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A MUSICAL BEAR.

The Novel Experience of a California Girl.

Her Piano Playing Attracts the Attention of Brain, and He Falls in Love with the Young Lady and the Instrument.

Mary Carter was practicing her music and was all alone in the house. But for some reason she was always alone when she did so. As soon as she struck the first note of her exercises everybody went outdoors and staid there regardless of the style with which she went over the scales. Mary, according to the Elmira (N. Y.) Telegram, was a San Francisco girl who had gone to spend the summer with her sister, who married a rancher that lived away up in the mountains near the headwaters of American river. Her brother-in-law, Mr. Matthews, was well-to-do and fixed the little house to which he took his bride in fine style. Things were so elegant it was hard to imagine that the place was nearly fifty miles from civilization. When he was buying furniture he was persuaded to take a splendid grand piano, which in due time arrived at the ranch, and it was on this that Mary was practicing. She did not like the idea of being alone at first, but as she found it impossible to persuade her sister to stay with her she had to make the best of a bad job. She went over the scales carefully every few minutes, taking a look out into the garden to see that her relatives did not get too far away. After finishing one piece she rested a moment, thinking of what she would play next. Suddenly she heard a shuffling sound, and, turning around, she saw a large, brown bear standing in the doorway leading to the back part of the house. She was paralyzed with fear and could neither move from her chair nor scream.

She saw the bear come nearer, and she trembled like a leaf. Oh, how she wished she could faint. But she was a strong girl and couldn't, and the bear kept coming closer, and soon had his paws around her. She gave herself up for lost as she felt the grip, which she knew was deadly, tighten around her and the warm breath of the creature on her face. Looking through the window she could see her relatives lounging around peacefully in the shade of the pines and tried to call them, but her tongue would not move and she closed her eyes, expecting to open them in that happy land of which she had been taught from childhood. But what was this? The bear was not hurting her. He held her gently but firmly in his paws, and was actually licking her face, like a pet dog. She opened her eyes, and the world was the same as usual. She could not tell whether she was frightened or not, but somehow she did not try to scream. She just kept quiet, hoping something would happen to end the agony, which she did not understand. The bear did not hold her more than a second, although it seemed ages to the girl. He did not want to hold her, for he threw her on the floor. She was still frightened and expected the beast to jump on her and devour her at his leisure. But instead he turned around, commenced to claw the piano and was evidently delighted with his performance, for he kept time with his feet and looked around approvingly. The people outside heard the clatter but did not pay any attention to it, as they afterward said it was not unusual. Mary has never forgiven them for this. The bear began to play furiously, and Mary, seeing a way to escape, took advantage of it and ran away screaming from the room. Her relations at first refused to believe her story, but hearing the clatter ran to the window and looked in. Brain was still at it, and by this time had become so enthused that he was performing a sort of can-can to his own accompaniment. He was in the height of his glory and had found out where the bass keys were, and with these he was particularly delighted. The deep, continuous rumble seemed to afford him the greatest pleasure, and he would execute a bar that sounded like the cadenza of "A Storm at Sea."

He howled and jumped and whined, and at last concluded his concert by getting on the piano on all fours and executing a jig. At this time Mr. Matthews thought he had better take a hand, and he ran into the room with an ax, as that was the only weapon available. The bear did not seem surprised, but got out of the way, and had there been room would have left the house. He was struck several times with the ax, but did not show fight, and the man thought he must have found a tame bear, although he could not imagine where it came from. He then changed his tactics and tried to capture it, as it did not appear dangerous. He got hold of it and tried to tie it in the piano cover. But at this the brute's wild nature showed itself, and it got ready to make an attack. Before the man could realize what was coming he heard a deep, angry growl, and the next moment was clutched angrily by the monster. The bear could have killed him but it did not want to. It just gave him a good squeeze and threw him violently against the wall. After looking at him a moment the bear went out the door and walked leisurely into the yard. Mrs. Matthews and Mary rushed in and soon had Mr. Matthews back to consciousness. He got up and looked out of the window and saw the bear walking quietly over the hill in the direction of the mountain.

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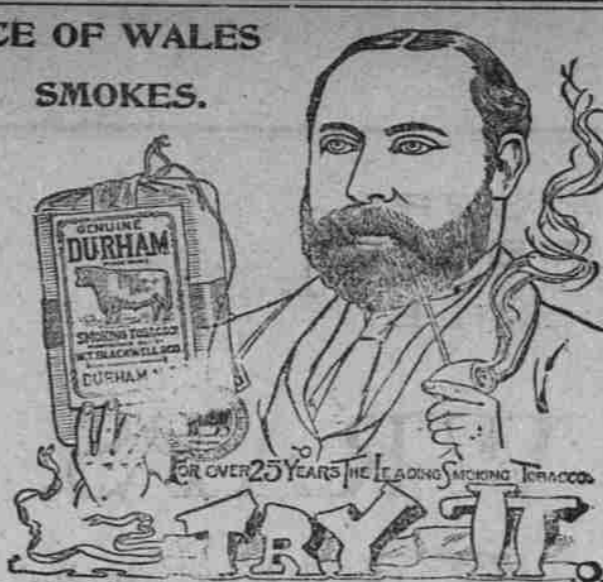
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