which sweep up at certain seasons from the sea, like the ocean vapors of a Newport summer afternoon."

"As I had no special path and was traveling only by familiar landmarks, now rendered indistinct by the honny haze, I was obliged to move more slowly and soon felt satisfied that I had missed my way."

"Reaching at length a space open upon three sides, the fourth being thinly wooded, but without a particle of undergrowth, I paused for a moment to survey, so far as my limited horizon would permit, a tract of country which was new to me. Moreover, I hoped to hear the sound of running water, which, as I knew the general direction of the streams, would serve to guide me in taking what sailors call a fresh departure."

"While listening intently I heard from the wooded side of my narrow, visible world a sort of pounding, as if some man with large boots and no corns had found his feet unpleasantly cold and was endeavoring to warm them by stamping in a manner which betokened an utter disregard for shoe leather."

"Then came a wheeze like that of a gruff giant troubled with the asthma and finally a mixed compound of crunching and mumbling, as if a huge hog were eating hard corn. My attention now being thoroughly aroused by so remarkable a combination of sounds, I peered into the gloom until I fancied I could perceive the vague, misty form of some creature stirring up the fog within twenty feet of the spot on which I had halted."

"It is—no, it can't be—yes, but it is a grizzly! Don't I wish I was at home!"

"That's what I thought. You see, I hadn't come bear hunting. I was duck shooting and had no conveniences for carrying home a bear even if I should kill one, and the more I looked at Mr. Grizzly the better satisfied I was that he had every convenience for killing and carrying me."

"All I had ever heard or read of his ugly, hateful ways seemed to rush into my mind."

"If I had been examined on this subject in natural history just then I should have gone up to the head of my class immediately."

"We stood looking at each other. It was evidently a surprise on both sides. I stared very hard at the bear with wide open eyes, while the bear stared very hard at me with wide open mouth."

"I think the bear got over his astonishment first, and, what is worst, I could see he wasn't at all alarmed. He stopped eating, gave a sniff and a sort of interrogatory 'Who are you? grunt and then took a step toward me."

"As I am of a retiring disposition and have never been willing to intrude myself into company where I have not been invited, I felt some delicacy in continuing to be a witness of his repast and was accordingly withdrawing in as unostentatious a way as good manners would permit, when it seemed to occur to brain that he owed me a good fellowship to cultivate my acquaintance."

"Declining that honor, I dropped into a backward walk, keeping my face, after the manner of royal presentations, toward this monarch of the western wilds, when, to my horror, he favored me with a grin—such a grin—and it was followed by a snap and a growl."

"As he quickened his steps toward me I unconsciously hastened my own, when, taking a long stride backward, I found myself suddenly prostrate in a sort of dry ditch or slough, where I lay for a moment half stunned in com-

pany with my dead birds and duck gun."

"As I recovered myself I could hear my grunting and grumbling friend, doubtless not a little astonished at this sudden disappearance, go tramping up and down in the vain attempt to nose me out in the fog."

"I had now time to think and, as a merchant might say, 'take stock' of my position and prospects. On the one side I was chased by a bear—a hungry bear, a cross bear, a bear disturbed at his breakfast of sweet acorns. I had lost my way. I had only a ducking gun, which, however formidable to wild geese, was a mere plaything when brought to bear upon the thick, tough hide of an acorn fattened grizzly, whose gross weight might be somewhere in the neighborhood of 900 pounds. As for my hunting knife, I had left it at home. What wonder if, as an Irishman might say, I wished that I had left myself there before I started?"

"Against all this I had the consolatory assurance that the grizzly bear never climbs, which, as the trees were all on the side of the bear, did not add much to my sense of security. But my principal hope lay in the fact that I was just then hidden by the gully, the depth of which varied from eight to twelve feet, with precipitous sides and a dry bed, which probably led down to some neighboring stream of water."

"Now, thought I, I have only to crawl along this ditch, reach the stream, cross it and bid goodby to grizzly."

"I had just picked myself up and was proceeding to carry out my plan of escape when I heard a crackling and breaking of the underbrush which fringed the ditch and by which I was partly screened from view. This was speedily followed by an angry growl as the treacherous earth gave way and let Mr. Bear with no gentle tumble directly down into the very gully into which I had fallen."

"Fortunately for me, brain had not only a greater fall, but tumbled into the ditch at a point somewhat distant from my hiding place, and the little ferret eyes did not at once perceive me. An unlucky stumble, however, which I owed to a twisted root, betrayed me, and he turned and gave chase."

