

These, reader, are the conditions under which the romantic "camp life," so often sighed after by American youth, is begun. Let us go on and see what delights, or otherwise, await our enterprising friend—delights that life in the comfortable home left in dear old New England (which even yet is scarcely spoken of without a tender lowering of the voice, as if it were something sacred), and the rough but social times at the home ranch are alike unable to afford him.

Arrived at camp with the sheep, our herder—whom I will call Jack Halliday—proceeds to prepare and demolish his supper, which, strangely enough, seems to want a relish that the one eaten only twenty-four hours before certainly possessed. It is a curious thing, for the food is certainly the same, and he is quite as hungry. But there the feeling is. There is some consolation, though, in the exceedingly small amount of trouble required to wash his solitary plate, cup, etc., with water drawn from a pool close by and heated in the bake-oven. After that is over he sits down outside his dwelling, leisurely puffing his pipe, and enjoying the peace and quietness of his isolated home. Gradually, imperceptibly, this feeling changes. The silence becomes oppressive; and finally giving himself a sort of shake, Jack jumps up and walks quickly toward the sheep, quietly feeding some two hundred yards away. He gently and carefully urges them on to the side of the hill out of which the house is cut, and making a circuit to leave them undisturbed he returns to the hut. After moving restlessly about for a little while, one by one the sheep lie down, one by one the lambs, bawling for their mothers, subside, and at last, beyond an occasional sneeze or grunt, a dead silence reigns over the surrounding creation.

The bedding of the sheep accomplished, Jack makes up his own bed, and, lying down, thinks, as a matter of course, that he will at once drop off to sleep, as he has always done before. But the expected slumber will not come. The uneasy, uncomfortable, miserable feeling that, unconsciously to himself, has been steadily increasing ever since he arrived at camp, begins to get almost unbearable.

Suddenly his shepherd dog, "Skip," lying at the door of the cabin, leaps up and flies out into the night barking loudly. Halliday seizes his loaded revolver, and going outside listens intently. The barking gets fainter and fainter. Skip is evidently chasing away some intruder, probably a coyote.

A wolf! Strange that that word makes his heart beat, and his fingers mechanically tighten round the lock of the pistol; for he knows these prairie wolves are arrant cowards, and will attack nothing more formidable than a sheep. What causes this nervous dread even of a coyote? It is because, for the first time, a night must be spent alone, away on the prairies, far from any human being. All sorts of fears that had been smiled at before take full possession of him now. He finds himself trembling all over at—what? There's nothing to be afraid of.

"Ah, what's that? That black thing standing about twenty yards off—is it a bear? What can it be? Per-

haps a mountain lion that knows I am alone." Jack raises his pistol to fire, when there is a rush of soft feet, a loud, ringing bark from the returning dog, and the apparition—a great black Texan cow—gallops off as fast as its legs can carry it, kicking up much dust in the operation, and protesting loudly all the way.

After a hearty laugh at himself and an affectionate caressing of the faithful dog, Jack again lies down, this time determined to sleep come what may. But it is not to be. Just as he is dozing off the dog barks a second time, but does not, as before, rush boldly out. There is another sound, too, that comes nearer and nearer, until it is directly overheard—the dull, thunderous tramp of affrighted sheep. The young herder leaps out of bed in a twinkling, and issues forth, pistol in hand, as before. The night is pitch dark, and he can distinguish nothing; but the sheep bells are ringing furiously, proving that the animals are rushing wildly from some unseen enemy. The dog, curiously enough, after a few undecided, nervous howls, subsides into silence. From these signs Jack knows at once that there must be a mountain lion about; an animal which, if left alone, will do terrible havoc among the flock, one puma having been known to cut the throats of thirty sheep in a night.

Jack instantly fires his pistol into the air, the report of which will probably scare the animal for a time. But it has spoiled his night's rest, and will do so for many a night to come. This is, in fact, one of the greatest provocations that he has to endure. On every dark night this puma will be prowling around; and nothing but the greatest vigilance can keep him from inflicting fatal damage on the unfortunate sheep.

These animals never come except on the dark nights, when you cannot see a yard before you, and, of course, are quite noiseless in their movements. Moreover, it is a very dangerous business to attack them unless you are certain of killing at the first shot, because, if wounded, they have no hesitation in flying at a man; and, in consequence of their activity and tenacity of life, they are considered very nearly as formidable antagonists as the grizzly bear.

However, this continual disturbance, night after night, makes Jack desperate, and a desperate man, especially when young, will risk much. After trying many ways he at length hits upon one that seems to promise almost certain success. It involves the loss of a sheep, to be sure. But what will that matter, if he can only destroy the mountain lion?

The next day he shoots a young wether, and, dragging it to the door of the hut, he skins and dresses it. He then scoops out a little hollow, just in front of the door of the hut, which he manages to fill with the blood of the defunct sheep. The carcass he hangs inside, and as soon as it becomes dark he extinguishes his fire, muzzles and ties up the dog, and beds the sheep very close to camp. He then places himself at the door, with one hand on the lock, ready to jump out and fire the moment he hears the puma outside lapping up the blood placed ready for it.