

IN A MOUNTAIN FIRE.

A Thrilling Episode of California Life

BY ADA E. FERRIS.

A mountain fire at night—that was the sight which Louise Eltham, a visitor from the prairie states to her uncle's home in California, was regarding with awe and admiration.

"Let's ride up and take a nearer view," said her cousin Phil. "You will never see anything like this in Illinois—nor very often here, for that matter. There isn't a bit of danger. Prince goes easy and isn't skittish, and we'll just go up on one of the foothills where we can see it all. Get your thickest cloak, though, for it's chilly, and you don't want to freeze on one side while you roast on the other."

Nothing loath, Louise ran for her wraps, and very soon they were galloping toward the blazing mountains. How light it was! "It's like my picture of 'The Last Days of Pompeii,'" Louise panted, "only this isn't doing any harm."

A wagon came clattering toward them, and Phil drew up suddenly as he recognized the lady who drove. "Good evening, Mrs. Hastings! Why, you are not burned out, surely?"

Mrs. Hastings laughed hysterically. "The house was all right when I left, but I don't suppose I shall ever see it again. The sparks were falling in showers, then. Mr. Hastings and his brother insisted on my coming out with the coats before the road was blocked by the fire. They said they could go over the eastern ridge by the cattle-trail and out by Wilson's road, if they were delayed too long. Our pretty home—"

She choked, but almost instantly recovered herself, and asking hurriedly, "Is your mother at home? I think I'll drop in on her until the matter is settled," she drove on.

"For Mrs. Hastings!" Louise sighed.

A fire starting in one of these gulches or canyons rushes up it as flames rush up a chimney, but the steep rock walls on either side often confine it. Though the clouds just westward of the Hastings place roared like a fiery furnace, their ravine was still dark and unharmed. Phil looked up it longingly, but dared not take his cousin in, for the house was some half mile up the canyon, the road thither was a bare cut through tangled thickets, and if the fire once started there it would be impossible to get back. Yet he was aching to go to Mr. Hastings' assistance.

"Here's just the place, Louise. Come on," he cried, turning up a cattle path to the top of a partially detached knoll to eastward. "You can see it all from here and yet be perfectly safe. If Prince gets restive, throw your handkerchief over his eyes. Don't go any nearer. I'll be back presently, but I want to run up to the Hastingses. You don't mind, do you?"

Louise did mind, but would not say so, knowing how much the Hastingses needed help, so a moment later she was alone on the stony knob. Almost in the next moment, it seemed, she found herself listening to the distant barking of a dog. Louise loved dogs, and recognized this at once as the voice of a large one, frightened, angry and appealing. It was up the canyon eastward of the Hastings ravine. She had been up that trail once with Phil and Mina.

There she had seen a small, rough shanty, and two little toddlers playing with a great dog, half-bound, half-bulldog, which Phil informed her was the terror of the neighbors and the devoted slave and guardian of the children. Was he now afraid of the fire? He had reason. If it swept up Hastings' canyon it could hardly fail to take Wilson's also.

Then Louise felt her blood run chilly. Only that morning she had seen Wilson and his invalid wife drive by on their way to town, 12 miles away. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, but not the children! Mina had told her that when the Wilsons went to town they left the children locked up in the house. No wonder poor Bose was barking frantically! He scented danger in the air, and his beloved little ones were unable to escape!

"Phil! Phil!" Louise screamed, involuntarily, but Phil was far beyond hearing, and already there was a dull smolder of fire in the dead leaves beside the road, where a spark had fallen.

She sprang from her horse and rushed it out, but that could postpone the inevitable for but a moment or two; flames were showing over the western ridge, and other smoldering fires were visible. She could not reach Phil—there was no time to ride for help—yet clearer than ever she heard the frantic barking. Oh, the poor children, locked up in that little shanty with its roof of redwood shaker, dry as tinder!

