

William Thomson

Great Cats I Have Met



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Great Cats I Have Met

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WITH A ROAR CARLO DASHED AT HIM.

(See page 22.)



William Thomson

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Great Cats I Have Met

Adventures in Two Hemispheres

By William Thomson

AUTHOR OF "ON THE WAR-PATH WITH KIT CARSON,"
ETC.

Sixty Illustrations by Jay Hambidge and William A. McCullough

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Contents

[Also Available from LutheranLibrary.org](#)

[About The Lutheran Library](#)

[Contents](#)

[List of Illustrations](#)

[Preface by Lutheran Librarian](#)

[Author's Note.](#)

[1. My First Great Cat.](#)

[2. A Bobcat And A Pigeon-pie.](#)

[3. Little Manuel And The Jaguar.](#)

[4. The "Little Spotted Tiger."](#)

[5. A Black Lion.](#)

[6. A Day In A Tree.](#)

[7. My First Lion-hunt.](#)

[8. A South African Leopard.](#)

[9. A Family Of Tigers.](#)

[10. How I Met The True Panther.](#)

[11. A Black Leopard.](#)

[12. Two Girls And A Tortoise-shell Tiger.](#)

[Copyright Notice](#)

[How Can You Find Peace With God?](#)

[Benediction](#)

[Basic Biblical Christianity | Books to Download](#)

[Essential Theology | Books to Download](#)

[Devotional Classics | Books to Download](#)

List of Illustrations

- ◇ William Thomson
- ◇ Head of puma
- ◇ Eye of Puma
- ◇ Paw of Puma
- ◇ Puma and her cubs
- ◇ Not very happy
- ◇ Sleeping Pumas
- ◇ Skull of Puma
- ◇ Head of Lynx
- ◇ A Canadian Bobcat
- ◇ I was knocked flat on my back.
- ◇ The Jaguar's Muscular Back
- ◇ The Jaguar's Paw in Repose.
- ◇ The Action of Jaguar's Claw.
- ◇ The Morning Bath
- ◇ It let go of the gun.
- ◇ The Monkeys.
- ◇ Jaguar after Monkeys.
- ◇ Head of Ocelot
- ◇ Ocelots Hunting.
- ◇ Crouched for Springing.
- ◇ Another actor appeared on the scene.
- ◇ Piteously Mewing.
- ◇ The Last of the Little Spotted Tiger
- ◇ Head and Side View
- ◇ An Appalling Human-like Shriek.
- ◇ Mbengo Slashed At Him.
- ◇ Head, Front View.
- ◇ On The Trail
- ◇ At Bay.

- ◇ Head of Peccary
- ◇ Two Slowly Advancing Lines.
- ◇ They Descended On the Peccary.
- ◇ Treed.
- ◇ One Old Grizzled Peccary.
- ◇ Its Mate Leaped.
- ◇ Male Lion
- ◇ Lioness
- ◇ Dashed
- ◇ Defiance
- ◇ Leopard.
- ◇ Leopard
- ◇ Screaming.
- ◇ Leap.
- ◇ Slashed.
- ◇ Tigress
- ◇ Tiger.
- ◇ Panther
- ◇ Hiding
- ◇ In tree.
- ◇ Sprang
- ◇ At Play.
- ◇ Crouching Black Object.
- ◇ Arched Up Its Back.
- ◇ We Could See The Murderous Beast.
- ◇ Began To Leap And Frisk About
- ◇ The Encircling Wood
- ◇ In The Tree.

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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A Note about Typos [Typographical Errors]:

Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

Author's Note.

BORN AND REARED in what was in that long ago time the backwoods of Canada, I enjoyed in my boyhood days exceptional advantages for becoming acquainted with the habits of all the various kinds of wild animals, birds and fishes then abounding in the forests and streams of that country.

As any other strong, healthy boy, so situated, would naturally do, I very early became exceedingly fond of outdoor sports, and by the time I was ten or twelve years old was a quite successful little trapper, hunter and angler — and became more and more expert in my accomplishments the bigger I grew.

While still a very young man — having meantime, through practice, attained to really remarkable skill in the use of rifle, rod and gun — I was fortunately afforded the opportunity of extensive travel, not only in Northern, Western, Central and South America, but also in far-away Australia and many other countries and islands of the eastern hemisphere.

In all my wanderings, whether prospecting for gold or engaged in commerce, I never neglected any possible chance for indulging in my favorite pastime of hunting; and this, often carried out in the haunts of dangerous game, naturally led to many exciting adventures and experiences. Some of these, relating to the Cat Family, are recorded in this little book.

In throwing these various adventures together, I have followed as nearly as possible the actual course of my journeying from one country to another, so as to form the whole into a sort of continuous narrative, though in one case I jump from Brazil to Texas in order to bring in some relevant incidents which occurred long after the one related in the first part of the Brazilian story.

As the contents of this little volume are plain, unvarnished facts, possibly grown as well as young people may find entertainment in the perusal and, perhaps, come upon some things in regard to the American and foreign felidae [ed: the cat tribe] not before brought to their notice.

Lacking, on the day I write these lines, but one month of completing my seventy-second year, it may well be that I shall not live to see this book published; yet I submit it to a generous public without fear of hostile criticism, because, from its utterly unpretentious character, it is not open to such.

W. THOMSON.

1. My First Great Cat.



HEAD OF PUMA.

MY FIRST INTERVIEW with a wild member of the large and dangerous family of the felidae was in 1833. I was only nine years old then, and it was considered quite an adventure for a little boy.

My home was in the backwoods of upper Canada, now Ontario, where bears, wolves and deer were plentiful; but for years no one had seen a specimen of the more savage creature I was to meet.

Farmers' clearings were not very extensive in those parts at this early period, and our cattle were allowed to roam for pasturage in the great woods.

One afternoon I was sent out to look up our cows. As usual, my dog, a powerful deerhound called Carlo, went with me. This dog was absolutely fearless. He would attack anything in the shape of a wild beast. He bore on his body many honorable scars, as mementos of his rash fights with wolves and bears.

Well, we two, careless and happy, went gaily along the forest paths, and at last heard the distant tinkle of the cow-bell. At the same moment we heard a strange, piteous cry. It seemed to me the voice of a woman or a child in dreadful distress. But Carlo was of a different opinion. Instead of showing sympathy, he set up his bristles, his tail stiffened, his eyes gleamed, and he kept close by my side.

The wailing cry came again and again. It appeared to come from a grove of oaks about a hundred yards from the path. I felt sure that some little girl, out picking berries, perhaps, had got lost and was sobbing and moaning from fright. So I shouted as loud as I could to encourage her, and made for the grove, in spite of Carlo's protests.

No intelligible voice answered my halloo. Then I felt certain that the lost child must be badly hurt, since she did not come to meet us.



EYE OF PUMA.

On the edge of the grove stood a very large oak with wide-spreading branches, the lowest not more than twenty feet from the ground; and, very strangely, the half-sobbing, half-whining, cry seemed, as we came near, to come from among these low limbs.

My hound, always very gentle and pleasant with children, seemed to have changed his nature. He grew more and more frantic with rage, and when we got almost under the tree he stopped short, sat back on his haunches, and looked up towards its top, howling fiercely.

Following his upward gaze, I myself then saw, crouched on a big limb, a full-grown puma a beast I had heard some of our neighbors call a "painter," others a catamount, others a panther — though there is no true panther in

America. I knew the creature at a glance, for I had seen a specimen of his kind in a traveling menagerie, and my little knees shook under me.

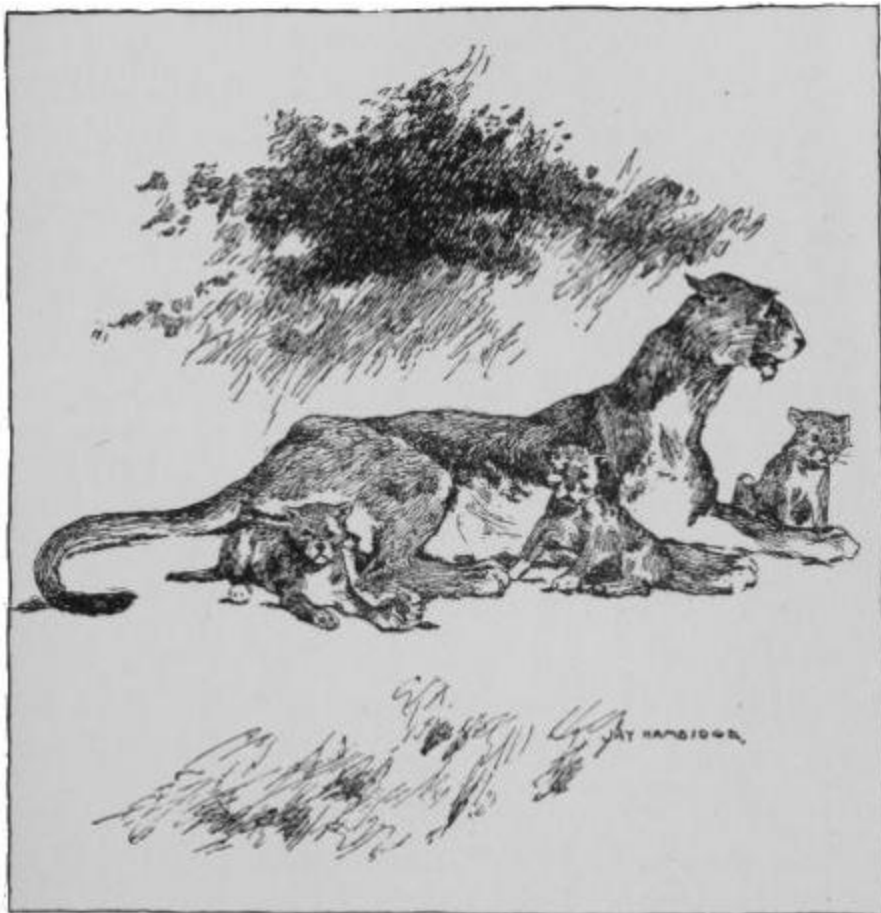


PAW AND CLAW OF PUMA.

All at once, I remembered hearing hunters say that the “painter” sometimes cries like a person in pain on purpose to attract human prey within his reach — a fable, as these creatures, like their relatives, the domestic cats, moan and screech at times for reasons best known to themselves.

