

# OVER THE RAFT

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**L**YING in the western part of Minnesota are two long, narrow lakes, which form a portion of its boundary line with Dakota. One is called Big Stone and the other Lake Traverse. Although they have but a few miles of low marsh and meadow and between them, they have no connection by water. In their vicinity a traveler rides over a rolling prairie. As far as the eye can see, a vast expanse of dried grass spreads out in undulating lines, like an ocean.

A great writer says nature is ever surprising; but few have thought of her as a magician, who can change a level plain to the brow of an immense hill.

A deep, wide valley lies before you, covered with rich, green grass; a line of cottonwood trees mark the circuitous course of a stream, and, as the eye follows the valley at either end, a sheet of silver water sparkles in the sun, between the verdant hills.

You step from dreary stillness into sunshine and happiness—a silence only interrupted by the weird, lonely cry of the jacksnipes and the sound of your pony's hoof.

Far away in the distance, towards the west, a line of blue hills, called the Kotos, rise. These form a water shed, dividing the rainfall on one side from that on the other.

There is the source of the Minnesota River—a river, at first a tiny stream, it gradually widens, and in the frequent freshets, has gullied out for itself a deep ravine between the hills.

In the summer its still pools are barely stirred, excepting by an occasional water-fowl; but in the spring, when the heavy rains have melted the snow on the higher table lands and hills, its roaring can be heard for miles.

The rude bridges, built of cottonwood, along the trail to the Lisseton Indian Agency, are swept away, like chaff before the wind.

The trail winds cautiously down the steep descent and across the valley; before you is this river. A cluster of rude log houses, at first unnoticed, are discovered among the trees by a thin wreath of ascending smoke.

My arrival was announced by a chorus of yelping dogs, which brought the crowd of idle loungers about the stove to the door. A few were Indians, whose ponies I saw munching the grass near by.

The house proved to be the hotel, if such a rude hut of logs could be so called. I was in time for supper, which was shortly announced, and my appetite, sharpened by a ride of thirty-five miles, gave me a keen relish for the roast duck and steaming dish of baked beans and brown bread set before me.

As night set in the falling drops of rain told of a coming storm, but no one realized it would last more than a few hours.

The next morning it was still raining heavily, the river had considerably widened, still, as yet, was within its banks.

The ford, close by where water the evening before gently rippled across the stones, was now flowing a deep, muddy current.

The day went by, and the next, without the rain ceasing. Inundation threatened the whole valley; but the morning of the fourth



*The Rope was placed on Board and the Raft pushed off, Two Men remained on it*

day the sun came out. The river had risen nearly to the door. Although it remained unaltered for some time, it did not prove of a serious nature for us.

"Hello! there is the mail carrier," said the landlord.

The man was mounted, but did not dare to swim his horse across to us.

"Can't you get over?" he called.

The landlord was up to the emergency. "Boys," he said, "there are two logs behind the shed, with some boards; here are hammer and nails and a saw. While I am getting out some rope, you commence a raft. Hurry up! We won't keep him waiting long."

The logs were about ten inches in diameter and twelve feet long. They were dragged into the water.

Some boards and joists for building, which had lately been hauled from Herman—the nearest railroad—lay in a pile near by, and from these were selected two four-by-two joists twelve feet long.

They were nailed lengthwise along the logs, one on each, with large nails or spikes six inches long. This was to raise the platform above the water.

The logs were placed six feet part, and enough boards sawed and nailed across on the joists to cover them. In this way a board platform was made, which floated high above the water.

While the work was going on, the landlord appeared with a large coil of rope, which he told me he had bought for this very purpose. There were also two big blocks or pulleys, with a strong rope fifteen feet long attached to each, the ends of which were fastened to the raft, which allowed of their being let out or drawn in at pleasure.

"We may have to use the raft a number of times," said the landlord; "so let's make a good one."

The rope was placed on board and the raft pushed off, two men remaining on it.

A few yards away stood a large tree. The water had risen around its trunk; so they easily got to it, and secured one end of the large rope about it, after first putting it through the blocks, which were fastened to the raft.

Now, how were they to get the rope across the water to an opposite tree?

I could not tell, but they evidently knew what they were about.

One of them took from his pocket a ball of strong twine and a piece of lead about the size and shape of a small egg. It had a hole through it where the string was fastened.

Unwinding a quantity of it on the boards sufficient to span the distance, he took the line a few feet from the ball, and whirling it around his head, let it fly.

It was so directly aimed that the string was carried to the right spot, where the mail-carrier got it, and soon had drawn a larger cord across, finally the rope, which he tied to a tree by his side. The men then boldly pushed off.

The forward end of the raft being held nearer the rope than the other end caused the current to strike the raft obliquely, carrying it across the river at quit: a rapid rate.

After securing the mail from the other side, the ropes were reversed, drawing the opposite end nearer the cable, and they were soon back again. Long habit had accustomed them to this sort of thing; but to a stranger, like myself, it seemed a novel and ingenious method.

## A CAT'S WHISKERS

**N**ATURE is an economical dame, and never indulges in useless gifts. If she gives an animal or plant an appendage of any kind, we may be sure that it serves some wise purpose.

