

## **Forests of Dixville - n.d.**

*[note: pages labeled 25-48, all bound in one book]*

### Chapter 3

#### Still in the White Mountains

In good season Wednesday morning we were again on the road and had gone about a mile and a half when we came to the village of North Conway, this is quite a little village, it has two or three large hotels and is visited by many summer tourists who come to view the White Mts. Very pretty views of these mountains can be obtained from here, as we passed on forests bordered the road on every hand except where occasionally along the Saco River, which ran close to the road most of the way, there had been farms cleared which were now under cultivation, forest clad hills and mountains were in all directions now, while the White Mountains towered up in the North, at about noon we entered Lower Bartlett a village of only a few houses, and just as we were thinking of stopping for the night we came to the village of Jackson, here we bought what we should need for the next two days as it was the last village we should pass though for that length of time we then passed on a short distance and pitched our camp among a clump of spruces by the roadside just beyond a deserted farm, some time along in the night we were roused by the growling of our dog, we both sat up and made sure of our guns for we did not know what might be around as were among the mountains in a thinly settled country, close to the foot of the great White Mountains, and as the dog kept grow[ing] we could see that he constant[ly] looked in the direction of the woods instead of the road, and the longer we waited the more our spirits fell, and as we listened we heard a slight rustle in the leaves, Rover heard it too and made a dash through the side of the shelter and we heard him rush off into the woods when we [heard] him howl as though he was nearly frightened to death, we looked out between the bows on our shanty and by the light of the moon which was near its heighth [height], we could see our dog dancing around some object in the brush but instead of a bear as we thought it might be we saw it was a black and white skunk. I then ran out with a small [britch?] loading pistol and shot it, but as it was a white one we throw it away. The next morning we started on amid the mountains of Jackson headed toward the great peaks of the White Mountains, the last named having an elevation of 2,000 feet above the sea, at noon we camped on a small stream in Bean's Purchase, game was plenty here among the mountains, partridges crossed the road ahead of us or flew away in flocks from the bushes at our side, while our dog quite frequently started a rabbit which would run across the road or hop along in it, and occasionally we came upon a rabbit by the road side, we shot what we needed and let the rest go, at night we stopped at the foot of Mt. Washington and put up a substantial shelter, as we were to work we saw the sun go down behind Mt. Washington though it was only about five o'clock, we could see the sun shining on the surrounding country except where a lofty peak casts its shadow across the landscape, and the mountains were yet aglow in the autumn sunshine, as it began to grow dusk and the mountains became prominent against the sunset sky, we sat at the opening of our camp eating our supper, when the darkness had settled down around us and we had closed our

camp and were lying with in there came a faint, far away cry from the mountain-side, dismal and wild, it was the cry of some wild animal, probably a wildcat, and before we fell asleep we heard it repeated several times beside the occasional hoot of an owl or the cry of some other night animal or bird. The next thing that I remember, I awoke with a start and the sensation that I had heard something at no great distance as I sat up I could hear the low growl of Rover as he lay at our feet. I put my hand on my gun and listened, at last it was repeated up on the mountain side on the opposite side of a small ravine through which a brook ran, at the first note of the cry there was strong imitation of a small child in distress, but as the note was again sounded, I could plainly distinguish a weird catlike not slightly resembling what I had heard at night at home, but I now heard it with a feeling that my hair was rising and that not very slowly, at this moment Jack awoke and whispered "what is it."

"Panther" said I, for by the descriptions I had read I made up my mind that it was that animal that I had heard, at that Jack sat up and grabbed his gun and we both slid in some heavily loaded shells from our cartridge belt and waited, we had not long to wait before we heard the cry again from across the ravine, it was coming nearer, again and again we heard the cry and each time it was nearer, our dog crawled close to our side and we could feel him shake from fear and occasionally whined, this kind of an animal was something he wasn't used to and he didn't like the sounds it made and we either for that matter, at last there came a cry from our side of the ravine, probably in the road, it had crossed the brook and was now at hand, not another person within a mile or more of use, I could stand it no longer, I must at least get a view of him and watch his movements, so I began making a small opening in one side of the camp, at last I looked through, it was moonlight outside, but just as I looked out a cloud passed over its face and it was again dark, I waited though with an unsteady feel till the moon again shone and after looking intently for a few moments, I caught sight of a long dark form slowly creeping through the woods in a direction partly toward the camp but as though he were going around it, his eyes shining like coals of fire in the dark as he kept them fixed on the camp. "Make an opening at our feet," I said to Jack, as the panther was passing around where I knew that I should soon lose sight of him, and as I watched I could hear Jack working as though his life depended on it, and I heard an involuntary "Oh" as he looked out and caught sight of the animal, though at a distance of only four or five rods, he was so indistinct that we dared not try a shot for fear of only wounding him and so making matters worse, but we kept pretty sharp watch, and could feel a chill pass down our backs every time he passed into the shadow of a tree where we could not see him, when he had come round the second time he had got within a short distance of us and as he came into an open space where the moon shone full upon him, I aimed for his head and fired, the panther leaped into with a yell that as the stories say "made our blood run cold" but instead of falling dead he again struck on his feet and I let Jack have a chance for a shot, but before he could shoot, the brute sprang upon the side of the camp and I thought for an instant that he was coming through but the roof held and before the panther could move Jack had fired a shot into the under side of him, and he let go and came onto the ground, where he laid till morning. We found Rover in under the brush we had brought in for a bed