This puma ceased his cries so soon as he saw us, and began to claw the bark of the tree, switch his tail and arch his back for a spring — whether at me or Carlo I don’t know. I was almost numb with terror, but as the great tawny gray body shot downwards, I and the dog instinctively sprang to one side, and he missed both of us!

After the nature of cats, when foiled in a first spring, he tried to sneak away; but with a roar Carlo dashed at him and fastened his teeth in his throat. The gallant hound was no match for such a foe; and though I saw the blood follow his grip, he was shaken off, and the puma in a moment had scurried up another tree.



A PUMA AND HER CUBS.

At this sight my courage returned. I knew at once exactly what to do. Like most country boys of those days, I had flint, steel and punk in my pocket, and in fifteen minutes I had four good fires blazing around. Then, bidding Carlo keep watch, I ran home as fast as my little legs would carry me and told my father about the rare game I had “put up.”

Although he doubted that I had seen a real “painter,” my father took down his flintlock rifle, seized his powder-horn and bullet pouch, and hurried back with me to the oak grove.

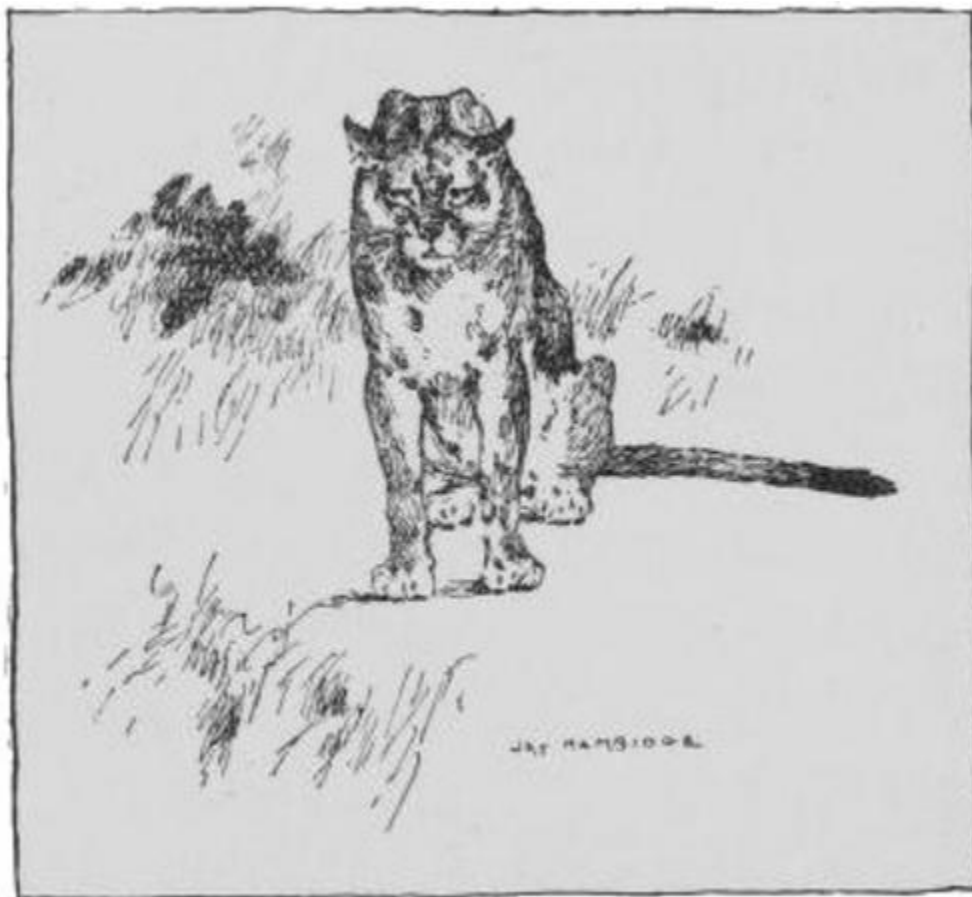
The puma had gone high up into a lofty fork, and when we got sight of him was looking down at the dog, spitting and snarling, exactly as a house cat does when threatened by Towser [ed: A large dog].

My father waited until he got a fair view of his head, then he took aim, and at the crack of his rifle the savage cat came toppling down.

He proved to be a very large male. My father measured him, and although sixty-one years have since passed away, I remember the measurements still. The length, from the point of the nose to the root of the tail, was four feet three inches; the tail itself, black-tipped, but not tufted, was two feet five inches; so the creature was six feet eight inches long.

The largest of the claws were one and a third inches long, and their points were as sharp as needles; the animal keeps them withdrawn into a sort of sheath, which prevents them from blunting.

The upper part of the pelt was dull gray tinged with reddish brown, but my father said that when cold weather came the whole back always turned a soft uniform gray, while the throat and belly remained a dull white — about the color of unbleached factory cotton.



NOT VERY HAPPY.

My father, besides having the fine pelt, got twenty dollars Provincial bounty, for the slaughter of the dangerous beast, out of which he gave me the largest sum I had ever possessed in my life.

The puma is truly a terribly fierce animal, but I do not believe that as related by some writer, "a single one has been known to kill fifty sheep in one night r So shy a creature as the puma would not stay around the haunts of civilization for so long a time. Nor do these great cats, like dogs, kill sheep for the fun of it!

My father told me that the puma does not have a regular lair or home, as do most other wild cats, but roams from place to place. This maybe so, but I have known exceptions. Many years later, in the Rocky Mountains, I killed a female puma which was domiciled with her three cubs in a close den

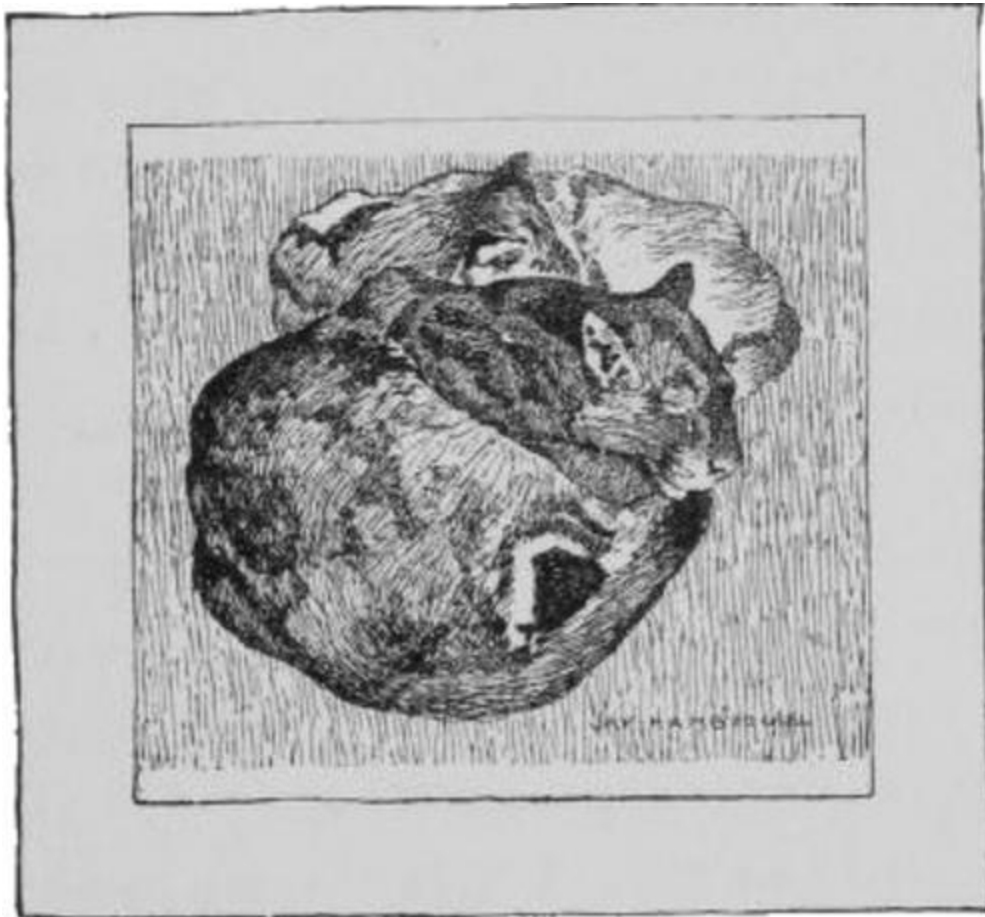
among the rocks, one evidently occupied for some time, as the floor was littered by cleanly-picked bones.

The little puma kittens are extremely pretty creatures, marked by distinct dark lines and spots.

In most English-written works on zoology, this beast is called cougar. I acquired the habit of calling it puma in Spanish America, where people so name it. Only the most illiterate of our own hunters now use the vulgar misnomer, "painter," though nearly everyone in the Middle States and Canada, when speaking of the cougar, or puma, still refers to it as "panther," which it in nowise resembles; the latter cat, found only in Africa and Asia, is spotted, much like the true leopard.

In Colorado and other parts of the West the creature is called "mountain lion," in Texas "Mexican lion," and in Mexico itself simply "lion"; but under whatever name known, it is everywhere the same treacherous, blood-thirsty, cowardly beast; its cowardice alone prevents it from being more often destructive to human life.

Once, in Colorado, I very nearly became the prey of one of these fierce animals. While out one afternoon, prospecting for silver ores on the mountain side, I accidentally fell, just before dark, over a ledge about twelve feet high, alighting upon a pile of sharp broken granite in such a way as to dislocate my left elbow, break one jaw, knock out several teeth and cut my lips so that it was necessary to stitch them up inside and out. I was not rendered senseless, neither did I faint. The accident occurred at a lonely spot about three miles above Georgetown, in Clear Creek county, and no help was at hand; but I knew that half a mile or so further up the trail there was a miners' boarding-house. To this I determined, if possible, to make my way, and so set off at once, walking painfully along and marking my path by drops of still trickling blood.



SLEEPING PUMAS.

I had not gone far in the fast-gathering dusk when, hearing a slight rustling noise behind me, I turned about and found myself face to face with a full-grown cougar, or "mountain lion," sneaking stealthily on my track and evidently preparing for a spring!