"Prince, we've got to try it!" Louise sobbed, springing back into the saddle and turning him to the eastward. "Phil said 'Don't go nearer,' but I can't stay here and let those babies burn alive. I know they are

shrieking for help, and nobody to hear but poor, faithful, helpless Bose. Now keep cool, Prince! We simply must smash that door in and get the children back here before this canyon is a furnace, and that may be in less than ten minutes. Quick, Prince, quick! It's a race for life, now. Fly, boy, fly!"

Prince snorted as if he understood, and plunged down a steep cattle path to the narrow trail that wound up the canyon. Half a mile of this cave-like gloom, the crooked trail so narrow that her outstretched arms might touch the branches on either side, and now, indeed, Louise felt that she had rushed into the jaws of death. A few moments' delay would make return impossible, and she knew no other way out.

Now the canyon widened. She was under the firelit sky again, with Bose bounding toward her, barking imploringly. "Yes, Bose, yes, good doggie, we'll save the babies, never fear," she called, breathlessly, extending her hand toward him, for she understood the dog's tone. One snuff assured him that Louise was a friend, and he ran before her barking loudly and flung himself against the shanty door.

Louise sprang from her panting horse. Sparks were flying in clouds overhead, and the air was filled with the muffled roar of fire. Hastings' canyon was all ablaze. There wasn't a moment to lose. She rattled the rough door fiercely.

A frightened little face showed itself at the window. "Please'm, we can't open the door. We're locked in, and papa and mamma haven't come yet. Ain't it time?"

Louise looked desperately around for an axe to force the door. She could see clearly—it was too light, indeed, with all that ruddy glow from the smoke-clouds above. The great dog was watching her suspiciously. "Now don't be angry, boy," she coaxed, a little nervously. "We've got to open the door, you know, to get the babies out, or we shall all burn up together."

Bose barked and again flung his whole weight against the flimsy door just as Louise found a light hatchet. She attacked the door furiously. A strong man would have made short work of it, but the girl was neither strong nor skilful, and though it shivered and splintered it held fast for what seemed a terribly long time. At last as she and Bose together threw themselves against it, it crashed in, and the dog bounded across the room to where a little girl about six years old was trying to hush the screams of a brother of three.

The shanty consisted of but one room, with neither floor nor ceiling, and the furniture was of the rudest description. A few relics of better days "back east" contrasted oddly with the home-made stools and bedstead. Louise gave one glance at a fine, inlaid stand and a handsome family Bible, but with that terrible half-mile of overarched wood road to traverse, it was impossible to think of saving anything but the children.

She caught up the chubby youngster. "Come," she said cheerily, "let's go and meet mother."

But the child screamed and fought her vigorously. While she strove to soothe him, the little girl ran to the door, but one look brought her back to clutch Louise's dress.

"The mountain's all afire! We shall be burned up!" screamed the little girl, clinging tighter, while the boy kicked and pulled Louise's hair with all his small might. Fairly desperate now, Louise shook him into momentary quiet, and said, sharply, "Gracie, be still! I'll save you both if you'll be quiet and mind me. If you don't I can't, and we shall all burn up together!"

The little maid gulped down her cries, and even unclasped one small hand. "I'll be good," she gasped, obediently. "Don't let me be burned up."

But the spoiled baby only shrieked and kicked.

His little sister, trembling like a leaf, made a piteous appeal. "Please don't mind him. He don't know any better, he's so little. O Johnny! please be still, please! I'll give you my dollie, anything—but if you don't keep still—O Johnny, do listen to sister—we shall be burned up!"

But Johnny was deaf to argument, and Louise had to carry him out, and exert all her strength to lift him on the horse. "Hold on tight," she said; but before she could lift Gracie also, the perverse little fellow rolled shrieking to the ground. Louise had to spring and catch the bridle or Prince would have been off.

Master Johnny scurried back into the house and under the bed in spite of his sister's frantic appeals, for he had never been required to obey her or anybody else. Gracie ran after him, sobbing and tugging frantically to get him out. Louise had to tie

Prince before she dared follow, sick at heart with fear. The spoiled baby's wilfulness might cost all their lives.

