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## THE TIMES.

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## Surrounded by Fire.

IT WAS in the last week of June, 1879. I left Gorher, a new mining town on the East fork of the Grand Pie, a place which takes its name from the peculiar shape of the mountains which surround it, to prospect on the west side of the main range as far north as Eagle Pine. We left Gorher by a trail leading north up Copper Creek, which heads in the Maroon mountains opposite the head of a creek of the same name which flows north into the Roaring Fork of the Grand Pie. Much as I love the grand old Sierras, the span called Maroon mountains has, to me, something peculiarly attractive about it, being nearly as high as the highest peaks in the range. It takes its name from the color of the rock of which it is composed, being above timber of a bright maroon color, interspersed with a lighter-colored strata, which dips slightly to the west. The inroads of time and the decomposing elements have worn away the rock, leaving the distant peaks in the shape of pyramids, steeples, domes and towers which compare in beauty and grandeur with the finest architectural work of human hands.

It being late when I left Gorher I did not cross the divide over on to Maroon creek until the next morning. While on the range above timber line I discovered that the timber was on fire six or eight miles lower down the creek. Our party pushed along as fast as the unfavorable condition of the trail and country would permit. Toward the middle of the afternoon we went into camp in a little willow flat about three-fourth of a mile from where the fire was sweeping everything before it. The fire was much nearer to us on the east side of the stream than on the west, so I started down on the west side to see what the chances were for getting through below it. We had not gone very far when I discovered that the fire had crossed the creek behind us, and we had better make our best time back to prevent being surrounded. By the next morning the fire had sufficiently consumed the timber along the stream so that it was possible to get below it, and we traveled along for several miles down the canyon, when we discovered another burning district below us. We came to another willow flat of about an acre at noon, so we unpacked our animals to give them a chance to graze, while we ate a lunch preparatory to pushing our way through and beyond the fire. After stopping an hour or so, we saddled up and started. Matters at first seemed favorable, as the wind had gone down and the fire did not seem to be as furious as it was a short time before. When we left camp our trail led along the side of the mountain, a little way from the creek, which entered a narrow defile below us. Before we had gone half a mile we got into the fire, which had first fed upon the fallen timber and dead trees, the latter constantly falling around us. The ground in places was covered with dry pine leaves and boughs to the depth of four or five inches, which were soon in flames, and so burned our horses' feet that I thought best to dismount and go it on foot. We traveled as fast as we could, hoping to get past the fire as soon as possible. The heat was growing intense, and it soon became so hot for us we could go no farther. We concluded to grapple and bear it until it had burned itself out, but suddenly the wind sprang up, and in an instant almost everything seemed aglow with fire. The place where we stood, and which before was a bed of smoldering embers, now became a hissing,

crackling mass of burning coals. In a moment our pack mule gave up and fell down by the side of a burning log. The pack lashed to him was soon afire. I had been foolish enough to take with me into this place a sixteen pound can of blasting powder, wrapped in a gunny-sack, which I had strapped to that mule. Here was a new and terrible danger threatening us. How to get the can of powder off that mule before some flying spark should reach it was our first thought. Every moment was fraught with terror, for if it should explode while we were hemmed in with fallen timber on every side some lives might be sacrificed. The anxiety to save our property made us hazard the effort. We tried our mightiest for a while to remove the pack, but it was no use as the pesky critter was lying on the lash ropes. So we left him to his fate and moved along a little to await the explosion, which we thought sure must come very soon.

I confess I felt no little curiosity as to where the biggest part of that mule would land when the upheaval took place, and as we stood around joking about this most serious matter—serious not to the mule alone, but to ourselves as well—we failed to notice that the wind freshened into a gale and that the fire was sweeping through the foliage of the pine and spruce trees under which we had taken shelter. Sprigs of fire were torn from the burning wood and blown in showers, which kept us busy knocking away the hot embers that fell upon us. Our horses suffered terribly, and it was as much as we could do to keep them from rushing headlong down the mountain. They floundered around as if they were possessed by evil spirits. I expected every moment they would go down. The old fellow who was with me seemed to feel the effects of the fire and smoke more than any of us, and kept gasping out, "Oh, my lungs; my lungs!" until his lamentations became most pitiable. To proceed on our way was impossible, to remain where we were was sudden death. Our only way was past that mule! Imagine the situation if you can. The mule had fallen so as to completely block the way, and at any moment that can of powder might go off, and two to one everything within a radius of a hundred feet would be blown to pieces. I waited a few minutes for the explosion, which did not come. The heat was getting terrible. I was compelled to keep my eyes partly closed to save my sight. My whole body grew numb and heavy and my throat parched. I realized that it had become with us a matter of life or death, and some bold effort must be made to get out of this hellish corral, or we would suffocate. All this came to me sooner than I can tell you, and the resolution was quietly acted upon. I handed the reins of my horse to a companion, and started for the spot where we had left the mule lying. To my surprise he had regained his feet, but some part of the harness had fastened to the log and he was evidently so exhausted he could not pull loose. The pack had shifted under his belly and must have impeded him in his efforts to tear away. He was prancing around as well as he was able, and realized more than any of us no doubt the discomfort of the situation. But I had no time to spare to help him. My purpose was to get him out of the way and that as quickly as possible. The pack hanging to him was burning, and the sack containing the powder was half consumed. I took hold of it and tried to tear it loose, so as to hurl it down the mountain. I was unable to do so as the lashing had not burned sufficiently. However, I managed to get the mule out of the way so that it was possible to get the other animals past, and shouted to my companion to come on with the horses, which he did, and all got safely past the magazine. We then made our way back to the little willow flat where we had stopped at noon. We had several narrow escapes from falling trees which had burned off near the ground. When we arrived at the flat we were very much exhausted. A party of men had arrived at the camp from above, deeming it unsafe to proceed further as the fire was spreading in every direction. Deer, with their tongues out, were coming down off the mountain, seeking safety along and in the stream which flowed through the canyon. Grouse