Save for a strong and sharp hunting knife in my belt, I was entirely unarmed, even my light, prospecting pick having been left where I fell, and it seemed quite likely that my time to die had come. However, knowing the brute's cowardly nature, I drew my knife and with a loud shout rushed right at him; but, excited by the scent of blood, he didn't scare. Instead of turning tail, he crouched low for a moment, then rose with a mighty bound as if bent upon descending on my head. As he came down I met him with the extended knife, which cut a great gash in one of his cheeks, but his weight and

impetus bore me to the ground and I fell flat on my back, with him on top of me!

Although my left arm was much disabled, I could still move it freely from the shoulder, and now I instinctively put it up to guard my throat.

This movement saved my life; for the “lion” at once grasped the arm below the elbow, and by a lucky, or providential, thrust I severed his jugular vein and in dying he rolled off me.

This was a very remarkable and wonderful escape, so wonderful indeed, that when I at last reached the boarding shanty, the men could not credit my story until they had gone down the trail and actually seen the dead cougar.

One of the kind-hearted miners tramped off to Georgetown and brought up a carriage, in which I was taken safely down, and soon so skillfully patched up by two ex-army surgeons that in six weeks I was as well as ever, though to this day my left arm is a little crooked and still bears the marks of the “lion’s” tusks.

Some years before this adventure while on a hunting trip in southern Texas, I caught a female cougar, “Mexican lion,” in a rather singular manner. The beast and its mate had been for a long time destroying stock on the ranch of a friend with whom I was staying, and all efforts to trap or shoot either of them had failed. Prompted by a recollection of something I had seen in India, I at last devised a plan whereby we captured the female robber alive, in a common fishnet.

Afterward, while trying in vain to catch her mate, we secured a much more valuable prize — one that greatly surprised and delighted us. As, however, in the account of a jaguar adventure, I shall fully describe the methods employed in this curious and lucky experiment, I will not give the details here.

This many-named great cat, the puma, or cougar, has the most extended range, I believe, of any of the American felidae — covering, indeed, nearly the whole continent, from Canada to Patagonia and from Maine to California.



SKULL OF PUMA.

2. A Bobcat And A Pigeon-pie.

THE CANADA LYNX is known to many hunters in that country, as well as to those in the Lake States, as the “bobcat,” and is the only cat I ever saw — barring that of the Isle of Man — without a tail; to be exact, it does possess a bit of one, about an inch long. (Of course the lynx is not a very “great cat,” yet it is quite big enough to be a dangerous enemy when so disposed.)

Settled along the Credit River, a few miles from our farm, were considerable numbers of half-civilized Indians, and these people had a legend as to how the lynx happens to be so nearly tailless.

The Great Spirit, so this Indian story run, was in the habit of coming down to earth on moonlit nights, to watch over the slumbers of the firstborn son of a favorite warrior. A troop of lynxes, roaming through the adjacent treetops, one night, set up a series of horrible mocking cries and purposely woke the babe. This made the Great Spirit wrathful, and he pronounced instant death upon all cats of that variety; but, on the warrior’s plea that his people would thereby be deprived of much valuable fur, he changed the sentence to amputation of the greater part of the animal’s tail — and ever since, all lynxes have been born with that mark of disgrace.

The lynxes are true tree-cats, fond of a bird-and-egg diet; but the first lynx I ever saw, I saw on the ground. When I was about ten years old, I became the proud possessor of a light, flintlock, single-barreled gun, paid for by my own earnings in the way of mink, musk-rat and raccoon skins; and for so young a boy, I was beginning to shoot pretty well.



HEAD OF LYNX.

That year we were visited during wheat harvest by prodigious flocks of wild pigeons, and one Saturday afternoon my father gave me leave to go out with my gun and try to get birds enough for a great Sunday pot-pie; counting indoor servants and all, our household numbered eighteen persons.

Away I went in great glee to the big beech woods. I had with me four ounces of powder and a pound of number six shot. This would make about sixteen charges, and should bring me twenty-four pigeons, for it would be hard luck indeed if I couldn't now and then bring down several at a shot. Shooting, boy fashion, only at such birds as were perching on tree-limbs or hopping along the ground, I soon had fourteen nice fat ones. These I strung by their beaks on a piece of twine and hung the bunch on a sapling, and then went on to hunt for more.

Following along an old cattle path, I got twenty-one pigeons in nine shots. Then I found my ammunition was gone. I had forgotten my father's orders: "Never, while hunting, leave yourself without one charge for your gun."

So far as the pot-pie was concerned, I already had pigeons enough to make one that might feed half a hundred men; but what if in the fast-approaching dusk I should run on some big game — a wolf, for instance! Such a creature might possibly relish a fat little boy!

But no wolf appeared, nor did I even hear one howl as I hurried back along the darkening trail.

Coming to the sapling, where I had left my first string of pigeons, I found the birds gone. Next moment I saw that they were being devoured by two animals lying on the ground a few yards away, and which, in the gray shades of evening, I could not have seen at all but for their glaring eyes. The creatures didn't look very savage or very large, as they lay there amicably sharing my birds.

"The thieving raccoons!" I muttered, at the same time clubbing my gun and stepping up, thinking to scare them away and recover some of my pigeons.

But when I got within three feet, I myself was the scared one! Instead of harmless 'coons, the beasts were full-grown lynxes! I knew them by their short, powerful legs, big feet, the pencils of hair on the tips of their ears, and the absence of tails. Then didn't I regret my neglect of a hunter's first duty — to keep his gun loaded!



A CANADIAN BOBCAT.

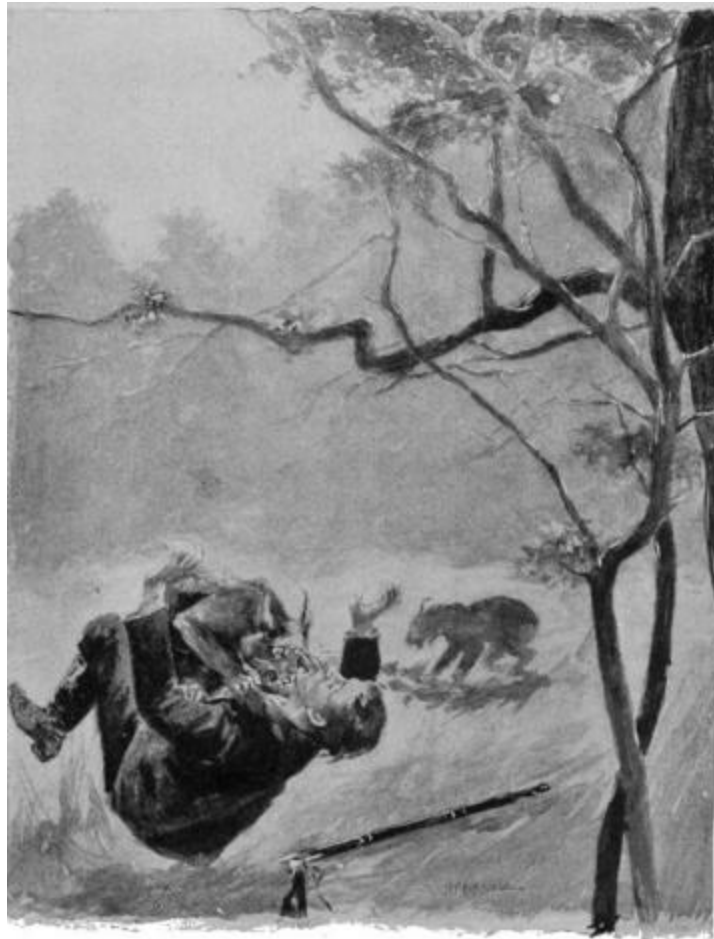
But though knowing a “bobcat” to be more than a match for the best dog, I had never heard of even a child being attacked by one, and I had no notion of letting this pair rob me of my potpie.

Yelling as loud as I could, I struck with all my might at the cat nearest. My gun came down on its back and, to my great surprise, disabled it. Had I known the back was this creature’s most vulnerable part, I could not have made a more judicious blow.

I got no chance to make a second, however; for the moment the moan of its mate rang out, the other lynx uttered a shrill snarl, and dashed at my breast. Though a strong, heavy boy for my age I was knocked flat on my back, and the maddened cat came down on top of me. He was a big fellow, and must have weighed fifty pounds.

Strange to say, all my fright disappeared then. A curious reckless kind of numbness came over me. I actually did not feel any pain as the beast sunk his long teeth into my arm which I had instinctively raised to shield my face — teeth three times as long as those of the domestic cat. I did not know un-

til afterwards that the curved claws of its front feet had torn through my coat collar, waistcoat and shirt, and mangled both my shoulders.



"I WAS KNOCKED FLAT ON MY BACK."

How long the furious creature had been tearing at me I do not know — it might have been thirty seconds or five minutes when suddenly I saw a stream of fire and heard the report of a gun. Then I knew nothing more until I found myself on a sofa at home, and saw on the floor before me a great heap of pigeons and the gray, black-flecked pelts of both lynxes!

My father, who had strolled out with his rifle to meet me, had come upon the scene in the nick of time, and after hurriedly skinning the bobcats

had carried me and my trophies home.

I was not seriously hurt. The very next day I helped demolish the biggest pigeon pot-pie I ever saw.

Afterwards, as I grew bigger and learned more about hunting, I occasionally came across and killed a lynx — generally in the deep gloom of the forest or, as the shade of night was beginning to fall, in more open places.

Sometimes, though rarely, these fierce creatures came quite close to our outbuildings in search of prey. Just before dark one evening early in April, I was going with Carlo at my heels past the sheep-fold, when a large lynx scrambled over the fence from the inside, holding a newborn lamb in his mouth, and came down not six feet from us. I had not even a club with me, but the bold robber had barely touched the ground when Carlo sprang forward, seized him by the throat and, though severely lacerated by those fearful claws, held bravely on until one of our men, hearing the outcry, ran out of the barn and despatched the savage beast with a pitchfork.

When I was thirteen years of age, we had in the house a very remarkable domestic cat — Pompey by name; a big black fellow and a mighty hunter, who did not by any means confine himself to the slaughter of rats and mice, but roamed over the fields and woods in search of other game.

Pompey frequently killed chipmunks, red squirrels, partridges and quails, also large gray and black squirrels, and brought all to the house. Once he killed a woodchuck nearly as heavy as himself and dragged it proudly into the kitchen. Yet Pompey never molested any of the barnyard fowls; and our pet canaries would perch fearlessly on his back and trill their little songs — evidently to Pompey's great delight.

