FLESHERTON ADVANCE.

"TRUTH BEFORE FAVOR."—"PRINCIPLES, NOT MEN."

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A SUGAR BUSH TRAGEDY.

A PRIZE STORY.

It was my lot to be born in a rough section of country, where people continually met face to face with danger, and became so accustomed to it that they even thought lightly of it; consequently my early life was not without its exciting experiences, some of which would doubtless be of interest if placed upon paper. It is my purpose to describe a peculiar adventure which befel me in a sugar bush—one which, although it did not result very disastrously, yet left an indelible memory behind it.

My father owned a large bush on the side of a very steep hill, and at the base of a perpendicular rock which loomed above the tallest trees, in which the owls held high carnival at night. This rock, which was a terror to small boys, gave a wild,gloomy appearance to the surroundings and it had frequently been reported that panthers had been heard, as they prowled through the woods in search of prey. In fact one or two had been seen, but as they had never molested any person,the settlers were fearless of them. Bears, too, were frequently met, but they were only hunted after a raid had been made on some farmer's flock of sheep. At such times the neighbors would turn out with their rifles and fowling pieces, and bruin generally got his coat perforated, though not always damaged to such an extent that he could not carry it away with him.

Each spring my father was in the habit of tapping about one hundred and fifty maple trees and during a good season he would make enough of the luscious sacharine extract to supply us until the next season arrived. He had his boiling works erected at the lower extremity of his circuit of sap yielding trees, though not entirely at the lower edge of the woods. This was arranged so that in bringing the sap to the kettles, no up hill carrying would be necessary.

The boiling works consisted of two large kettles, one of sheet iron for heating the sap, and the other,a large, heavy iron one, for boiling it down to a rich fluid. These kettles were hung by chains to a long pole which was held up at one end by a crotched stick and braced from both sides. The other was propped against a large hemlock tree which stood by the side of a backlog and everything was made convenient for swinging off the large kettles when the day's work was finished.

The spring in which my adventure occured was an exceptionally good season for the making of maple sugar. The nights were frosty and the sun came out warm through the daytime, making the trees gush forth their sweetness in a manner that would gladden the heart of any sugar maker.

My father was unable to attend to the sugar interest this year, as other business called him elsewhere, so the responsibility fell on me. I was only fourteen years of age,but the very idea of running a sugar camp made me a man at once, in my own estimation. I had often helped my father with boiling, thus becoming thoroughly acquainted with the art of boiling the syrup just enough to make the least bulk to carry home, and not enough to make sugar of it before it received the cleansing process.

In this particular branch of the business I was expert, for it required a great deal of tasting, at least I thought so, and at the risk of burning my taster I gave myself more anxiety about the safety of the syrup than was necessary.

Before entering into this mammoth business, I came to the conclusion that I would require a partner, so I immediately entered into negotiations with a neighbor's boy, of about my own age. The terms we agreed on were that I should furnish the utensils and he was to help me in getting them placed, and then assist in the getting of wood and carrying sap, for which I was to give him half the syrup when made.

We entered into business under the firm name of We, Us & Co.,and nailed our bark sign, which was painted with a coal, up to the hemlock tree that formed part of our boiling place. We both entered into the business with an energetic vim that denoted the lack of knowledge of what we had taken upon our hands to do, and before many days had elapsed we were heartily tired of it, but we had been so confident in our own ability to carry it on to success, and had said so much about it that we were ashamed to give it up. Besides, our mothers were inclined to keep us at it, seeing that our labors had been so well rewarded.

We worked away for a couple of weeks, and had not so much time for treeing chipmonks and indulging in other pastimes as we had while helping father boil syrup.

Very often we were forced to be out in the bush late at night to finish boiling down the sap, so that a waste would not occur from overflowing buckets. When we were belated in this way we generally felt a sense of uneasiness, for we did not know when some carnivorous brute might happen along and conclude that he would enjoy a morsel of boy for his supper.

As a weapon I possessed only an old fowling piece which was noted for its bang and "scatteration." Father had taken the rifle with him and left me the old "boomerang" to use as a weapon if I required one. I took good care to put a charge in that would take effect if it hit anything. As a substitute for a bullet I whittled out a hardwood plug that would fit the gun tightly,and drove it down. I had only the one object in view, and that was the effect to be produced at the muzzle, for I fully intended to annihilate whatever animal I might shoot at. It never occured to me that the butt end of the weapon might be as dangerous as the muzzle, after loading it as I had.

I took good care to have this death-dealing instrument within reach when we were boiling at night, and woe to the first marauder that showed his ugly head within range of my carbine.

One night, after a hard day's work, we sat on a log by our brightly blazing fire, telling each other of thrilling adventures, of which our fathers were the heroes. Then we began to discuss the best plan of procedure in case of an attack from any wild beast. We were both as brave as lions and ready to fight for each other until both were annihilated.

When we had finished making these vows it was time for us to swing our syrup from over the fire, and we immediately set about doing so. As I was reaching for a poker with which to scatter the embers, I chanced to glance into some bushes on the down hill side of the sugar camp, where I caught sight of two glaring balls of fire. The blood seemed to freeze in my veins. To stir from that position was impossible. My tongue refused to move and if ever a human being suffered from terror it was I. There I was, my hair standing as straight as my hat would allow, gazing into those two fiery eyes, from which I dared not take my own for fear the hideous brute would spring on me.

I stood thus for some seconds till I had regained some of my self-possession, then thinking of the gun, I very carefully raised my foot and took a step backward, still keeping my eyes on those fiery orbs. As I did so the eyes moved slightly to one side. This made me hesitate for a second. Then, step by step, I drew back until I knew I was within reach of the weapon. I reached my hand behind me, grasped the gun and raised it to my shoulder. I aimed it between the two bright spots as nearly as possible, and pulled the trigger. There was a terrific report, and I received a shock that landed my head against the tree by which the gun had been standing and with such force that for a short while I was perfectly stupefied. When I came too,sufficiently to have feeling, I found that there was a vacancy in my upper jaw where two teeth had been knocked out into the darkness.

But where was my chum? I began to think that I had a chum somewhere around, so I called to him, for by this time my tongue was loosened. A faint voice came from beneath a large barrel which we kept our sap stored in, but which had been emptied and turned bottom side up. I told him to come out, for I had shot it,so with this assurance he cautiously crept out and stood shivering as though he had the ague. I persuaded him to go with me in search of our game. The eyes were no longer visible, and I had every reason to belive that my shot had taken effect.

We took our lantern, and before very long found the intruder rolled up beside a brush heap with a hole through both of it's sides. We carried it up to the fire, held a postmortem examination over it and concluded that it would no longer serve as a sap bucket, for such it was. The light from the fire had shone upon it in such a way as to make it appear like a pair of eyes.

We marched home that night with feelings that can be better imagined than described. Of course it all had to be told. There was my injured jaw, minus two teeth, to be accounted for, and also a twisted and split gun-barrel, and the hole through the bucket.

FRED A. THURSTON.

THE MARKETS,

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Spring Wheat	85	0 85
Barley	0 35	0 40
Oats	0 28	0 30
Peas	0 53	0 53
Butter	0 14	0 14
Eggs, fresh	0 9	0 9
Potatos bush	0 25	25
Pork	5 50	5 50
Hay per ton	6 00	6 00
Hides	3 50	3 50
Sheepskins	0 50	1 00
Geese	0 08	0 08
Turkeys	0 12	0 12
Chickens per pair	0 40	0 40
Ducks per pr.	0 70	0 70
Wool	0 18	0 20

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