were flying about seemingly as much perplexed as I imagine Noah's dove must have been on its lonely hunt for a roosting place, and bear toddled along the banks of the creek seeking a place of safety.

Toward evening the wind went down, and as the fire had spent its fury in the vicinity where we had left our mule, two of the men volunteered to go down and see if they could save anything from the wreck. They succeeded in following our track through the ashes and embers, when they finally came to the place where the mule had been. They found tools and other articles scattered about, but the mule, oh, where was he! The first thought they had was that the magazine had exploded and blown mule and all to the four winds, but after a short investigation they concluded that the old fellow must be in the neighborhood somewhere, and feeling anxious to know what had become of him commenced a search. In a little while they struck his trail, and following it for some distance came to a point where it led to the edge of a precipice. Over this the unfortunate animal had no doubt blindly staggered. Sure enough, about thirty feet below, on a bench of rock, lay the mule, his heels sticking up, and held from going over by a clump of stunted cedar brush.

The men returned and reported everything lost. They had not been back long before night set in. The wind sprang up again and at times blew almost a gale, and the fire took a fresh start. Toward midnight the scene was terribly grand. Now and then the wind would go down for a time and the smoke would hang in a great black cloud above us until the wind again freshening fanned the fire into flames. The lurid glare reflected on the blood-colored rocks made them look like a huge mass of burnished gold. The crash of falling timber could be heard for miles, while massive pieces of rock cut loose from the ledges above would go tearing down the sides of the mountain like an avalanche, carrying everything before them. As they fell, striking against other rocks, these great boulders would burst like a bombshell and scatter their fragments in every direction.—Rocks weighing several tons and glowing with heat went bounding along like swift fleeting meteors, making a noise not unlike the howl of wild beasts in terror, and plunging with a hissing cry into the stream below. It seemed like a pandemonium let loose. We finally laid down to rest but not to sleep. There was a great tree slowly burning away at its base, and we calculated whether it was tall enough to reach where we had spread our blankets. We concluded that it was not but during the night it came down with a crash, falling to one side of where we lay and reaching a number of feet beyond us.

The following morning, after breakfast, we saddled up and started down the trail again. On arriving where we had been the day before, we found a little heap of scorched flour here and burnt sugar there, and bottles which had contained acids and other chemicals, together with the tubes, were all melted. I took my carbine and went down in search of the mule, to put him out of misery, if he was yet alive. When I got to the brink of the precipice and looked over, Mr. Mule was nowhere to be seen. He had evidently fallen from the bench where he had lain, and as this projected so that I could not see beyond it, I went further down the stream until I found a place where it was possible to get down to the bottom of the canyon, which I followed up with considerable difficulty, as I was compelled to cross the stream several times over logs and floodwood. As I passed around a point of rocks I came all of a sudden upon the mule. He was standing on a little gravel bar. I at first thought it was an apparition, but soon discovered that the old chap was worth several dead mules, albeit badly burned and bruised. His rumps looked like some old venison hams that you often see hanging in front of restaurants, besides he had received other injuries (which, however well-bred and circumspect he may be, the energetic mule always makes use of when you get near him)—he had lost his tail! When he saw me he brayed—and such a bray! It was as the plaintive wail of one who had bid adieu to

the pleasures of this life, and been shut forever in a cave of gloom. I at once began to look around to see if there were any way to get him out of there. I went up the stream to a perpendicular fall and found it impossible to make any further progress in that direction, so I started down the canyon and found that by crossing the stream two or three times, and cutting away a few logs, that I could get him out that way, so I went to where the other party was and got an axe and a long rope, and asked two of the men to go with me. We soon chopped the logs off and got them out of the way. I went over on a log and fastened a cable to his neck, and then towed him across the raging torrent and landed him on the right side of Jordan, which he undoubtedly realized was a hard road to travel.

I then went back and gathered up some scorched flour and sugar and a few beans, which by the way were nicely baked; the "old fellow" aforementioned, with the mule in tow, finally took up the line of march on the old trail, a little the worse for wear all of us, as a consequence of our two days' experience on the burning mountain.