One day he pounced upon a big hawk, and twisted its head off, as it was in the act of rising from the ground with a chicken in its talons. Then he trailed the two birds, still locked together, into the sitting-room — to be praised and petted for his gallant deed, which had been duly observed from the windows.

This cat was thoroughly honest as well as brave. No matter how hungry he might be, he would never touch even a dish of cream or any tempting food, unless it were given him.

But, alas! poor Pompey's discretion was less than his valor; hence his tragic and untimely end. One evening I was standing at the back-door, doing nothing in particular, when I saw our cat coming along with a black squirrel dangling from his mouth, and looking as pleased and happy as any lucky hunter ever did.

Not far from the house there was a belt of scrub pine, left as a wind-break for a young orchard, which was very dense and dark. Pompey was coming along by this thicket and had got half way and was purring loudly to challenge my admiration, when a very large lynx sprang out of the thick covert and, without touching the cat, seized upon the dead squirrel.

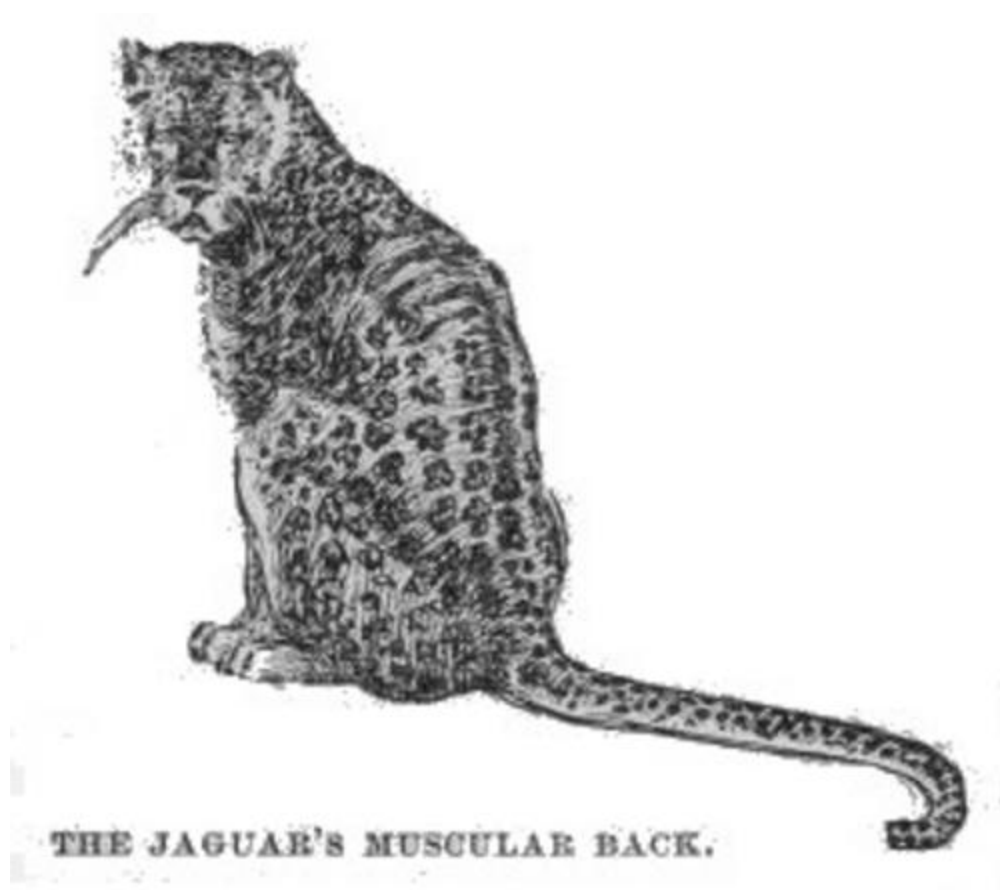
Instead of dropping his prize and running away, as a more prudent cat would have done, Pompey rashly showed fight, and in ten seconds was as dead as that hero of antiquity after whom he was named. But he did not die unavenged; for I snatched the always loaded rifle from its pegs, crept softly round to the back of the grove, stole cautiously halfway through it, finally caught sight of the murdering thief humped up on a great log, and shot him as he was in the act of devouring his sneakingly-gotten booty.

We youngsters had a funeral for poor Pompey, and probably he was quite as sincerely mourned as was the great Roman soldier. This little tragedy so vexed me that ever since I have actually hated that especially cruel wildcat known as the lynx, or "bobcat."

3. Little Manuel And The Jaguar.

I WAS STILL A YOUNG MAN when I met and slew my first jaguar. During my lifetime I have killed, or helped kill, nine of these terrible creatures. Only one of them was in our country, in Texas; Texas is as far north as this cat ever comes.

The jaguars are midway in size between the tiger and leopard, two of the worst cats, but they are much handsomer than either and quite as dangerous.



I was visiting on the coffee plantation of a Portuguese gentleman in Brazil, about a hundred miles north of Rio Janeiro. Senhor Rinaldo was a great sportsman, and his little son Manuel, about twelve years old, was a real little expert with fishing-rod and fowling-piece. It was needful there that even a little boy should know how to use a gun, for on every hand were dense vine-clad forests full of dangerous animals.

One hot forenoon, after an expedition on the river for fish and wild fowl, Senhor Rinaldo decided to row up stream still further, to lunch on a piece of open ground kept clear of underbrush and trees for picnic purposes, a pleasant spot, round as a fairy's ring, covered with tropical flowers, and closely surrounded, even at the riverfront, by thick forest.

After the meal was over, Senhor Rinaldo and I dreamily smoked and rested in the shade. But Manuel was on the wing. Gun in hand, he flitted

about among the dazzling flowers, picking such as he thought might be new to his beautiful young mother whom, in a curiously chivalrous way, he was wont to pet as if she had been a little sister.

By and by the youngster had wandered quite across the glade. There he sat down to sort his flowers, in the edge of the forest. He was directly opposite us. Not for a moment, here so near us, did either of us imagine that any harm could befall the boy. But suddenly we both saw the little fellow spring to his feet, drop his half-arranged bouquet, throw up his gun, and fire at some object by us unseen.

The shot was instantly followed by a snarling scream. Through the powder smoke we saw a brilliant streak of color dart in a curve from the dark trees and descend upon the boy. As he went down, he shouted:

“O, papa! papa! the tiger! the tiger!”

Racing for life, we dashed across to the rescue. I, being the younger and more fleet of foot, got first to the scene, dreading to find it one of horror. What I did see was this: Manuel stretched out alongside a decaying log, and over the log with its jaws fastened upon the gun, which the young hunter instinctively held before his face, sprawled the form of an enormous jaguar.

The furious beast was bleeding from a wound in the back of its neck, where the charge of birdshot, fired at close range, had cut a furrow. This red torrent streaming down over the boy's breast gave him all the appearance of being mortally wounded. To pass over the one hundred yards of space had probably occupied me twelve seconds and I knew that the cat had had time to dispatch the boy. I supposed my brave little friend was dead.

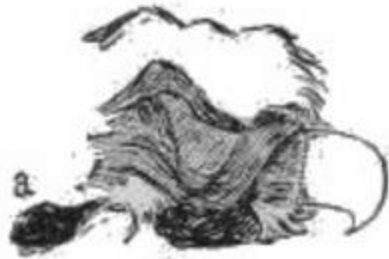
When I was still about ten feet off, the jaguar let go of the gun and sprang at me, his retracted lips showing a full set of fangs, and his yellow-green eyes glowing like live coals. This was a foolish move on his part, for a heavy bullet from my gun at once entered the open mouth and passed through his head. He sank down at my feet, dead.



By this time, Senhor Rinaldo had come his boy in his arms. Then, to my amazement, we found that Manuel had not had even a scratch, thanks to the protecting log and to the gun-barrel which the beast's teeth had deeply indented.

"Why, papa," said he, "I'm not a bit hurt, and mama's flowers are all safe!"

A monster the jaguar was in size — nearly ten feet long, counting in his rather short tail — but he was also one of the most beautifully-furred creatures I ever saw. The thick, lustrous fur was a rich fawn color, profusely dotted by dark glossy rosettes, and in the center of each of these spots, which ran along his sides, was a smaller spot of light yellow. Across his breast and along his spine were several unbroken black streaks.



ACTION OF JAGUAR'S CLAW;
a, OPEN FOR ATTACK; *b*,
SHEATHED, THE MUSCLES
CONTRACTED, THE WEIGHT
BORNE ON THE TOES.

There was great rejoicing on the plantation especially by Manuel's mother. Though the jaguar will not openly attack a man face to face, he will skulk for miles on the track of a person and at the first good chance make a spring; and he will attack and kill children in bright sunlight.

Senhor Rinaldo's Indians told me that on account of the forests being so dense and dark, the jaguars wandered at all hours for prey, and that though monkeys were their favorite food, they often visited the plantations and destroyed colts, calves and even full-grown horses.

While hunting one day in Nueces county, southern Texas, years after my world-wide wanderings were done, I had shot a large buck after a long

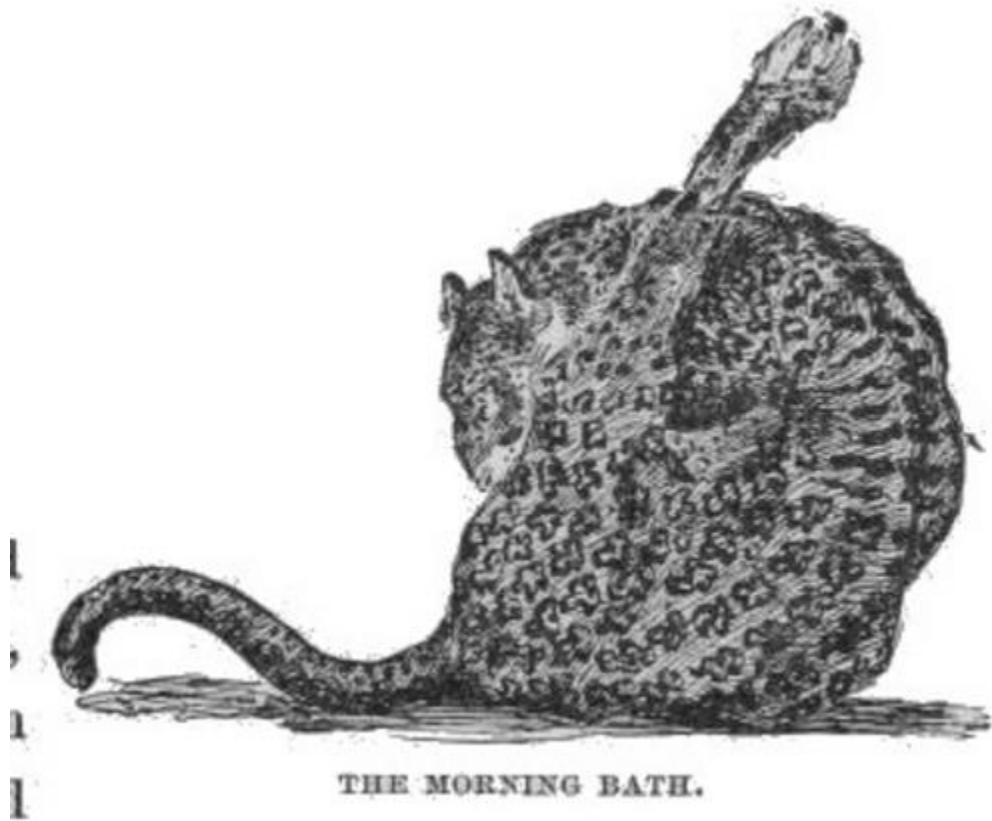
chase. Being somewhat tired, I sat down to rest in the deep shade of a tree, before beginning to skin the deer, and carelessly fell fast asleep.