By main force she dragged him from his retreat, enveloped him in blankets and bore him out, but on the doorstep she paused. The breeze up the canyon, till now so cool and fresh, had suddenly become warm and smoky. The falling sparks had done their work, fires were already smoldering lower down the canyon. A minute more might see it ablaze. It would be madness to attempt that road now. She set Johnny down and looked around with desperate coolness.

A barrel of water stood under the nearest tree. Into this Louise hastily plunged bedding and pieces of carpet, then, scrambling on an old box, with the help of the broom she spread them as well as possible over the flimsy roof.

Suddenly she sprang down. "The pool below the falls under the big bay tree! We may be safe there, and there isn't a moment to lose. Come, Johnny, we're going to the falls."

Once more she jerked the child from under the bed and carried him out. Now the air was close, and the canyon walls echoed to the crackling of the flames. Fortunately it was not far to the little pool, for it took all the girl's strength to lead the terrified horse and the struggling boy.

"Black man under falls—bogy man!" Johnny screamed, pulling back with all his might, and Gracie added, trembling, "Mamma says there is a black man there that eats little children; but you won't let him eat us, will you?"

"If there ever was a black man there," said Louise, with composure, "of course he's not there now—he's run away from the fire."

The "falls" were a mere dribble of water down an almost perpendicular rock; the pool was not over three feet deep, and green slime lay along its edges, but it was water, and it lay in a hollow, with rock walls on three sides, while over it spread the green luxuriance of a great bay tree. Louise drew a long breath of thankfulness when she reached the stream.

"Here, Gracie, hold this youngster a moment. Now, Prince, come and be tied to this tree. Poor old horse, you are nearly scared to death with all this heat and rushing and roaring and crackling round you. But you are safe here. Rocks and water can't burn, nor this green stuff, either. Oh, you little scamp!"

She was just in time to catch Johnny as he broke away from Gracie. This time she tore a strip from his apron, tied the restless ankles together, and set him down beside the pool, screaming, but unable to make more trouble.

"There, now! Don't cry, Gracie; I didn't hurt him, and we are safe here. Step close under the tree. Look at Bose lying in the pool. He knows how to make himself comfortable."

The canyon was now a sea of fire. Great flames seemed to reach and eclipse the pale stars overhead. The heat was intense, and the showers of sparks hissed in the water and scorched the ferns. Louise could see the thick foliage of the green bay shrivelling in the hot wind.

"But rocks and water can't burn," she repeated, desperately. "And this heat can't last long."

She dipped Gracie's wrap and her own into the pool, but Johnny held his so tightly and screamed so loud that she had to let that go.

A frightened rabbit flashed past them up the canyon, and a snake glided away among the rocks. Louise wondered if they would escape. She dashed water over Prince's saddle and back, over herself and the children. The heat was terrible. It seemed impossible to live except by lying flat. She tried to force Prince down, but he was too terrified to understand or obey, and she had to drop down herself.

The flames seemed to shoot up both sides of the canyon now, netting a fiery bowyer against the sky. The rain of sparks made little Gracie, looking into the mirror of the pool, scream in terror. "The water's afire, too!" she cried.

Louise tried to reassure her, but she found herself glancing up apprehensively at the shrivelling leaves of the bay tree. They would soon cease to be any protection. "Lie flat, Gracie," she said, and once more dashed water over the children and horse. Then she dropped, panting and exhausted, on the verge of the pool, closing her eyes to the foe she could no longer fight.

But scarcely a minute passed before Gracie exclaimed, "The fire's going out, and our house isn't burned. It's just going to, though!"

Louise sat up. The dry grass and leaves had burned out, the canyon was comparatively dark, and the shanty was but just smoldering into a blaze. The wet blankets and rugs had protected its roof, the great clump of callas and vines, its sides; but these had been dried out completely, and the last shower of sparks had accumulated. In an instant Louise was speeding toward it. There was a little water in the barrel. A few minutes' work with her saturated cloak sufficed to beat out the fire.