"They have a very expressive phrase in California when a person is desired to leave suddenly. It consists of but two words, 'You git!' My dears, when that bear tumbled into my gully 'I got,' and when he took up the chase I continued 'to git' in a style which astonished even myself."

"When I first saw him fall I certainly hoped that he had broken his nose at least or even dislocated his great ugly neck, but that hope vanished in a moment."

"He was evidently not a whit the worse for his somersault."

"It was no longer a matter of ceremony. I sped over the ground like a hunted deer, while my stout friend came lumbering and puffing on behind, like a portly old gentleman who fears he may be too late for the evening train. I was expecting every moment to feel the blow of his heavy paw, when, turning an angle of the gully, I perceived, with no little dismay, that the ditch in front of me was blocked by an immense fallen tree. The smaller end of the broken trunk, being toward me, showed an opening wide enough to admit my then somewhat more than usually slender form."

"There was little time for hesitation. I could hear the bear's heavy tramp behind me. A moment more and I had plunged into the opening and drew my gun after me, just as my fat friend rounded the turn of the slough in hot pursuit. Running blindly on, he endeavored to force himself after me, giving the log a shock which made me tremble for the security of my new tenement."

"One or two furious plunges tended to convince him that I could enter where his huge frame could not, for he seemed to reflect and finally introduced a paw, from whose farreaching grab I retired into the inner recesses of my chamber."

"Finding that his attempts in this way were equally futile, I began to feel a little more at ease, and when brain again poked in his great paw in an inquiring sort of way I managed to push a dead duck out to him with the butt of my gun by way of a peace offering. I was willing just then to have peace at any price short of surrender."

"But Sir Bear had no thought of such a compromise. He tore away and made the feathers fly with his cruel teeth and claws in a style which gave me a pretty lively notion of what I might expect were I to trust myself within his grasp."

"I had begun to think seriously of giving my pursuer the benefit of a charge of duck shot in the hope of putting out one or both of his ugly little eyes and making him give up the hunt when, my eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, I discovered a faint indication of light behind me. I crawled toward it and dropped out backward."

"The creek was below me, and I dropped into it in a moment and pushed, apparently unheard, to the opposite bank, whence prudence, coupled with some doubts as to the possibility of discharging a wet gun, induced me to leave Ursa Major to his log boring while I made the best of my way back to camp."

The Text.

The minister had preached on the text, "Why halt ye between two opinions?" and upon little Cora's return home from church her grandmother asked what the text was.

"I don't remember exactly," answered Cora, "but it was something about a hawk between two pigeons."—Chicago News.

Dense Stupidity and Amusing Blunders of the Natives.

In the "Autobiography of Sir Henry M. Stanley" the author says of the colored natives of central Africa:

"Good as the majority of Zanzibaris were, some of them were indescrivably bad, and for me most unfortunately dense. One man who from his personal appearance might have been judged to be among the most intelligent was after thirty months' experience with his musket unable to understand how it was to be loaded. He never could remember whether he ought to drop the powder or the bullet into the musket first. Another time he was sent with a man to transport a company of men over a river to camp. After waiting an hour I strode to the bank of the river and found them paddling in opposite directions, each blaming the other for his stupidity and, being in a passion of excitement, unable to hear the advice of men across the river, who were bawling out to them how to manage their canoe."

"Another man was so ludicrously stupid that he generally was saved from punishment because his mistakes were so absurd. We were one day floating down the Congo, and, it being near camping time, I bade him, as he happened to be bowman on the occasion, to stand by and seize the grass on the bank to arrest the boat when I should call out. In a little while we came to a fit place, and I cried, 'Hold hard, Kirango!' 'Please God, master,' he replied and forthwith sprang on the shore and seized the grass with both hands, while we, of course, were rapidly swept down river, leaving him alone and solitary on the bank. The boat's crew roared at the ridiculous sight, but nevertheless his stupidity cost the tired man a hard pull to ascend again, for not every place was available for a camp."

"He it was also who on an occasion when we required the branch of a species of arbutus which overhung the river to be cut away to allow the canoes to be brought nearer to the bank for safety actually went astride of the branch and chopped away until he fell into the water with the branch and lost our ax. He had seated himself on the outer end of the branch."

A Bunch of Kicks.

"I'm in hard luck!" sighed the steel rail.

"Look at me! I get nothing from morning till night but hot air," groaned the pumping engine.

"I'm always in hot water," sighed the boiler.

"Consider my plight," cried the macadam road, "invariably walked over and trodden under foot."

"I'm used to it, for I'm always up against it," philosophically remarked the wall paper.

"You're none of you as badly off as I am," said the furnace, "for, no matter where I go, I'm generally fired."—Baltimore American.

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