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Bees and B'ars

By M. QUAD

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High up on the Cumberland mountains one autumn evening as I sat before the big fireplace in Zeb White's cabin, I asked him for a story of the mountains. He was silent for awhile, and then he laughed in a shamefaced way and said:

"It's a story agin myself."
"That's all right."
"It happened a long time ago."
"It will be just as good."
"Waal," he started in, "one Sunday mornin', arter breakfast the old woman looks at me sorter queer and says:

"Zeb, you know that's a camp meetin' gwine on over at Snicker's grove."
"Mebbe I do," says I.

"They are havin' a powerful time I hear."

"Glad on it."
"Zeb, we'll take a walk over to that camp meetin' as soon as I git the dishes washed up, and we won't come back home till night."

"It would be time throwed away."
"But we're gwine right along jest the same," she says.

"It was jest the season to watch wild bees and line 'em to a tree," explained Zeb, "and I figgered on puttin' in the day at that. I told the old woman so and asked her to go on alone, and she turned on me with:

"Zeb White, if yo' reckon to cheat the Lawd and come out all right yo'll git left! Nobody ever did 't in all this world. If yo' steal his day sunthin' will shortly happen to yo'."

"But we want honey in the fall, don't we?" says I.

"What's the good of honey if yo' lose yo' soul?"

"Nobody's gwine to lose his soul on account of huntin' up a bee tree."

"Mebbe not. Mebbe he'll jest break his neck or leg or wildcats will claw him up or the b'ars roll him about. The Bible tells about the fate of the stiff-necked and obstinate, but yo' won't heed it. Jest go right along arter yo' wild honey, Zeb White, and I'll go to the camp meetin' by myself. I reckon yo'll find out the power of Providence befo' sundown."

"She went away without another word to me, and for half an hour I was a good mind to foller on. I didn't feel right about it 'tall, and my old dawg slunk away from me as if he was ashamed of his master. I didn't want to give in, however, and bimeby I shet the door and strolled off to look fur bees. I was makin' fur a place about two miles away, but befo' I reached it I stopped to look at a big chestnut tree with a hollow in it. That hollow was big 'nuff fur fo' men to stand in, and I was was lookin' in and wonderin' why I had never seen the tree befo' when I heard sunthin' movin' behind me. I wheeled about, and that was a whoppin' big b'ar sneakin' up on me. I could tell by the looks of his eye that he meant bizness, and it was no use to try to bluff him. One jump carried me into the hollow, and he rushed and jest missed me. I had no gun, but I did have my knife along, and when the b'ar tried to foller me into the tree I slashed him fo' or five times. He was no fool. He seen I had the advantage, and he jest backed off and sot down to wait. I kept purty quiet fur an hour, thinkin' he'd git discouraged and go away, but he had other plans on hand. When I stuck my head out and waved my arms and yelled at him he growled a few times, but he didn't come a foot nigher.

"It was plain that I was in a bad way," continued the old hunter, "but I didn't see what I could do about it. I was in the hollow, and the b'ar was outside, and that was no show fur me to come out until he went away. It 'rned sundown, and it cum night, and he was still there. I saw I was in fur all night, and I went to sleep. I woke up once and saw his eyes shinin', but he let me alone. I woke soon arter daylight and he was still there. Not to worry you with perticklers, I passed two nights and two days and a half in that tree, and at last I'd hev given my self up for a dead cat of spring water, to say nothin' about my hunger. I was no longer a match fur the b'ar. I was weak and flighty, and he'd hev a big advantage over me. However, I was tryin' to work up my courage to crawl out and do the best and hev it over with when Abe Holden, who was lookin' fur his lost mawl, cum that way, and the varmint made a sneak. My voice wasn't much stronger than a baby's, but I managed to make Abe hear, and he pulled me out and helped me home. The old woman sot on the doorstep singin' a hymn, and as we cum up she looks at Abe and says:

"Good evenin', Mr. Holden. Kin I take it that yo' old woman is peart?"

"Fairly peart, fairly peart, Mrs. White," he replied.

"And yo' peart to hev a stranger with you," she goes on.

"No, ma'am. It's Zeb, yo' old man."

"Indeed! The last I saw of my old

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man he was gwine out to a tree. Did he find it?

"He found a hollow tree, ma'am."

"Yes?"

"And a b'ar!"

"Yes? And what does he think about cheatin' the Lawd on his Sunday?"

"He'll never do it ag'in, ma'am, and as I'm in a smart hurry yo'll excuse me if I pass on."

"He passed on," said Zeb, with a sorrowful smile, "and the old woman made me some chicken broth and tucked me into bed."

PERSONALS.

Mrs. Charbeneau and daughter returned this morning from a visit to Seattle.

Miss Jess and Miss Beas Booth of The Dalles are here this week, the guests of Miss Etta Foley.

J. T. Langley, superintendent of mechanics for the O.W. was here this morning transacting business. Mr. and Mrs. A. Buckley arrived home from Portland this morning.

See McLeod's add on page seven. 3-24-2t

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