

Kit = A STORY OF THE OREGON COAST RANGE

Friendship of a Mountain Lion For a Hunter Who Had Saved It From Slow Starvation

BY B. A. CHILDERS.

THE incidents herein related may seem far-fetched to some of those who read this story. Others, more bold, with less regard for an author's feelings, may pronounce the whole thing a tissue of lies. It is difficult for the ignorant and narrow-minded to admit the truthfulness of any statement which falls without the circumference of their limited understanding. This accounts for the slowness of scientific facts being accepted by the masses. I shall not be surprised to find among the doubters a few educated persons, and, occasionally, a teacher, who requires her pupils to accept, without question, as to their truthfulness, all her statements, and yet regards my stories in the light of fairy tales and takes them, cum grano salis.

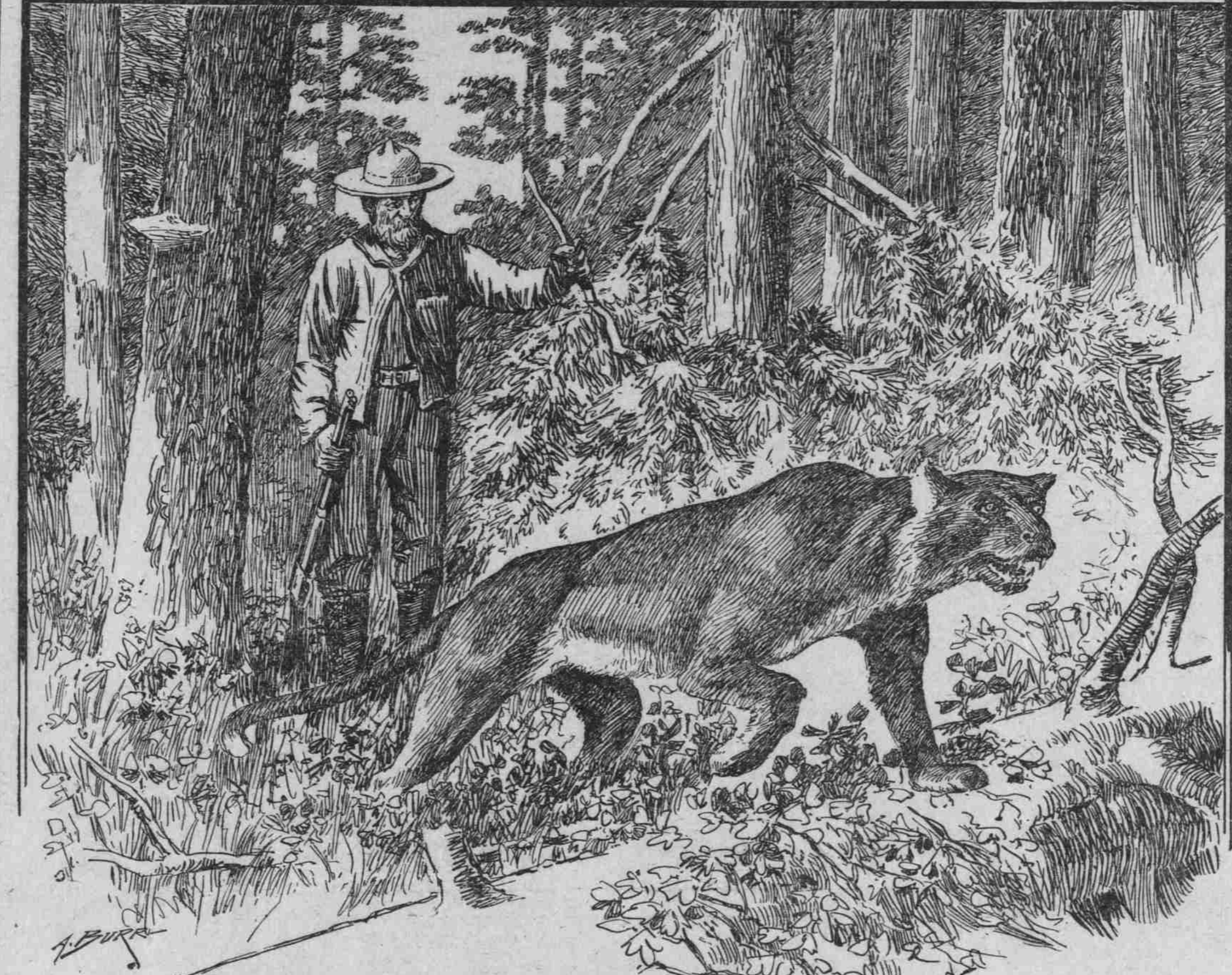
During the Summer of 1907 I was hoofing it over the trails of the Necanicum and North Nehalem Mountains, in the capacity of fire warden for a Portland timber company. I usually spent the night in some deserted cabin, and often days would pass without my seeing a human being. It is needless to say I was often so lonesome that I would have welcomed the company of a digger Indian. My hobby for something to read was so intense that I often followed the section lines solely for the purpose of reading the inscriptions on the corner posts, and when I found some familiar name, like Cy Crumbly, Siph Johnson, John Leacey, or Billy West, on a stump or tree, tears of joy welled to my eyes and pattered down on the moss at my feet. The sight of a familiar name in the dense forests, thrills the lonely wanderer, and fills him with unutterable joy. Once I found a woman's name on a tree, and I camped near that tree, and all night I was absolutely and perfectly happy. True, I did not know her, but she was one of those angelic beings at whose shrines every true man worships, and on departing next morning I poured out an oblation of pure mountain water, the only beverage God ever brewed for man, to her, and inscribed her name in memory's tablet, to glow over in my hours of solitude.