"It's better than no shelter," Louise remarked, grimly, as she dropped on the doorstep, utterly exhausted. "And their bedding isn't all burned

up, though I wouldn't give much for the things on the roof, and I don't think I shall wear this cloak to church again. I wish I was safe at home in bed; but thank God the children are safe!"

There came a patter of small feet and a shrill, wrathful voice. Johnny had succeeded in freeing himself, and returned in great indignation. "I'll tell my mamma on you," he declared, loudly. "You broke door in, and you dwag me off and you tie me up in de fire. I'll tell my mamma!"

"You're welcome," Louise said, dryly.

You broke windows and burn house. I'll tell my mamma," Johnny reiterated angrily.

Very cautiously Louise removed the blinding coat from her horse's head. She patted and soothed him, and was about to climb wearily into the saddle when there came a flare of torches and lanterns over the western ridge. She heard a woman sobbing wildly and declaring she must and would go on to her poor children, while men seemed to be dissuading her.

Then Louise heard Phil's voice, full of distress. "She would have been perfectly safe where I left her, and Prince wouldn't run away. Whatever possessed her to go wandering off? Ben, won't you go and see if she has gone home? I can't face them if she isn't there."

"Oh, Phil!" the girl called. "I'm here all right. Is that Mrs. Wilson crying? Tell her the children are all right and the house is standing. Bose! Down, sir! Don't you know your friends?" for the dog had bristled and growled angrily at Phil's headlong rush down the hill.

"Why in the world didn't you stay where I left you? Hastings thought sure you had tried to follow me and been caught in the fire. Next time I won't bring you out."

"You needn't. I never want to see a mountain fire again. All the same, I'm glad I came this time. You are, too, aren't you, Bose? You didn't hear him calling for help, did you, Phil? His barking brought me, and if Johnny had been half as sensible as his dog I could have had the children out before the fire caught us. Don't be angry, Phil. I couldn't stay there and let them burn up without trying to save them."

"Who's said anything angry? Only I didn't know you set up for a heroine."

"It wasn't heroic," Louise answered, simply. "It was the only thing to do."

But somehow she never could make the Wilsons agree with her, or Phil, either.—Youth's Companion.

CAN'T FOOL THE BRUTES.

Beasts Cannot Be Deceived by Illusions to Which Man Succumbs.

"It's a singular fact," said a man in the show business to a New Orleans Times-Democrat reporter, "that illusions, as we call 'em, don't fool animals. I've seen that proved over and over again. A few years ago I had what is known as the 'Mystic Maze' at the Nashville exposition. It was simply a small room filled with mirrors so arranged that you seemed to be in a narrow corridor full of turns. It was very puzzling, and I used to get lost in the place myself, but it never bothered my dog a moment. He would run through it from end to end at full speed and never bump against a mirror."

"I saw something in the same line in 'Frisco not long ago. A friend of mine had an illusion called 'The Haunted Swing.' You get in what seems to be an ordinary swing, hung in the center of a good-sized room, and the thing begins to move. It goes back and forth and finally clear over the top—that is to say, it seems to. What really turns around is the room itself—the swing stands perfectly still. It is a good illusion, and when the room is revolved rapidly there never was a man who could keep his head in the swing. It seems as if he must certainly pitch out, and if the motion is kept up he gets deathly sick. But a pet cat belonging to my friend used to lie on the edge of the seat and never turn a hair, no matter how fast the thing was worked."

"The elder Hermann told me that animals were never deceived by false table legs, built up with looking-glasses, and used in stage tricks. They always passed around on the other side. I guess they must see better, somehow, than men."

The Youngest Mayor.

The youngest mayor in the United States is Charles N. Fletcher of Clayton, Ill. He is just twenty-five years old. From his birth till the Spanish-American war broke out he lived in that section.