After a while I was awakened by a strange noise. On opening my eyes, and peering through a fringe of intervening bushes, I found this noise to be the pleased purring of a pair of full-grown cougars, or “Mexican lions,” who were about to help themselves to my game!

The animals first lapped up such coagulated blood as had not soaked into the ground, and then the male cougar — a splendid-looking fellow — gallantly began to tear at and enlarge the wound in the buck’s neck, so that his rather smaller and less strong consort might conveniently share in the feast.

As this part of the deer was of no value to me, I sat quite still, intending to watch my unbidden guests’ mode of feeding for a few minutes before killing them, which I could, of course, do with my repeating rifle, whenever so inclined. But a less complacent spectator, heretofore modestly hidden, suddenly assumed the part of an actor in the drama.

The male “lion” had stripped back a considerable portion of the tough neck skin and with his mate was crouching down, tearing off morsels of the fresh venison, when a brilliantly-spotted form shot through the air from an adjacent tree-top; and with a hoarse screeching cry an enormous jaguar alighted between the preoccupied gourmands, dashed both aside and began himself to dine on my deer.



For, perhaps, a quarter minute, the two cougars stood spitting and snarling at the intruder as does an angry house cat at an intruding dog.

Then, as if by a common impulse, both sprang, with arched bristling backs and swollen tails, upon the jaguar, each one fastening fangs and talons in his gorgeously-colored sides.

The jaguar, twice as strong as either of his foes, and probably heavier than both combined, being thus disturbed at the beginning of his meal, rose with a terrific yell and shook off his rash assailants. Then, while his obliquely-set yellow-green eyes glowed with vengeful fires, he made a vindictive dash at the male cougar; but the agile creature bounded, like a rubber ball, high in air and came squarely down on the greater beast's shoulders. The female buried her teeth in his flank at the same moment.

If the reader can imagine three maddened domestic cats — the size of one magnified 60-fold, of the other two 30-fold, and the united caterwaul-

ing of all three multiplied by 100 — engaged in a fight to the death, he can form some idea of the sight and the sounds I saw and heard with horror.

In vain the infuriated jaguar sought to again shake off the clinging pair. With appalling howls of pain and rage he rose again and again, despite the weight on his shoulders, almost upright on his hind feet, and struck out in blind impotent fury with his fearfully armed forepaws; but he could not reach the perching male “lion,” and the female clung tenaciously to his flank.

In the midst of his pain and rage a happy thought seemed to strike the frantic beast; coming down on all-fours again, he twisted his lithe body half around, opened his huge jaws, and closing them on the female cougar’s head, just above the eyes, so exerted their tremendous power as to drive his great tusks through her skull to the brain and thus killed her.

No whit cowed by the death of his mate, the male cougar now tore with his teeth more savagely than ever at the jaguar’s neck, around which his forelegs clung, while his front claws were working havoc with the big beast’s throat, and those of his hind feet were doing the same for his loins.

By this time the jaguar had lost much blood and was evidently weakening, though still full of fight. Horribly shrieking, he reared and plunged, leaped with mighty bounds from side to side, threw himself down and rolled over and over with his tormentor, but could not loosen that deadly grip, and it seemed to me quite certain that he must shortly succumb to his comparatively puny assailant.

As nothing more could be learned by a further study of the combatants, I prepared to end the misery of both. So deeply, however, had the gallantry of the cougar excited my admiration that I would gladly have spared him had such a course been consistent with a proper regard for the public good. ’ But he, being entirely uninjured, and hence capable of making a swift retreat to engage in further depredations upon the settlers’ stock, must of necessity die first; and, as was so brave a warrior’s due, his death should be a painless one. So, waiting until the struggling beasts were broadside to me, I took careful aim at a point midway between the cougar’s eye and ear, and touched the trigger. So instantaneous was the effect that the brave old fellow never heard the rifle’s report, much less knew what had so suddenly reduced him to nothingness. Then the sorely-punished jaguar, finding himself

free, attempted to sneak away, but a second bullet pierced his great round skull, and he sank down dead, with no further motion than a slight rising and falling of his glossy fur.



"IT LET GO OF THE GUN AND SPRANG SAVAGELY AT ME."

I had done a famous afternoon's work: a fat buck, not in the least damaged as to hindquarters and head, an unusually large jaguar, and a pair of fine "Mexican lions" being a reward that might well repay a whole week of hunting.

It was in Nueces county, too, that I planned and carried out the extraordinary netting feats alluded to in the story of the pumas. The rancher, at whose house I was staying, had lost a number of young cattle and several colts, supposedly through the ravages of what he called "Mexican lions,"

though, as will be shown, these great cats were not the only ones to blame. Every exertion had been made to find and destroy the beasts, but they were so cunning and wary that none of the hunters could even catch sight of them.

One morning, while my host was grumbling at his hard luck, I happened to notice, in a loft overhead, a long seine, which had been used during the river's spring floods to net fish. This seine suggested to me a way by which one might capture the unknown marauders, and though my friend at first ridiculed the idea I soon convinced him of its perfect feasibility.

So, that same afternoon, we took the net, and a lamb for bait, out to a narrow ravine leading from the hills, on whose bottom were numerous tracks of cougar or some other kind of big cat.

The seine was about twelve feet wide and thirty yards long. We divided it in the middle and twice folded both parts, thus forming two separate nets of quadruple strength, each one a little more than eleven feet long.

Then, by means of wooden pegs driven into the rocky walls, we hung one of these nets loosely across the ravine, here only ten feet wide, and tied the lamb to a stake six feet behind it; then in like manner suspended the other net at an equal distance in rear of the live bait, so that no wild beast could get at it from either direction without first breaking through a net.



THE MONKEYS.

We went home then, but came back shortly after dark and hid ourselves near the trap, in such a way that we could not be either scented or seen by any animal that might try to seize the lamb which kept up, meantime, a pitiful bleating, not knowing — poor innocent — that it was perfectly safe! The night was not at all dark, as the moon was nearly full; and after watching a couple of hours we dimly saw some creature creeping along the ravine bottom toward the bait. For several minutes it lay quite still within a few feet of the net, evidently studying the situation. We hardly dared to breathe. But at last the beast, whatever it might be, sprang full against the flimsy-looking barrier and was instantly enveloped in its fatal folds, which only enwrapped it more and more tightly with each fresh furious struggle.



Seeing that our prize was safely caught, we came down from our hiding place, lighted a torch, and found that we had captured a handsome female cougar. Knowing that the creatures would be worth ten times more alive than dead, my friend fired two prearranged signal shots, whereupon a lot of cowboys came from the ranch, and in five minutes had so securely tied the squirming, raging beast that it could be carried away without difficulty.

The next night, hoping to catch the fierce female's mate, we went through precisely the same performance; but instead of a "lion," we had the rare good fortune to net a magnificent male jaguar, which the fearless cowboys deftly secured in the same way they had carried off the cougar.

On each occasion we used an unweaned lamb as a decoy, and had the pleasure of restoring both of the temporarily orphaned creatures to their mothers entirely unhurt.

We tried this netting business twice again, but without success. Probably all the wildcats in the neighborhood had learned of our little game.

After I had left that part of the country, my friend sold the jaguar and cougar to an agent of the San Antonio Zoo, where I afterwards saw the beasts and had photographs of both taken. How long they lived in captivity I don't know, as I have never since visited San Antonio.

4. The “Little Spotted Tiger.”

A FEW DAYS after our adventure with the jaguar, little Manuel and I went off by ourselves on a bird hunt along the western edge of his father’s plantation. The forest itself was woven too thick with parasitic vines for sportsmen to penetrate it.



HEAD OF OCELOT.

We got some grouse for the table, and some toucans for “specimens,” and then sat down to rest under a clump of tree-ferns whose gigantic fronds furnished a perfect shade.

Here we had lain for perhaps half an hour, when a swarm of monkeys, driven into concealment by our firing, reassembled in the near treetops and began to frisk about.

We sat for a time watching their comical gambols, when suddenly their joyous chatter changed to alarmed cries, and their actions showed that some catastrophe had occurred. Numbers of them ran threateningly down the clinging vines nearly to the ground; then, as if seeing some sight of horror, they scurried aloft again, shrieking.

Suspecting that a lurking puma had caught one of them, we peered in among the undergrowth but discovered nothing.

The next moment we heard, seemingly not ten yards away, a sort of rending noise, also a confused murmur of growls and purrs, louder but much like the sounds uttered by a domestic cat in devouring a mouse.

Sure now that we were within a few feet of a jaguar or a puma, I lay down, gun in hand, to worm myself into the forest. I motioned little Manuel to remain where he was. With a flash of his dark eyes he placed himself beside me.

’Twas no time for argument, besides I knew that as we could not advance abreast the boy would be shielded by my own body.

Noiselessly, one following the other, we drew ourselves along on the soft black ground, continually hearing that curious double murmur which seemed as if it could not be produced by a single animal.



OCELOT'S HUNTING.