One morning, while winding my way along the most lonely trail of the mountains, I heard the most plaintive sound that ever fell on my ears. It sounded like a woman in distress, whose sobs were so faint and far away I could barely hear them. Pausing to locate the sounds, more perfectly I set out in their direction, beating my way through the tangled underbrush, lacerating my hands with the devil's walking cane, that barred my way, and saying my prayers—most backwards. Soon I came to a dense clump of elder bushes and, in them I located the moanings. I called, but received no answer, although the moaning instantly ceased. I called again, still no reply. Then I parted the bushes and began to work my way down toward the center of the clump, wondering at the same time, how a woman ever got into that God-forsaken locality. I had almost reached the center of the clump of bushes when I was horrified to find myself on the edge of a well-like crater, into which another step would have plunged me headlong.

Carefully clearing the brush from the edge of the crater, I gazed down into its murky depths, but at first could distinguish no object. Finally, when my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, I could see the form of a huge animal lying on the bottom of the crater. At last the animal raised its head and two glowing eyes gazed pitiously into mine. There was none of the fierceness of the forest marauder in that gaze; only a piteous appeal for help, and my heart went out in tender pity to the poor brute lying famished and helpless at the bottom of that pit. Ordinarily we were enemies, but now the universal tie of suffering, which connects all God's creatures, made us friends on the broad ground of sympathy.

Heavily unslung my pannikin from my pack, I went to a little stream nearby, and secured about a quart of water, which I carefully lowered to the famished brute by means of my pack-ropes. This, after two or three efforts to raise its head, it lapped greedily. Fortunately I had several pounds of fresh venison in my pack and of this I gave it about a pound. The famished animal devoured the meat eagerly and mutely appealed for more, which I refused it.

That evening I fed and watered it again and talked to it, as best I could, in "Kit," and other pet names; and it



"WE WOULD STOP AND LISTEN"

seemed to delight in hearing the sound of my voice. On the morrow after feeding Kit, I began devising means to rescue him from the pit. I did not apprehend any danger from it. In fact I felt toward it much as if it were a suffering fellow-creature needing my help. I cut a good-sized sapling, trimmed it, leaving the limbs long enough for a foothold, slipped it into the pit, took my pack rope and boldly went down to rescue my friend. It did not betray any fear or anger when

I reached the bottom, and was soon purring, contentedly, while I was stroking and lashing it ready for hotting. Owing to the emaciated condition of Kit the pit I had little difficulty in raising him, and it did my heart good to witness his gratitude for his delivery. He was so weak he could hardly stand, but he kept large, luminous eyes on me constantly, and in their depths beamed a world of love and gratitude. I found on measuring him that he lacked only a few inches of being 11 feet from tip to

tip, one of the largest specimens of the cougar family I had ever seen. The quantity of meat he devoured during the two weeks following was startling, and the way he laid on flesh was equally surprising. He soon learned his name, and would come readily as a shepherd dog. He was lavish in his love, and would arch his beautiful back, rub against my leg and purr, his contentment whenever I spoke to him or stroked him. I soon

ceased to entertain the idea that animals of the cat kind have no gratitude. Here was a living witness to the contrary, full of love for his rescuer and constantly manifesting it. Kit accompanied me on my journeys through the woods and after his first startled spring at the sound of my gun, never manifested a particle of fear. In a short time I began to learn the mystery of stalking game from him, and, ere long, trusted entirely to his unerring instincts and woodcraft. He always

hunted against the wind, gliding through the tangled mazes as silently as a shadow and stopping often to listen or catch the scent of his prey. One day in the early morning he caught a scent that set him all a-quiver. He grew so eager that he could scarcely wait for me, and I expected him to spring into the forest and disappear at any moment. But he restrained himself, and together we stealthily approached our quarry. Finally Kit halted; his tail became rigid, then slowly waved from

side to side, and became rigid again. I knew he was preparing to spring, and stood perfectly still, thrilled with the magnificent beauty and power of the couchant form. When, suddenly, like an arrow from a bow, it was gone! Then I saw his prey, a splendid bull elk, which stood with his head pointed from me, unaware of danger. The distance was about 20 feet and Kit sprang squarely on the elk's back. One mighty paw caught the elk in the top of the neck, the other thrust down and under, hooked itself in the elk's lower jaw, and with one mighty wrench the elk tottered to its fall. During all the struggle I stood speechless, thrilled with the lust of battle, surprised that an animal one-fourth the size of another should conquer it so easily.