On the day the Quincy (Ill.) division of the naval reserves paraded before the United States Navy officers for inspection Fletcher felt a thrill of patriotism and at once enlisted. The battalion went to Norfolk, and there in the scattering of the reserve he was ordered to the Yale.

Fletcher served on the Yale till he was discharged last autumn. On his return home, from the reports of his companions touching Fletcher's steadfastness and dashing courage, the men of the town concluded he would make a runaway canvass if nominated for mayor, and he did.—New York World.

QUAINT AND CURIOUS.

There are apple growers at Montreuil, France, who furnish fruit bearing family crests. The apples are grown in paper bags. When the apples are about as large as hickory nuts the bags are slipped over them in order to protect them from the sun. When they are nearly ripe new bags are adjusted, with the crest cut out like a stencil on one side of the bag. The sun then colors the apple, leaving a green crest on a red apple or a red design on a green surface.

Mrs. James Platt of Union Mills, Ind., recently gave birth to a quartet of girls. Each measured twelve inches in length and weighed twenty-four ounces. The mother is 16 years old, while the father is upward of 30. Three of the quartet died soon after birth. The fourth is well developed and bids fair to live. The attending physicians believe that the case is without precedent in medical history. Births have been recorded of quartets with a division of males and females, but no case has been recorded, they say, where the babes have been of one sex.

Rev. A. C. Bowditch, pastor of the Methodist church on City Island, New York City, has a black Java hen of remarkable accomplishments. She has recently been laying eggs of surprising dimensions. The eggs are 3 3/4 inches long and 2 3/4 inches through the middle. The measurement around the long way of the egg is 8 1/8 inches and two inches less around the middle. Four of these eggs weigh a trifle under one pound and they average three and three-quarter ounces apiece. Another peculiarity of the Java hen's energy is that the eggs are double yolked.

A surgical operation with remarkable results was recently performed at the Mendota Hospital for the Insane at Madison, Wis. Joshua Davis, a patient with suicidal tendencies, was found to be suffering from a peculiar complication of troubles and he had informed the doctors in charge that he had swallowed nails, wire, etc. The doctors decided upon an operation. They found embedded in the stomach and intestines, both of which were perforated, one-half pound of nails of all sizes, two pocket knife blades and several pieces of twisted wire. Some of the nails gave evidence of having been in the stomach a long time. The man died twenty-four hours after the operation.

There is a singular but an absolutely true story of a watch which went through the cyclone. The timepiece, which has been under fire and is now a veteran, was an old one of strong build, says the St. Paul Dispatch. When the storm struck the owner, whose name is Bryant, forgot all about his valuables in the hustle for safety. The watch was in the drawer of a bureau. After the blow was over Mr. Bryant found himself almost without a scratch and went back to view the house. He found nothing but a landscape. He began to search about the ruins early the next morning, and here comes the funny but true part of it. In the bottom of an unbroken pickle jar were the works of the watch, ticking away while the silver case could not be found.

There was general excitement at Lime Ridge, Wis., recently when a flock of American passenger pigeons passed north over that place, the flock being a mile long and so dense as to nearly obscure the sun. Their appearance has created interest, as these birds have not been seen for twenty years and even specimen hunters could not secure a single bird. They formerly roosted near Lime Ridge, and came every summer by millions to nest and breed. The people made pigeon hunting one of the principal sources of revenue in those days. They were slaughtered by the hundreds of pounds but still seemed to increase in number. They suddenly disappeared and were supposed to be extinct until their recent appearance.

He Was His Own Burglar.

A young country doctor committed a "daring burglary" upon his own premises a short time ago. He locked open a ground floor window, ransacked the surgery and dining and drawing rooms, collected all the valuables in a sack, and then, clanking parties, he rushed out of the house and chased an imaginary burglar across half a mile of open country. Returning home empty handed, of course, he immediately alarmed the police, who discovered that a burglary had been committed, but that luckily the unfortunates had been too eager to head their retreat to carry off plunder. The young doctor maintains now to his intimate friends that his dodge was one of the finest advertisements a practitioner could invent.