and he would not come out till daylight the next morning. We did not sleep anymore that night and were glad when morning came, when it came light we went outside and there lay the panther in a heap on the ground, upon exam[in]ing it we found that it had a ball through the head and another one through its chest barely going through the heart ,we skinned it and threw the carcass into the ravine, the skin we stretched up on a large tree that it might dry a little during the day while we were looking over the mountains. After breakfast Jack and I started up Mt. Washington to go to its summit, the sides of the mountain are wooded and in some places are very rough, a little before noon we reached the summit and what a view met our eyes, around us in every direction was a confusion of mountain peaks, forming great waves as of a gigantic ocean. On the south-eastern horizon was a faint silvery streak, it was the Atlantic Ocean sixty-five miles away. Lakes of all sizes, from Lake Winnipiseagee to mere mountain ponds were to be seen far and near at the west the Green Mountains were distinctly seen and at the south and south-west are Mounts Monadnock and Kearsarge, close around us to the north were Mt. Adams with an altitude of 5.794 feet and others we did not know, then to the south were Mt. Madison with a heigth [sic] of 5.365 and Mt. Monroe 5.384 feet and many others, we ate our dinner here on the summit then began to descend, once while on our way down we clanced [supposed to be "glanced" or "chanced"?] across to side of an opposite mountain and there in a small opening among rocks and trees was a small herd of perhaps eight deer but as the law was yet on them it was not much of a temptation and as they soon bounded away into the forest we probably could not have got a shot at them any way, partridges, rabbits and squirrels were plenty but as we had no use for them, we thought best not to waste our ammunication. The only trouble we had that night from wild animals was the fighting of a couple of foxes in the ravine over the carcass of the panther, but it was so dark that we did not get a shot at them. The next morning we turned our backs on Mt. Washington and its surrounding peaks, or as many of them as were behind us and headed for Gorham, at noon we reached the border of the town and stopped for dinner at a little brook by the roadside, and about the middle of the afternoon we came to the village of Gorham which is quite a t[h]riving place and has a station for the Grand Trunk railway, from here can be seen many mountains, to the south-east at a distance of a few miles stands Mts. Moriah and Carter, each about 5,000 feet in heighth. At the west Mt. Madison, in the north-west the Pilot Range while at the east are the Androscoggin Hills, a few miles beyond the village we camped for the night on the Androscoggin River, as it was Saturday night we must again make a two days stop, we looked at our calendar and found it to be the 11th of September.

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#### Chapter 4

##### We Reach Dixville

The 12th of September which was Sunday we spent in camp, we wrote a letter home, and another to Francis' paper, we also wrote up the weeks experiences into story form. The day seemed long and uneventful after so many stirring events, but t was a relief to have a chance to rest after so many days of travel, though it had only been two weeks since we left home. The next morning we left camp and were again on the road, it would be but a few days now before we should reach Dixville. The

road here lay along close to the Androsroggin most of the way, at about eleven o'clock we entered the village of Berlin Falls in the lawn of Berlin. This town appears to be principally engaged in lumbering, as we saw several mills, and passed through vast forests of spruce and pine. We saw some farms but they were scattering and mostly along the Androskoggin river. The lawn is a mountainous one, one of the principal elevations being Cates Hill, just before night we crossed the Androskoggin River and came into Milan village, a very small village on the Androskoggin. Just beyond the village we stopped for the night. The next morning we kept on up the Androskoggin and at a little before noon came to the pretty Pontacook Falls. The Androskoggin here falls over to sloping ledges while there is quite a rapid above them and a pool below, as we stood below the falls on the further side of the pool, and were watching the water come over the falls, a splendid deer with large branching horns came down to the side of the rapids above and began to drink, we were standing in the brush and it did not notice us, we were so surprised at such a sight and so taken with the beauty of the deer that for an instant we did not think of our guns. Then they came up and were about to fire when our dog rushed out of the bushes at one side. The deer threw up its head and the next thing it was gone in the forest. I fired at it as it was disappearing in the woods but it only went the faster. Rover followed it for a while then gave up the chase and came back, we were disappointed somewhat but its beauty made us a little more willing to let it go, a little ways further on we came to where the Little Ammonoosue flows into Androskoggin, here we left the Androskoggin and followed up the Little Ammonoosue all the afternoon, at about four we came to quite a pond, the name of which we did not know. The pond was over a mile long and connected by a stream a few rods long with a smaller pond, as stood on the shore of the pond a large hawk came sailing close to the water from the upper end of the pond, as he came opposite to us, he was but a short distance away, and I fired at him, at the same time there came a report from Jacks gun at my side, and the hawk dropped, which of us hit him we didn't know or care as long as we got it, we sent Rover after it and when he brought it in found it to be about four feet across, and one of the large white breasted kind, we kept on up the river a short distance the struck doe north by the compass, after going about a mile we stopped for the night in the heart of a pine forest, the next morning after a good nights rest we again pushed on, with the thought that we were now close to Dixville. That only one or two more days would bring us there, that forenoon we passed several farms, some in good others in a poor state of cultivation, at noon we stopped at a pretty little pond in the wilderness, though there was a farm on the lower end of it, this pond we judged to be about a mile long and nearly a half wide, here after eating dinner we tried fishing a little, for though the law was on rout it was not on other fish, but the first fish that we hauled in was a half pound speckled trout, and a beauty it was too. The next two were flat-sides then came another trout, when we caught this we gave up fishing, for though we were out of the way from the law we did not wish to catch many in disobedience of its rules, after this we again went on through the forest, occasionally passing through a pasture partly overgrown with second growth spruces and pines, and we passed a couple of farms during the afternoon, about night we stopped in what we supposed to be the town of Dixville, only one day more would bring us to our