The instant the elk fell Kit released it and sprang lightly to one side, feeling content in his victory. I stood and gazed in awe at the two animals. One would easily tip the scales at 1200 pounds, the other barely at 300, and yet the smaller animal had destroyed the larger, almost in the flash of an eye. It seemed incredible, but the dead elk, with its neck broken, proved the statement true. I had seen the combat.

Often, in our wanderings, we came upon fresh bear tracks. To these Kit paid no attention. They were beneath his notice, not even worthy of being called enemies; scavengers of the woods, that feasted on carrion and dead salmon, with here and there an unlucky pig, which fell into their clutches.

One afternoon, however, we struck the trail of a bear which seemed to be a monster. The instant Kit noticed it he uttered a low growl and became instantly alert. His eyes blazed with absolute ferocity, and when I wanted to follow the bear trail, he barred my way. Willing to be guided by his cunning, I took another course for the shack in which we were camping. Kit followed me, silently alert, as if he sensed danger, close and terrible. When I went to gather wood, or to get water, Kit came close to me, and when I was in the shack he lay facing the door, with the light of a deadly hate glowing in his beautiful eyes that were almost human in their intelligence; and the glances he often threw me were full of love.

After we had eaten I sat gazing out into the beautiful moonlight, which threw a sheen of silver over the whole landscape. Picture yourself in my position. A lonely mountain cabin in a dense forest; the moon in its full, the silence of the night brooding over all, yourself a dreamer, and you can fancy some of the pictures that come into your mind. I built; some of the dreams of long ago, when youth's warm blood thrilled through every vein and all life seemed one glorious song!

My reverie was broken by a hoarse, deep growl of anger and hate, as Kit launched himself through the door and scrooped with teeth and nail, with a gigantic brown object that stood erect not 10 feet away. I knew in an instant that it was a cinnamon bear, the most terrible animal in North America, except the grizzly.

I seized my gun and sprang into the field of combat, ready to assist my friend at the first opportunity. The snarling and growling was terrific, and the intentions of the animals so rapid that I had no chance to fire a shot without striking Kit's life. He waited, excitedly, for an opening. The bear was striving to get his lithe antagonist into his deadly embrace, which Kit, with equal ferocity, seemed determined to avoid, and was springing under the gramma of long, mighty adversary, cutting and slashing the brown monster with his terrible fangs and claws, then avoiding a clinch, like a trained prizefighter, who knows that once in the embrace of his powerful foe, the fight is practically over. When once those deadly arms close round him, he will soon be a crushed victim helpless in the embrace of death.

Just what would have been the result of this sanguinary conflict will forever remain a mystery. As they tore loose from one of their fierce grapples the bear came face to face with me, and charged without a moment's hesitation. I gave a yell that would have started a Comanche Indian and sprang to one side, with such swiftness that I fell clear out of the bed and struck the floor with a thud that awakened Kit's life. In the house I started all kinds of inquiries as to whether I had them again, or if it were only a plain, common, ordinary nightmare. Too proud to reply I crawled into bed again and soon drifted away into the land of dreams.

THE HOTEL CLERK



BY IRVIN S. COBB

"SHE certainly is mighty superior-looking," said the House Detective as the young woman in the evening gown cruised across the marble and gold lobby of the Hotel St. Rockless and tacked down Cockatoo Lane in the direction of the ladies' writing-rooms. "I'll bet it takes a pile of money to keep her in clothes."

"Who?" said the House Detective. "Some good-looking young feller, I reckon?" "Not so as to startle your gaze," said the Hotel Clerk. "The one I see her

with most frequently here of late is the oldest boy of that rich bunch that came up from Newport the first of the month and took the big suite on the sixth floor."



I Couldn't Think of It! He Ain't Equiv.

speaks to the discovery that a contrasting background helps the stage setting a whole lot. I've always noticed that a leading lady who's depending largely upon her face and figure to fill the red plush reservation out in front is supported by some middle-aged females closely resembling a delegation of widows of the late Sitting Bull."

"But that there sawed-off locust—how kin she stand for him?" protested the House Detective. "If he'd stretch his galluses a little he could use his hip pockets for car muffs. Why, Mr. McBean, he ain't much bigger'n a half portion of rice birds and he's got a face like a sudden relapse. What's more, if I'm a judge, he ain't no intellectual giant, not by several rage volumes."

"Not me," said the Hotel Clerk. "I wanted to fathom the workings of his mind. You may not know it, Larry, but I'm a psychologist. A psychologist is a person who goes to a place where he's pretty sure there ain't any brains

will be onless he should have a long spell of illness and then get kicked in the face a couple of times by a mule. That secretary's a decent lookin' young feller. The nerve of the likes of him, talkin' that way!"



I Can Play the Button-Button Game on the Lady's Spine.

A Salt Water River. The Greek island of Saphalonis has a salt water river. It flows inland from a tideless sea and furnishes power for several mills.

The King of Italy is an ardent collector of coins, especially those of the Romans and the ancient Greeks.