

VARIOUS

HARPER'S YOUNG
PEOPLE, NOVEMBER 25,
1879

Various
Harper's Young People,
November 25, 1879

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THE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING.

"we's stuffed you long 'nuff; got to stuff ourselves to-morrow."

THE BRAVE SWISS BOY

[Begun in No. 1 of Harper's Young People, Nov. 4.]

III.—THE CHAMOIS-HUNTERS

Early the next morning the door of the little mountain cottage grated on its hinges, and Mr. Seymour entered the small apartment, eagerly welcomed by Walter, who ran forward to meet him.

"What! you are up already, my boy, and as fresh and lively as if nothing had happened!" said he. "I fully expected to find you knocked up and ill after all the exertion and fatigue of yesterday; but I am glad to see that you are so much stronger than I gave you credit for. How is your back, though, Walter? Don't the wounds made by the vulture's claws pain you very much?"

"They were very sore last night, Sir," replied the boy; "but father bound them up nicely for me, and says they will be much better in a week."

"Delighted to hear it. But where is your father? I don't see him."

"He is outside. Sir, with Liesli, the cow that we recovered through your kindness," replied Walter, with a grateful look. "She is the best cow in the valley."

"Ah, here comes your father," said Mr. Seymour, with a smile, stepping forward to grasp the hand which Toni Hirzel held out toward him, while thanking him in hearty but simple words for the kindness he had shown to his boy.

"Don't mention it, my friend. What I gave to the boy was given

very willingly, and he has richly earned not only that, but a few francs more, which I am still owing him. But we will square accounts now. Here, Walter; there is forty francs for the old vulture which you captured so bravely; and here is another sixty francs for the torn trousers and the knife you lost."

With these words Mr. Seymour counted out five bright gold pieces on the table, to the wonderment of Toni Hirzel and his son, neither of whom could utter a word.

"But, Sir," exclaimed Walter, finding his voice at last, "the vulture, the trousers, and the knife all put together are not worth twenty francs!"

"They are worth more to me," replied the gentleman, "and you must allow me to pay for them according to my opinion of their value. So make no more words about it, my boy, but put the money in your pocket. I hope it may prove useful to you."

Tears started into Walter's eyes. "Oh, father!" he exclaimed, "only look at all this money! We shall be able to buy another cow, and make twice as much cheese as we do now. We sha'n't have to borrow anything from Neighbor Frieshardt any more, and if everything goes on well, we shall soon be able to build a house as good as his. It will be a blessing for you to have a comfortable home in your old age."

But Toni Hirzel shook his head. "Don't talk so fast, my boy," said he, quietly. "That is a great deal more money than we can think of taking. Pray take it back, Mr. Seymour. Watty is quite right. Twenty francs will amply suffice, especially when you were

so liberal toward him yesterday."

"Very well, friend, so be it," was the reply. "If you won't let me pay you the money as a debt, I hope you will allow me to give it to Walter as a present. I'm sure you won't object to that. He can save it till he's a few years older, if he doesn't require to spend it now; so let the matter drop, unless you really wish to annoy me."

Seeing that Mr. Seymour was in earnest, Toni Hirzel made no further objections, and lifted the money from the table.

"Well, then, Walter, I will take care of this handsome gift for you until you are old enough to make a good use of it," said his father, as he placed the money in a leather pocket-book, which he deposited in a secret drawer of the cupboard. "Rest there quietly," said he, in a whisper; "when I am dead and gone, it will be a nest-egg for Watty to fall back upon."

Mr. Seymour then rose to take his departure: and before saying farewell, Walter asked and obtained leave to visit the friendly traveller soon; but when he went to Rosenlanibad three or four days afterward, he found that Mr. Seymour had received a letter from home, which had compelled him to take his immediate departure.

The summer passed away; autumn came, and stripped the leaves from the trees; the first flakes of snow fluttered in the air; the days were growing shorter, and the quiet and solitary valley took its turn in the changes of fortune which so frequently occur in the outer world. Although Toni Hirzel was sober and industrious, he could not escape the common lot of humanity.

He sustained a heavy loss at the beginning of winter in the death of his favorite cow. Soon afterward the severity of the weather drove from the mountains the wolves, which broke into the stable during the night and killed two of his five goats.

These losses were serious to the poor man. The only property he possessed in addition to his cottage consisted of the cow and the goats, which supplied him with the barest necessities of life; and now he was deprived of them almost at one stroke. It was hard to bear; but by-and-by the recollection of the money which Mr. Seymour had given him came as a ray of sunshine to Walter, who begged his father to take it and buy another cow.

"No, Walter," was his reply. "The money is yours. Mr. Seymour made you a present of it, and it shall remain untouched until you are old enough to spend it for some good purpose. You are too young and inexperienced yet; so don't say any more about it. Now that we have lost Liesli and the goats, we must bestir ourselves to do something else for a living, until the spring, when we may perhaps be fortunate with the chamois. There are plenty of chamois on the hills, and my gun on the wall there has brought down many a fine buck. When spring comes we'll go out together, and you will see that your father has still a firm hand and a sure foot."