destination. Just after supper as Jack and I were seated by our fire a rabbit sprang by but a shot distance away, Rover saw it and at once gave chase and for several minutes as we waited with guns ready for action we heard his bark sounding through the forest. The[n] all was still, and in a very short time Rover came into the small opening that surrounded our camp, nearly as fast as he left it but with his tail between his legs and every hair on end, and every few steps he cast a look behind as if fearful that something was following. The sight of our dog acting so was rather startling and put us on the alert for we knew not what, but dusk slowly came on and nothing had been seen or heard. We threw on plenty of wood on the fire and made sure that there was enough near to last through the night, then retired but with an uneasy feeling, it was probably nearly three hours before we fell asleep, and then we did not sleep very soundly as we were frequently awake and the night passed all too slowly, we could not account for Rover's actions, and every time when we spoke it formed the topic and Rover came with his tail between his legs even after it came light the next morning it often gave us quite a start as a dead limb fell off its own weight or some rabbit or squirrel stirred in the woods nearby, as we were preparing breakfast we caught sight of three or four partridges [of no?] great distance, and as I had made up my mind that we had had a false alarm I determined to try my luck for a bird, after following a couple of them for a dozen rods or more I got a shot at one of them and brought it down but as I started to step forward and pick it up I was startled to see a large, black shaggy animal rise from among a clump of hemlocks and start toward the partridge, then as it turned and faced me with a low growl I realized that I was confronted by a black bear and as I afterward found out a large one too, as this thought flashed into my mind, I put my hand to my side for a heavily loaded shell, but as I done so the thought came, "There I have left my belt at camp and have only two common loaded shells with me.["] The bear dropped down on all fours again and moved toward me with a shuffling gait, keeping my eyes on the bear I partly turned and called to Jack to bring his gun and my belt. I then backed off in the direction of the camp with my eyes on the bear, it was but a few seconds before I heard Jack come running through the woods though it had seemed a good while, just as I heard Jack speak close to me, I struck my heel against a fallen log and over I went, I did not lay in that position long and when I come to my feet Jack stood beside me with his gun to his shoulder and not two rods of was the bear still advancing, as I arose I slid a shell out of the belt that Jack had brought and into my gun as I was doing so there came a report and the bear staggered but did not fall, then he came at us with a speed that nearly took our breath away and by the time I could bring my gun to my shoulder the bear was nearly to muzzle of it, I aimed the best I could and fired. The animal gave a lunge forward, struck me and knocked me flat on my back at the same time coming down on me with all its weight, and I thought for a few seconds that I was a goner. It then rolled partly off from me and tried to come on to its feet, at this I rolled as quickly away from it as I could for my breath was nearly gone and I felt as though every bone was broken. The bear attempted to follow me but Jack got in another shot and the three wounds were a little too much. The bear rolled over and was soon dead, it took us over an hour to skin it, and during all this time Rover kept at a safe distance, but when we had rid it of its skin Rover seemed to consider it no longer dangerous. A little before dinner we again pushed don

northward toward the mountains in the north part of the town. The northern part of the town seemed to be mostly mountainous, as a long range lay to the north and rose to quite a height at about three in the afternoon we stopped for dinner on the side of the mountains among a thick undergrowth of moosebush while giant birches, and spruces stood over us, while occasionally a pine, maple or other tree showed its self among them, we now began to doubt the existence of a large pond on the top of such a mountain, after eating dinner we again kept on up following a small brook, jumping from one stone to another up some rapid, passing around some pool, cool and shady, beneath great overhanging trees, old and moss grown, again passing up through a sharp ravine, cut out during ages of constant work by this little brook, slowly we neared the top of the mountain, at last the brook passed in between two great knobs of the mountains, whose sides at this point rose almost perpendicular from the stream to a height of seventy-five or a hundred feet, and covered mostly with great yellow birches and rock maples with a scattering of evergreen trees, we had gone but a little ways further when we caught sight of a vast expanse of blue which at first we took for sky as we could but dimly see it through the trees but as we drew nearer we saw the pond we had been hunting for, stretching away before us.