Take a cat's whiskers, for instance, which may seem to you to be merely ornamental. They are organs of touch, attached to a bed of fine glands under the skin, and each of these long hairs is connected with the nerves of the lip. The slightest contact of these whiskers with any surrounding object is thus felt most distinctly by the animal, although the hairs themselves are insensible.

They stand out on each side of the lion as well as the common cat. From point to point they are equal to the width of the animal's body. If we imagine, therefore, a lion stealing through a covert of wood in an imperceptible light, we shall at once see the use of these long hairs. They indicate to him through the nicest feeling any obstacle which may present itself to the passage of his body; they prevent the rustling of boughs and leaves which would give warning to his prey; he were to attempt to pass too close to a bush; and thus, in conjunction with the soft pads of his feet and the fur upon which his claws never coming into contact with the ground—the enable him to move toward his victim with a stillness equal to that of a snake.

## Not Disobedience.

—Mattie persisted in running off to a neighbor's and her mother said; "If you go out of that gate again, Mattie, I whip you." In a short time Mattie was discovered on hidden ground and was led home. "Now, Mattie, what did I tell you?" "Mamma, I didn't go out of the gate. I abed over the fence."

## An Adirondack Adventure

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The water was not so deep but that, now and then, my feet would strike the bottom; but the current was so violent that it was impossible to stand for an instant.

Bruin was a grand swimmer, despite the wounds he had received; and, paying not the slightest heed to me, he made a bold effort to reach the bank, where a little bend in the stream created an eddy.

In this he was successful, and, scrambling up the gravelly slope, the creature sat upon his haunches, shook his shaggy coat and seemed to grin at me, as I lay badly exhausted on a smooth, flat boulder at the water's edge, where I had let go his tail and caught on a projecting ledge.

While we were thus situated, eyeing one another in a rebukeful way, as if each was chiding the other for getting him into such a scrape, I was fairly startled by the loud report of a rifle, and, glancing upward, discovered Nick Dowlett leaning over the rocky ledge forty yards away, his weapon still smoking in his hands, while the bear was smothering with pain and making an effort to climb still further up the slope, which, however, he was unable to do, as the hunter's bullet had broken one of his fore legs.

By this time I had recovered wind and strength enough to begin to clamber along the bank in the direction of Dowlett, who, I could see, was hurriedly ramming a bullet into his rifle, preparatory to finishing the enemy.

But he got no chance to discharge his gun the second time, for there was a puff of smoke from a clump of balsams further down the stream, and Bruin, with a tremendous spasm,

keeled over upon his broad back, with half an ounce of lead in his brain, while Verd Ritchie's sturdy voice was heard sounding a shout of triumph.

"I reckon we've all had a hand in this sport," said Dowlett, as we three stood about the carcass of the bear and I finished telling the details of my adventure; "and we'll have to toss up to see who he belongs to. The old fellow is pretty well riddled, I must say—shot in three legs, hind quarters and head. He, he!"

"You two can settle it as you please," laughed Verd, "for I have the other rascal all to myself. I wounded him bad the first shot, and a second one settled him. He's lying back there amongst some birch and spruce, and will never kick again."

We hastened after Verd, who carefully led the way, and soon came upon his quarry.

It was dark before we got home, with two valuable skins and a large lot of choice meat; and when old man Ritchie and Rupert came in later on, tired and empty-handed, we chaffed them not a little over our superior luck.

"Why, lad!" cried the old hunter, good-naturedly, as he slapped me on the shoulder, "I don't b'leve you're half the invalid they pretend you be, an' you can't pass for a sick chicken any longer. Never mind the old shot-gun you lost; the bar's worth more'n that, anyhow. I reckon they'll have to send you up a rifle from town now, an' you can jine our expeditions whenever you like."

And in due time the rifle came, and I need scarcely add that during the winter I made good use of it, soon becoming a fine shot and adding materially to my stock of health.

## SHE HAS AN AIM IN LIFE

**P**ENELOPE, have you any plans for the future?"

The father, a distinguished physician, looked sternly at his thirteen-year-old daughter as he asked this question.

"Yes, sir," she answered.

"You say it makes you homesick to stay away from home, Penelope. That is a consideration hardly worth mentioning. Homesickness soon passes away. Your sister is in her last year at college to which I wished to send you, and you will not be alone, at least for a year, and at the end of that time you ought to be able to get along nicely by yourself."

Penelope tapped the floor impatiently with her foot.

"I won't go, papa," she declared. "There's no use talking about it. I'd rather die!"

"You are growing up, Penelope," sighed the good doctor, "apparently without any idea of the value of time or the earnestness and reality of life. You don't care for useful books; you do nothing to improve your mind; you spend your hours in frivolity; you seem to float idly along as if there was no serious end or aim in living except to get what selfish pleasure you can get out of it. Yet you say you have your plans for the future. What are they?"

"I am going to be a society lady," said Penelope.

## A Well Wisher

—"Mamma," said a little five-year-old, "I wish papa would give me a pony."

"He can't, dear; he is not rich enough."

A little later;

"Mamma, may I have some pudding?"

"No, my dear, it is too rich."

"Mamma, I wish that papa was as rich as the pudding."