The Utility of Fly Screens.

"Our doors and windows have screens so we sit out in the porch in comfort."
"How's that?"
"The flies all stay on the screens, trying to get in."

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY.

Among recent inventions is a device by which the air-brakes of a railroad train can be applied from the track, as the train passes, without the intervention of the engineer. The air-brake system is connected with a lever controlling a vent in the train-pipe, and attached to the truck of the pony wheels close to the track at the forward end of the locomotive. On passing over an obstruction, placed on the track for the purpose, the lever is tilted and the vent opened, thus letting the air in to the brakes. The engineer can reset the lever from his place in the cab.

Although the accumulation of data concerning magnetism is the most pressing and perhaps the most important object to be attained by Antarctic exploration, it is by no means the only one. For geographers, meteorologists, geologists, zoologists, the Antarctic region is almost a new field. Until last summer no expedition had passed a winter there—no complete series of weather records, therefore, had been taken there. The science of meteorology is still young, but it promises to be of great advantage, and every record of wind currents, precipitation and other phenomena of the air has or will have, as the science progresses, its significance in the mind of the expert—who will in turn transmit the results of his inferences to the farmer, in the shape of weather predictions.

A novel and ingenious method of making perfectly plane mirrors has been devised by A. Mallock, and was recently communicated to the Royal Society of Great Britain by Lord Rayleigh. These mirrors can be made as large as two and two, and half, inches in diameter or even larger, and are formed by stretching thin films left on water after a few drops of a solution of pyroxyline in amyl acetate have been poured upon it and allowed to spread over rings whose edges have been ground to a true plane. The contraction of the film in drying makes a surface that when used as a reflector affords as good definition as one of worked glass. A two-inch mirror of this form would weigh considerably less than ten grains. Mr. Mallock's chief difficulties lie in the silvering of the films, the greatest possible precautions as regards cleanliness and purity of the chemicals having to be observed.

The extraordinary and unprecedented electro-motive force of 3,000,000 volts has been obtained by Professor J. Trowbridge in his latest transformation apparatus, consisting of 120 condensers. Under this stress the initial resistance of the air is greatly diminished. The extreme length of the spark in air is shorter, however, than it should be according to theory, and lower voltages, being only 6-12 feet instead of 10, as a consequence of leakage through the powerful brush discharges that proceed from the terminals to the floor and walls of the room. In spite of all precautions, part of the discharge is always thus shunted through the surrounding air. The initial resistance of highly rarefied gases is similarly reduced, and a Crookes tube that resists the passage of an 8-inch spark is brilliantly lighted by a difference of potential of 3,000,000 volts. Such a tube is made to give a photograph of the bones of the hand by a discharge of a millionth of a second.

The most delicate surgical operation ever performed, and which has so far proved successful, was accomplished by Dr. Farman and other physicians, recently, at Harman, W. Va. Jay Lutz, mine boss in the Harman mines, was almost killed by falling slate, his skull in the back of his head being badly crushed. All hope of his recovery was abandoned, but Dr. Harman concluded to resort to the last means to save the man's life, and accordingly had brought in from the pasture field a young huffer, and the brains of the animal were removed and substituted for those which were badly lacerated in Lutz's head. The transfer of the delicate members was tedious, but was, it is believed, so successfully done that Lutz will recover. "After the huffer's brains were removed she was burned loose in the pasture field. The beast stands in one place all the time unless started by some one, and it is necessary to hold her jaws to moving when she is fed, and to stop them when she completes her meal."

She Seem Well.

There was a supper in local Bohemia the other night in honor of the birthday of a woman who writes, and among the guests was a young man who is more widely famous as an athlete than as a turner of pretty compliments. Somebody drank to the health of the woman with the birthday.

"May she never be less fascinating."
The young athlete set down his glass and turned his eyes, very handsome eyes they are, too, to the woman with the birthday.
"That," he said, with a bow, "that would be impossible."—Washington Post.