The winter wore away by degrees. The warm south wind crept slowly through the valleys, melting the snow from the mountain-sides, and calling into life hundreds of sparkling streams. Waterfalls foamed and thundered; enormous masses

of snow came crashing down from the mountain-peaks; while amid the noise and thunder of avalanches the sun exercised its silent but mighty influence, renewing the mountain greenery, converting the barren ground into a verdant carpet. The birds returned from their winter home, and again burst into joyous song; and again the budding trees proclaimed that winter was over and gone.

During the dreary winter-time the simple wants of the two mountaineers had been supplied by much toil and much privation, so that the return of the vernal season was hailed with joyful acclamation.



WATTY AND HIS FATHER HUNTING.

"It is time for us to be off now," said the hunter one morning to his boy; and day after day, whenever the weather was favorable, they might have been seen climbing the lofty mountain ranges in search of game, sometimes not returning to their little cottage for several days. At other times, however, after unspeakable trouble

and danger, they would return home in great glee, the father bearing a large chamois slung across his shoulders, to be sold for a good price to the landlord of the inn.

Toni was looked upon by all the country round as the best hunter in the district, and he was determined to maintain his reputation. By the end of August, when the summer was approaching its end, he had shot thirty chamois, and the best of the season was still before him.

"Now, Watty," said he, "we must look out for the winter. We have got on famously through the fine weather, and have made a little money; but there's not enough yet for what we require, and we must work away for some time still before we get as much as will replenish our empty byre."

"I will do all I can to help you, father," replied the boy. "I saw a track on the Wellhorn yesterday that promises a finer buck than we have taken yet."

"On the Wellhorn! On which side?"

"On the glacier side, father. It is not so very difficult to get up there; but I noticed that whenever he was disturbed, the chamois went across the glacier toward the Engelhorn, and I am afraid it would be rather dangerous to follow him. There are cracks in the ice hundreds of feet deep, and how well we know that whoever falls into one of them would never see the light of day again."

"That is very true," said his father, thoughtfully. "But we must have the buck at any risk. Do you know the spot on the glacier where he makes for the Engelhorn?"

"Yes; it is quite at the top, where the ice is spread out like a sea."

"Well, then," said the experienced mountaineer, "we must try and avoid following the chamois over the ice, and rather wait for him on the Engelhorn, and get a shot at him as he passes. You must go to the Wellhorn, my boy, and drive him toward me."

"Yes; that will be the best, father," replied Walter. "I thought of that myself."

"Well, then, let it be so. We must be off before daybreak to-morrow morning."

Toni made the necessary preparations the same evening, and long before the first beams of Sol were visible on the following morning, he left the cottage with his son. After a toilsome ascent of half an hour, they separated. The father turned to the left toward the steep and craggy Engelhorn, after he had described the exact point toward which Walter was to drive the animal, while the boy scrambled up the dangerous ridges of the Wellhorn, to find the chamois, and drive it to the place where his father was to lie in wait.

"Be very careful, Watty," said his father to him ere they parted; "don't be reckless or foolhardy."

The boy promised to be watchful, and they separated, each to his own share of the toilsome and perilous undertaking. Taking advantage of the rocks and stones which marked the path of a former glacier, Walter reached the summit of the Wellhorn without much difficulty, after an hour and a half's climb. Taking

a small telescope from his pocket, he peered anxiously across the field of ice which separated him from the Engelhorn, and descried his father working his way cautiously along the edge of the glacier till he gained a part of the rocks that seemed to afford a possibility of climbing. He then had the satisfaction of seeing him sit down to rest.

"He has got just to the right spot," said he to himself. "He must have seen the track. It is just fifty feet from there that the chamois springs across a crack in the ice to get to the pasture higher up; and when he once gets sight of him, father won't let him escape. But, first and foremost, I must find the game, and start it across."

No sooner said than done. Clambering from rock to rock, always observant and watchful, the resolute youth pursued his way. Suddenly, however, he stood still, and threw himself flat on the ground.

"I thought so—there he is!" said he to himself. "I must work my way carefully round to the right, and then frighten him off with a shout."

Taking stealthy advantage of every rock that could screen him from observation, Walter raised his head now and then to make sure that the chamois had not taken fright and removed from the spot. When he had thus reached the right position, he started to his feet and uttered a loud halloo! With a bound the chamois sprang down to the field of ice, which it crossed with light and rapid strides.

"The game is ours!" exclaimed Walter, with delight. But his joy was premature. Now began a chase, which lasted nearly an hour, until the animal approached the spot where Walter's father lay, when it suddenly stopped, gave a tremendous spring to the right, fled across the glacier with the speed of an arrow, and was out of sight in an instant.

"He must have seen father, or else scented him," said Walter to himself. "Our trouble is all in vain for to-day, so I must go acquaint father with the result."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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