After going about twenty-five feet, I found myself coming to a lighter, more open spot where a lately-fallen tree had cleared a narrow lane. Peeping out of my thick cover, I saw a sight which, notwithstanding its horror, was so extremely pretty that I did not shoot at once, but waited for little Manuel to bring his head even with mine. There we gazed admiringly upon two creatures of surpassing beauty; a pair of spotted ocelots, nose to nose, were stretched out on the tree-trunk devouring a large monkey lying between them, and amicably purring over their feast, though sometimes, when one seemed to be getting more than its share, the other would hit it an admonitory cuff.

For a full minute we watched the handsome animals. They were not five yards from us, but their scenting powers were too much blunted by the odor of their feast to detect our presence. Then I quietly signaled Manuel to take the one on his side, while I would secure the other.

But another actor, more interested and less tardy than we, now appeared upon the scene. Very cautiously we were bringing our guns into position, when, like a flash, there shot down from the tangled maze overhead a black and orange streak, wound its lower end about the ocelot at which I was about to fire, lifted it partly up, and in less than one moment the beautiful little cat was wholly enwrapped in the whirling coils of a huge boa!

Its mate, as if fascinated, never tried to escape, but remained on the log, piteously mewling.

We, too, were bewildered, but when the great serpent rolled off the log with its prey, I whispered Manuel to shoot the uninjured ocelot and I would dispose of the boa.

Our rifle barrels cracked simultaneously, and then my gallant young comrade, hitherto so self-contained, went half wild over our good luck. He could hardly be toned down enough to assist in taking the pelts off the cats and in measuring the boa — thirteen feet long, the serpent was!



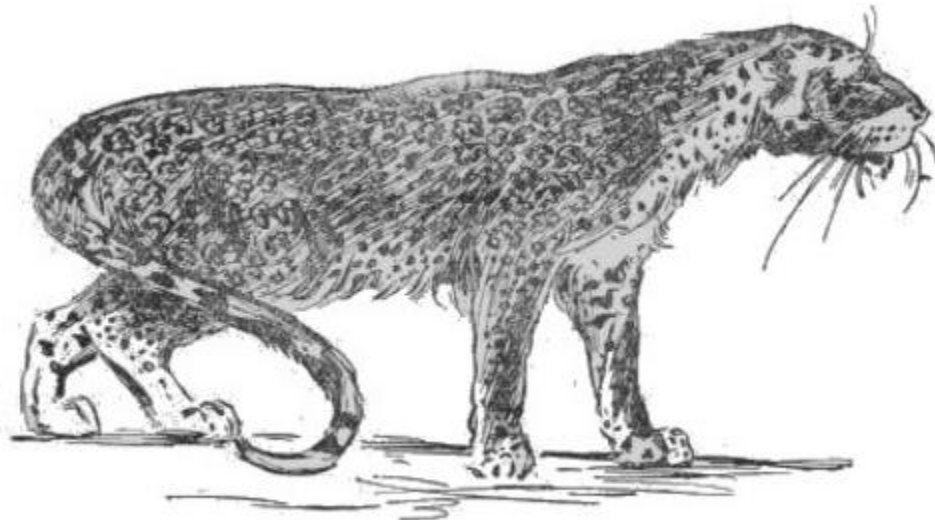
CROUCHED FOR SPRINGING.

There are two varieties of the ocelot in Brazil, the plain gray and the spotted. Ours were full-grown specimens of the latter kind, called by native hunters “the little Spotted tiger,” in contradistinction to the jaguar, which is known in Brazil as “the great tiger.” The spotted ocelot, a great climber and exceedingly bloodthirsty, is about two-thirds as large as the hunting leopard of India. Our specimens were about four feet long, but the tail alone measured twenty-five inches. Their standing height was about nineteen inches.



ANOTHER ACTOR APPEARED UPON THE SCENE.

This singularly handsome cat is truly leopard-like in its habits, and it is as much at home among the tree-tops as are the monkeys themselves, though it does not often capture one of these — its favorite dainty — in fair chase, but by lying in wait among the bushes.



PURBOUSLY MEWING.

As to the color of the ocelot, I was reminded a little of our own tortoise-shell cats, — the fur, fawn-tinted, being broken up by blotches and bands of very deep fawn edged with black. A continuous line of black runs along the spine. The rather small ears are black, but on the back of each, near its base, is a little disk of pure white, characteristic, I think, of no other member of the cat family.

When we got home with our trophies, Senhor Rinaldo gave some of his slaves permission to go out and bring in the skin of the boa, with so much of the underlying fat as they chose to strip off; the oil tried out from the fat of the boa being considered by the Indians of Brazil a sovereign remedy for various diseases.

These slaves, however, were negroes, not Indians, as the latter, though useful to the planters in many ways, do not take kindly to hard work. At that time all Brazilian planters owned slaves, and Senhor Rinaldo treated his precisely as a good master treats free domestic servants.

The jolly laughing fellows, four of them, went off in great glee, being hugely pleased by the fact that we had killed a tree-boa, a reptile though not nearly so large, far more dangerous than the great anaconda and intensely hated by plantation laborers. One of the men told me that a little six-year

old son of his had been crushed to death by one of these serpents and would certainly have been swallowed but for the prompt rescue of his lifeless body.

The men were gone a much longer time than seemed necessary; but by-and-by they came back, shouting, singing and dancing, with the skins of two boas!

They told us that one of their number — who, indeed, still looked almost gray from fright — had very nearly lost his life on their expedition. It seems that the mate of the dead boa had found and followed the trail of its lost companion (a quite common occurrence) and had coiled itself up in a low tree close at hand, as if to keep a watch over the form of its partner. The careless negroes, armed only with knives, did not notice anything unusual in the dense tree-top. One of them had just stooped down, knife in hand, to slit open the dead snake's skin, when swift almost as a lightning flash the live one, above, darted upon him, sank its fortunately venomless fangs into his left wrist and, having thus secured a fulcrum, whirled its coils around his body, but most luckily without enclosing his right arm.

The three spectators were, as they confessed, paralyzed by fright, and in ten seconds more their imperilled comrade would have been beyond help. But he, moved to unwonted quickness of thought by his peril and before the constricting folds had fairly begun to exert their crushing power, thrust his razor-sharp knife, edge upward, between his left wrist and the serpent's neck and with one sweeping motion actually cut the head cleanly off!

Then, as the hideous coils slowly unwound, the poor fellow began, his comrades said, to cry like a baby and to tremble as if in a fit. But he was not much hurt, after all; and was more than consoled for his fearful adventure by finding himself thenceforth a hero on the plantation.



THE LAST OF THE LITTLE SPOTTED TIGER.

5. A Black Lion.

IN 1843 I made a two hundred and fifty mile mule back journey from the province of the Rio de Janeiro to the Carandahy River, and it occupied me, my two half-breed Indians and my pack mules, nearly three weeks. There was not a foot of railway in Brazil at that time. Our road for the whole distance was little more than a forest path.



HEAD, SIDE VIEW.

It was on this trip I met a very rare cat, such a cat as I had never before seen, and have never since — a cat, indeed, whose existence has been and is still a subject of doubt to many naturalists.

One day we came to a small, sluggish river, only about forty feet wide, but too deep for wading. We knew we would have, to swim across. But as there were a number of big alligators lazily floating about within sight it seemed to me rather a risky proceeding.

I concluded to take time for a cold lunch and to consider the chances.

While we were sitting in the shade, about thirty yards away from the water's edge, silently eating, there suddenly waddled into view from the undergrowth on the opposite side of the stream a big capybara, a water hog. Just as it was sliding down its well-worn runway into the water, there descended upon it, like a thunderbolt, from an over-arching mimosa-tree, a jet-black beast, killing it in a second.

With a gurgling scream of triumph, which somehow seemed familiar to me, the black creature stretched himself beside the capybara, to lap the hot blood from its torn throat. What could this new animal be?

My Indians would have fired at once, but anxious to make sure of the strange game I motioned them to drop their clumsy flintlocks, and took very careful aim with my rifle. The capybara's body shielded the black head, and I had to fire at the heart, though I knew that even with that organ pierced through and through the beast might struggle far enough away to effectually conceal himself in the dense bushes.

My bullet struck just back of the shoulder. The astonished creature uttered an appalling human-like shriek, bounded high in the air, rolled over once, and then disappeared into the scrub. I ordered an instant crossing. We mounted and took the water abreast, each of us leading a packmule. With our six animals we made so big an array, and splashed so vigorously, that the alligators thought it best not to attack us.



**" UTTERED AN APPALLING
HUMAN-LIKE SHRIEK."**

We scrambled out to dry land, and my Indians dismounted and crawled off into the thicket. Presently I heard a chorus of exultant cries, and in a few minutes they emerged, dragging what they declared to be a "black lion," though they both confessed they had never before heard of, nor seen, such an animal! Still, it was a "black lion," they said.

For a while I was sorely puzzled what to make of my prize. A cat it unmistakably was — but of what species?

The whole head, back and sides, and even the tail, were glossy black, while the throat, belly, and inner surfaces of the legs were shaded off to a

stone-gray. I measured it carefully. The measures very closely corresponded with the well-remembered measurements of a North American “panther” to which I narrowly escaped falling a victim when I was a nine-year-old boy, and which was the only wild cougar, or puma, I had ever seen up to this time. The teeth, the claws, the shape of its head, the “set” of its ears, were like those of the Canadian cat.



MBENGO SLASHED AT HIM.

My Indians were right! All native Brazilians call the tawny-gray puma a “lion,” and the feline I had just slain was undoubtedly a black puma. Of this my own examination convinced me, and afterwards an aged Indian hunter told me that he had himself once shot “a black lion.”

Whether this rare cat is a permanent variety of its species, or merely an occasional freak of nature, I have never been able to learn, though I have taken much trouble in trying to decide the point.

With the exception of the old Indian referred to, no one I met in Brazil could tell me anything about it, and so I one day induced this man to give all the details of his OAvn single encounter with the beast and to say whether he thought it, barring color, just an ordinary “lion” (puma).

I cannot repeat the story in the old fellow’s own words, for his language was a curious jumble of Indian, Portuguese and English, and I could only pick out the phrases uttered in the last named tongue and fill up the gaps as best I could, so as to make the whole coherent and intelligible. I am confident, however, that the following, elicited piece-by-piece by many questions, is a correct rendering of what my red friend wished me to understand.