If I were a story writer, you can see from the facts I have so poorly strung together, what an interesting romance might be written on "Surrounded by Fire," or "The Adventures of a Mule Who Lost His Tail." But you will be content with the simple narrative so far as it has gone. If you have any curiosity to know what became of that can of powder in the mule's pack you must wait till the "day of revelation." I have wondered more or less about it ever since, and have finally come to the conclusion that the mule with the proverbial sagacity of the critter, must have realized the danger to himself of having the explosive material exposed to fire and as a matter of precaution swallowed it, can and all. I have noticed since the fire that he is a trifle more "sudden" than he was before, and this would account for it.

## ABOUT LIGHTNING.

WHAT is lightning?

Lightning is the result of electrical discharges from the clouds.

What is thunder?

Thunder is the noise which succeeds the rush of the electrical fluid through the air.

When does lightning occur?

When clouds, charged with the opposite electricities approach, the forces rush to each other, and combine in a state of equilibrium.

Why does lightning attend this movement of the forces of electricity?

Because the atmosphere, being unable to convey the great charges of electricity as they rushed towards each other, acts as an insulator, and the lightning is caused by the violence of the electricity in forcing its passage. When the conducting power is equal to the force of the electricity it passes invisibly, noiselessly and harmlessly whenever it finds a sufficient source of conducting.

Why does lightning sometimes appear forked?

Because, being resisted in its progress by the air, the electricity divides into two or more points, flies from point to point, and seeks a passage in different directions.

Why is it dangerous to stand near a tree during an electric storm?

Because the tree is a better conductor than the air, and electricity would probably strike the tree and pass to the person standing near.

Why is it dangerous to sit near a fireplace.

Because the chimney being a tall object and the smoke a good conductor would probably attract the electricity and convey it to the body of the person sitting near the fire.

Why is it dangerous to be near water during a thunder storm?

Because water is a good conductor and the vapor arising from it might attract the electricity.

Are iron houses dangerous?

No; they are safe, because their entire surface is a good conductor and would convey the electricity harmlessly to the earth.

Are iron bedsteads dangerous?

No; they are safe, because the iron frame completely surrounding the body

and having a great capacity for conduction, would keep electricity away from the body.

Why is it safe to be in bed during a thunder storm?

Because feathers, hair, wool, cotton, etc., especially when dry, are good insulators or non-conductors.

What is the safest position to be in during a storm?

In the centre of a room, isolated as far as possible from surrounding objects; sitting on a chair, and avoid handling any of the conducting substances. The windows and doors should be closed to prevent drafts of air.

In the open air, what is the safest situation?

To keep aloof as far as possible from elevated structures, regard the rain as a protection against the lightning stroke, for wet clothes would supply so good a conductor, would that a large amount of electricity pass over a man's body through wet clothes and he would be quite unconscious of it.

## WOULDN'T RECIPROCATE.

THE following from the Fairfield, (Me.) Chronicle, is neatly done, and has wide application outside of Maine. He was the manager of a church fair, and one morning he walked into the office, and said:

"Want an item this morning?"

"Of course," replied the editor.—Whereupon the visitor laid the following note upon the table:

The ladies of the—Street Church will give a festival at their vestry hall, next Friday evening. Literary and musical entertainments will be provided, and a supper will be served to all who desire. The ladies who have charge of the affair have much experience in such matters, and are sure to provide a good time. The admission will be only fifteen cents, and it is certain that no one can spend that amount to a better advantage. Be sure and go and take your friends.

When the editor read it he said:

"Oh! I see; an advertisement."

"No; not an advertisement. We prefer to have it in the local column," replied the manager.

And seeing the editor looked skeptical he continued:

"It will interest many of your readers, and help a good cause; besides, we have spent so much money getting up our entertainment, that we cannot afford to advertise it without increasing the tickets. In such a matter as this, we ought to be able to help each other."

"Well," said the editor, "if it goes into the locals, I suppose you would reciprocate by reading a little notice in your church next Sunday?"

The visiting brother asked what notice, and the editor wrote and handed him the following:

The Weekly Chronicle, for the coming year, will be the best and cheapest family newspaper in Maine. Its proprietor has had much experience, and has all the helps which a large outlay of money can procure. His paper has a larger circulation than any other published in the county, and is to be furnished at only \$2. It is certain that no one can spend that amount to a better advantage. Be sure to take the Chronicle and subscribe for your friends.

The manager hemmed and hesitated, and then said solemnly, that he "doubted whether it would be judicious to read such a notice," suggested that, if it was printed, copies of it might be distributed at the door of the vestry on the evening of the entertainment.

"Yes," said the editor, "but it would attract more attention in the middle of a sermon. It will interest a large number of your congregation and help a good cause, and besides, so much money is spent upon the 'Chronicle' that I do not see how the owner can afford to print handbills to advertise it without increasing the subscription price. In such a matter as this we ought to be willing to help each other."

The manager saw the situation, and withdrew.

There is a multitude of sorrow.—Gains spring out of losses. Benefits flow from afflictions. The morning is born of the night, and the spring of the winter. From the verge of destruction life is redeemed. And from apparent wasting and decrepitude comes forth youthful vigor, like the fabled eagle's renewal. Such is the wisdom of the Divine economy in nature, in society, and in grace.