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The Adventures of James Capen Adams, Mountaineer Adams Grizzly Bear Hunter of California (Classic Reprint)

Theodore H. Hittell

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Excerpt from The Adventures of James Capen Adams, Mountaineer Adams Grizzly Bear Hunter of California

A statement of the circumstances under which I wrote "The Adventures of James Capen Adams, Mountaineer and Grizzly Bear Hunter of California," may be not uninteresting. In the early part of October, 1856, while in charge of the local department of the Daily Evening Bulletin newspaper of San Francisco, California, my attention was attracted to a small placard at the door of a basement on the south side of Clay, near Leidesdorff, Street. It announced the exhibition there of "The Mountaineer Museum" - a collection of wild animals of the Pacific Coast, the principal of which were "Samson, the largest Grizzly Bear ever caught, weighing over 1500 pounds, Lady Washington (with her cub), weighing 1000 pounds, and Benjamin Franklin, King of the Forest."

Descending the stairway, I found a remarkable spectacle. The basement was a large one but with a low ceiling, and dark and dingy in appearance. In the middle, chained to the floor, were two large grizzly bears, which proved to be Benjamin Franklin and Lady Washington. They were pacing restlessly in circles some ten feet in diameter, their chains being about five feet long, and occasionally rearing up, rattling their irons, and reversing their direction.

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