It seems that when a much younger man, a famous hunter and the owner of a real percussion-lock gun, he lived with his people near a great forest in which, besides all kinds of native game, were many “lions”; and these beasts, he said, not only destroyed vast quantities of the wild game, but also preyed upon the few domestic animals and fowls possessed by his family. Hence there was no creature in the neighborhood he so much hated, and so persistently hunted and killed.

Several times, in roaming the woods, he had seen an unknown black animal, sometimes on the ground and sometimes in the tree-tops, which acted in every way like a “lion”; but, though he had often shot at it, he could never succeed in bringing it down nor so far as he could see even wounding it.



HEAD, FRONT VIEW.

Finally, the superstitious hunter became convinced that the mysterious black creature was possessed of an evil spirit, and that he might imperil his own soul by molesting it. (Many of these aboriginal Indians are devout Catholics, and all have learned that they have souls to be lost or saved.) So he determined never again to run so great a risk, but in future to let the dreaded thing alone, and propitiate it by leaving some of his own freshly-killed game for it to feed upon.

This peaceful policy seemed so much approved of by the strange beast that, after it had been in force a week or two, it never attempted to run away or hide at sight of the credulous hunter. It would lie on a low tree-limb and blink at him in a quite friendly manner, apparently.

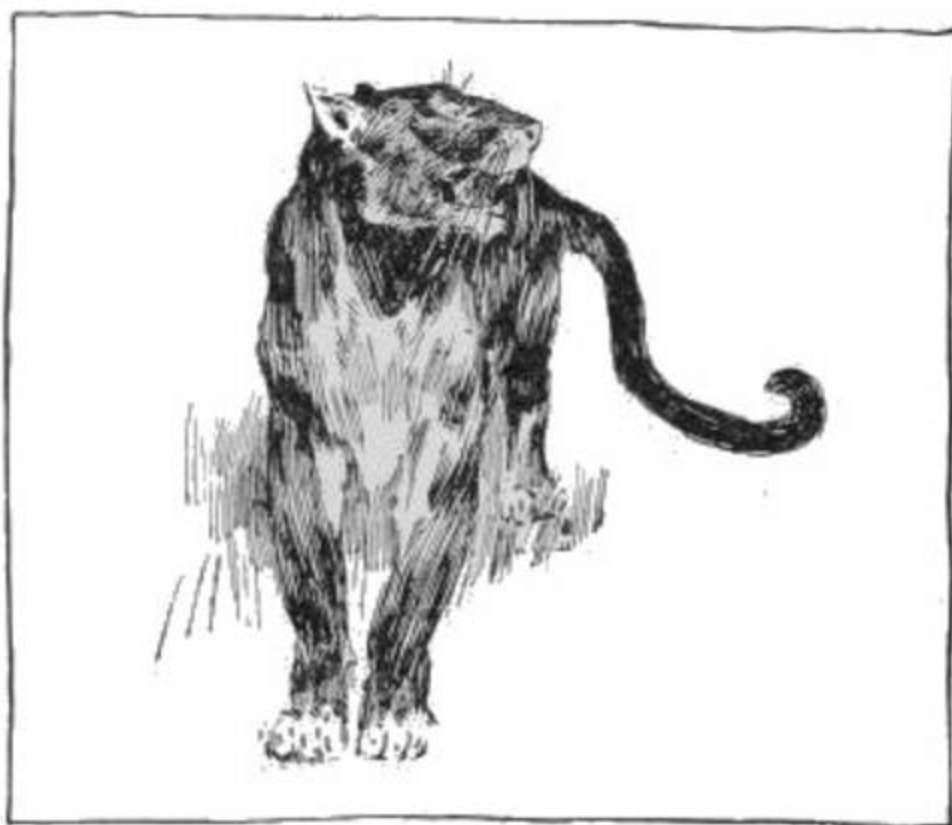
Deep cunning and a true catlike treachery lay, however, beneath this seeming amiability; for one pitch-dark night, when the man was accidentally belated before getting clear of the forest, he came very near furnishing a supper for his ungrateful protege!



ON THE TRAIL.

Knowing that noxious beasts were lurking everywhere around him, the nearly naked Indian was groping his way through the dense undergrowth, holding his loaded gun half breast-high and pointing straight ahead, while his finger rested on the trigger. Suddenly, and without a premonitory sound, something that seemed to be merely a moving chunk of the inky darkness dashed against the muzzle of the gun, which was discharged at the instant of contact. By the momentary powder flash the astonished hunter saw a great black thing fall at his feet.

Drawing out his flint, tinder and steel, he kindled a little fire, and then found that the heavy bullet from his gun had entered the mouth and passed clear through the head of the long-feared black beast! This fact at once dispelled the ignorant fellow's delusion. He carefully examined the dead animal and quickly came to the conclusion that it was in all respects, except in color, a common "lion" — an unusually large male; but why black he could tell no more than can I.



AT BAY.

6. A Day In A Tree.

WHILE IN BRAZIL, I had one day a very interesting adventure, which I shared with two cats.



HEAD OF PECCARY.

I had left my Indians in camp, and was strolling alone through a partly-cleared portion of the forest. Coming into an open glade, I saw a little ahead

a herd of white-lipped peccaries rooting among the logs in search of lizards, small snakes, beetles and other creeping things on which these curious hog-like creatures feed.

Although I had not been long in the country, I had learned that unless a safe place of refuge be at hand it is dangerous for any living thing to meddle with these savage little beasts. But as they were the first peccaries I had ever seen, I determined to stay and study them. So I slung my rifle and softly climbed up into the notch of a low-spreading tree where I could watch the comical tailless animals at my ease.

By and by, one of the herd — there were about a hundred — wandered away from the rest and came almost directly under my perch, and began to root up the ground precisely like a domestic pig. While looking down on it, I saw two slowly advancing lines of wave-like motion in the high grass between it and the forest's edge. I could not see what caused the motions. Little by little the unseen objects drew nearer, and I almost held my breath waiting to see what I should see. The lines of motion were not long enough, nor wavy enough, to be made by snakes; besides I knew that the boa-constrictor, the only serpent likely to attack such game, did not steal upon its prey in that manner.



"TWO SLOWLY-ADVANCING LINES OF WORM-LIKE MOTION."

All at once, at last, two spotted forms bounded high above the grass and descended on the peccary. With fierce catlike growls they tried to fix their teeth and claws in its bristly back. But the peccary, dropping on the ground, rolled over and over, squealing, and instantly the whole herd came rushing up, and in one minute would have made mince-meat of the rash cats if they had not scurried up a tree. This tree stood about thirty feet from mine.

While the beasts were climbing the trunk, and even after they had settled themselves among the branches, I could see them perfectly well, but I could not guess what they were. I only knew they were some kind of cat. At first glance I had thought of ocelots, but they were too small, not so beautiful, and not spotted in the same way.

But my study was cut short. The herd of peccaries had discovered my presence. Perhaps connecting me with their four-footed enemies, they surrounded both trees and began to gnaw the trunks furiously, as if bent on cutting them through. My curiosity had got me in a pretty fix! I had not enough ammunition to shoot a quarter of the herd. I and their other treed game were close prisoners. We might have to stay in our trees until we perished from thirst, or dropped down among the beasts. To descend alive among the peccaries would be certain death. I was not more than a mile from camp, and possibly might have called my Indians by firing a rapid succession of shots, but all the gold of Brazil would not tempt an Indian to attack a drove of white-lipped peccaries. I had one hope: it was early morning and the day was all before me. Perhaps the vicious little beasts might get intolerably thirsty themselves after awhile and make off.



THEY DESCENDED ON THE PECCARY.

But until they did leave, I must sit in my tree and wait. And I did wait, hours and hours; waited until the noonday sun blazed down through my leafy screen; waited until I would have given all I had for a pint of water — and still the savage peccaries kept up the siege.

By the middle of the afternoon my thirst became intolerable. I was in a frenzy. It seemed the only thing to do, to slaughter as many of the besiegers as m} ammunition would permit. Bringing my rifle round I pointed it downward to fire. At that moment one old grizzled peccary, evidently the leader, suddenly came out from the crowd and moved off, uttering a series of squeaking grunts. He was instantly followed by the whole herd. These

signals were probably a call to some woodland watering place, as they did not go in the direction of the river.

The moment they were out of sight, thirsty as I was, I turned my attention to the two cats, one stretched lazily out on a limb and not bothering themselves at all over the turmoil they had raised. In a flash I had made sure of the larger one, but at the crack of my rifle its mate leaped boldly out into space and, coming down right side up, bounded away.



"TREAD."

I slid down from my roost and stripped off the pelt of the slain cat in great haste, fearing the peccaries might return after drinking. The fur was pale yellow above, marked by longitudinal lines of dark patches. The lower parts were white, also marked by rows of dark spots. But in all other re-

spects — shape of head, form of body, teeth and claws, it was strikingly like an ocelot.

I got safely back to camp with the pelt, but the Indians could not name the animal, and I felt I had found a creature about as rare as my “black lion.”



“ONE OLD GRIZZLED PECCARY.”

Many years afterwards, in the city of Calcutta, I happened to pick up an illustrated edition of a work on natural history by a Spanish naturalist, Don Felix de Azora, who had during his lifetime resided in Brazil. From this book I learned that the cat which had so puzzled me, and the natives as well, was the mitis, or chati, which, I think, is found only in South and Central America. At all events, I never came across the animal in Africa, Asia,

nor in any of the isles of the remote eastern seas. It has often since occurred to me that possibly the pretty little beast may be a cross between the ocelot and the common tiger-cat, as, in many ways, and in its habits, it resembles both; but I am not enough of a naturalist to know whether such a cross is within the bounds of probability, or even possibility, though I see no reason why it should not be.

I offered my Indian attendants a liberal reward to kill or capture the mitis which escaped; but after a whole day of zealous hunting they gave up the job, not having even caught sight of the creature. They got the coveted reward all the same, however, as they brought me in two beautiful little "lion" cubs which they found nestled up on a mossy bed in the heart of a thorny thicket.



"HIS MATE LEAPED."

It was then that I learned that puma or cougar kittens are striped and spotted, as mentioned in the opening chapter of this book. Indeed, but for the information given by Indians, I should never have guessed that these two — about the size of gray squirrels and evidently very young — were, or could possibly be, the cubs of a mother of such sober color as is the female, as well as male, Brazilian “lion.”

I felt so anxious to preserve the little things that, as they would not eat solid food, I determined to turn back next day and try to find some ranch where milk might be obtained; but I had no chance to carry out my resolve.

The Indians had woven an apparently strong cage of twigs for the kittens, and this with a quite heavy weight on top was placed in my own tent before any of us went to bed that night. Nothing disturbed our sound sleep, and no idea of the cubs escaping ever entered our heads, for we knew that they could neither dig nor break out of the cage.

But we left one important element out of our calculations — we did not know of what daring cunning a wild beast bereft of her young is capable. Not one of us had heard a sound during the night, but when daylight came we found that a big hole had been torn in the side of the cage and the cubs were gone!

A number of tracks in the dust around and on the floor of the tent clearly proved that the mother “lion” had scented out her babies, crept under the tent wall, boldly rescued them, and carried them away, probably one by one in her mouth as a house-cat often carries her kittens. This, considering the usually cautious, cowardly nature of the puma, was a truly extraordinary performance and worth recording.

7. My First Lion-hunt.

AFTER STAYING SOME MONTHS IN BRAZIL, a thirst for adventure led me to South Africa. After much wandering I camped down in Matabele Land. I had a Transvaal wagon drawn by six oxen, and six Matabele natives.



HEAD OF MALE LION.

In those days lions were numerous in that part of Africa, and my ambition was to shoot one. So far, I had never got a fair sight of a lion though we could hear them roaring around us every night, and had to keep up fires to prevent our men and cattle from being surprised by the prowlers; for the lion is the most cunning, treacherous and sneaking of the cat family. Sometimes he is bold, at other times cowardly. It all depends upon the state of his stomach. After a heavy meal he appears indifferent, if not actually magnanimous; but woe betide the man or beast upon whom he comes hungry! I have known a full-grown lion to run from a child in the dusk of evening, and the same animal to charge next day upon a dozen well-armed men and carry off one in broad daylight!

Two of my men, whom I called Tom and Joe, spoke a little English, and these two usually went with me when out on foot. One day we three were hunting in the Molopo foothills, when Tom, who had been scouting in advance, came softly back and whispered: "Master, me see big tao (lion) go into hole in rocks."

After going a hundred yards or so through scattering trees and bushes, we came to a great pile of rocks. On one side yawned a dark opening about five feet high and four wide. That we had indeed found a lion's den, the rank feline odor proceeding from the hole, as well as numerous bones lying around, furnished proof.

"Yes, Tom, there's a lion in there. But how are we to get him?"

"Wait till sun most down; then tao hungry, and come out."

This really seemed our only chance of getting a shot at the beast. But our patience was tested scarcely twenty minutes.

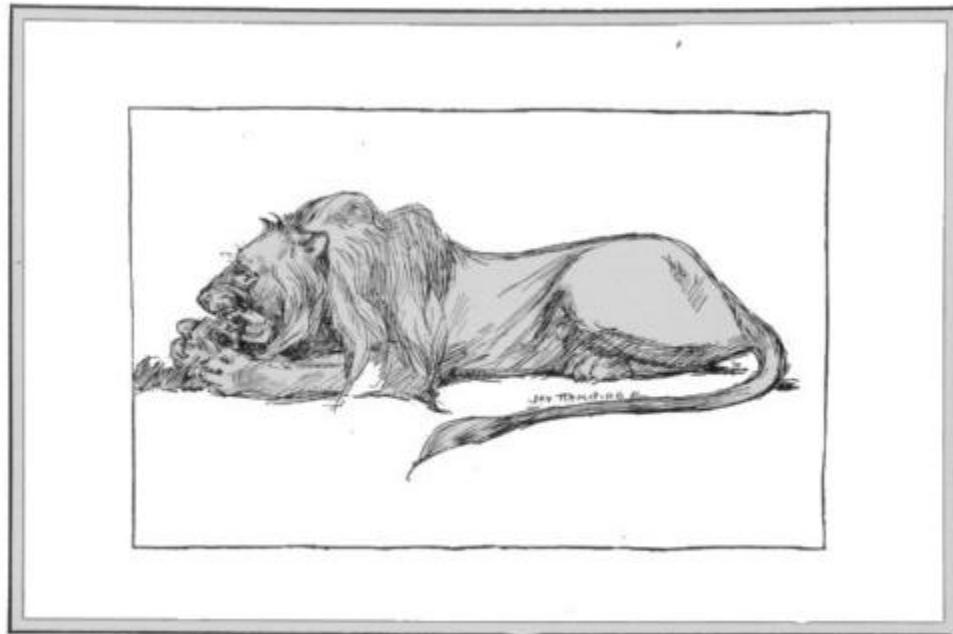


LIONESSE AND CUBS.

I had sat down at one side of the opening. The two blacks were carelessly standing a little in front. Suddenly, without having made a sound, an enormous red-maned lion darted from the cave's mouth, reached the men in two bounds and bore both to the ground. Either through fright, or from being stunned, neither of the fellows uttered a cry. They lay as if dead. The lion, lashing his long tufted tail and growling, stood over them, as though undecided which to finish first.

He was not more than fifteen yards from me and I had all the guns, but this was the first lion I had ever encountered, and I was nervous. The bullet I fired at the back of the huge uplifted head struck too low. Roaring, he turned from the prostrate blacks and came at me; not leaping as before, but in a sort of crouching run.

It was an appalling sight. With ears laid back, bristling hair, flaming eyes and exposed fangs, he looked with his sweeping mane a demon of destructive power, and I had short time to reflect that if my next shot did not kill him I should be torn to pieces, when he suddenly stopped within ten feet of me and crouched lower still, and I had my chance. Quick as lightning, I aimed between the cruel eyes and touched the trigger. A thunderbolt could not have caused a more instantaneous death. When shot squarely through the brain, the largest lion or tiger is as easily killed as a rabbit.



A LION AT LUNCH.

With a shout I looked across to where Tom and Joe had lain. Being but slightly bruised, on seeing my peril, both had taken to the nearest trees. Now seeing the dread “tao” dead, they came down again.

But our dangerous sport was only beginning. I had just reloaded, when in the distance we heard that peculiar sighing moan which precedes a lion’s roar, and then the hoarse, rumbling roar itself.

“She-tao come!” exclaimed Joe, his swarthy face almost pale.

“Stand by me, you cowards,” I commanded, putting a rifle in the hands of each. “Fire together when I give the word! If you run I’ll shoot you both!”

When not frightened they were good shots, and believing my threats they braced up. I had hardly finished speaking when a large lioness, clearing the high bushes, came bounding toward us. “Now! Fire!” I shouted as she alighted within twelve feet of us and crouched for the final spring. The three guns cracked together and every bullet told. Tom and Joe went half-crazy, and I was not much less jubilant over this good termination of my first lion hunt.

But was it terminated? Evidently my men thought not. While I was reloading, they crawled into the den with a supply of matches. Presently,

mingled with their exultant cries, I heard a sound of whining and meowings. In a minute or two the grinning blacks came out, bringing a pair of beautiful cubs, not higher, but much heavier and longer than large house cats. The pretty little creatures, too, spit and snarled, scratched, bit and meowed exactly as does an enraged tabby, though more vigorously. We were obliged to tie their feet together and muffle their heads in order to carry them away.

I had never before seen lion-cubs and was surprised to find their soft fawn-tinted coats marked by dark stripes like those of an adult tiger. These lines, my Matabeles said, always disappeared when the youngsters reached the age of six months.

We tried hard to keep the valuable kittens alive, but unable to get milk, we did not succeed. The interesting little creatures would not eat any kind of flesh, nor even lap the warm blood of freshly-killed game, and both died before the end of the week.



STEALING ON ITS PREY.

Afterwards, however, in another part of the country, I got three lion-cubs, somewhat older than the two lost, and, by employing a she goat as wet-nurse, succeeded in conveying the little creatures safely to Capetown. Two of them lived and when, as we supposed, about seven months old, were sold for |100 each to the traveling agent of an American menagerie — a great bargain for him, as he would probably have had to expend ye times that amount in having such a pair captured.

I had many lion adventures in Africa. One of them occurred when I was traveling with a large party of traders and hunters high up on the Zambesi River in a region unknown to any of us. The party consisted of twelve white men and about fifty blacks, the latter being necessary to do the hard work and look after our six wagons, each of which was usually drawn by eight oxen, though sometimes in deep sand or heavy mucky land we had to put on four more, from the reserve herd.

One evening, just as it was growing dark, we out-spanned by the side of a native village containing nearly one hundred miserable mud huts, whose inhabitants told us that a large black-maned lion had been seen and scared away by a little boy a few minutes before our arrival.

“Why didn’t it eat the boy?” asked our interpreter.

“Because,” replied one of the villagers, “it was surely the same beast that killed and half devoured one of our cows last night. He was full up and didn’t want boy-meat. Likely he’ll come back for more cow by-and-by. Then the white man can shoot him.”



"THE LION DASHED OUT OF COVER."

This we were very anxious to do, as black-maned lions were rarely met with in that part of the country. So, after supper, some of us concealed ourselves near the remnants of the slaughtered cow, and others staked out a live goat close to the patch of jungle into which the lion had retreated. We took turns in watching the baits all night, but the lion, not being as yet very hungry, never came near either of them; or else he was watching us and perhaps laughing at our shallow devices.

Next morning, having decided to employ all the adult males of the village and some of our own blacks in thoroughly beating the jungle, we twelve white men were standing in a group, within ten feet of an especially dense clump of bushes, arranging our plans, when with a single appalling

roar the lion dashed out of cover, seized a young German named Berstein and quick as thought bore him into a tangled thicket.

Stricken down by one blow of the brute's terrible paw, the poor fellow had not time to utter a cry; and we, though all armed with double rifles, had no time to fire before the savage monster had disappeared with his victim.

But it was not for men of Anglo-Saxon blood to stand weakly by in face of such a tragedy. With one accord, while the cowardly villagers and our own servants ran shrieking away, the whole eleven of us plunged into the almost impervious jungle, spreading out our line and pushing, tearing, fighting our way along like so many madmen.

We might, we thought, recover our comrade's body, but the chances were a thousand to one that none of us would ever catch sight of his destroyer. That single forlorn chance won, however, for in less than five minutes three of us, ranging a few feet apart, came upon the murderous brute standing, defiantly growling, over his precious prey, as if daring us to interfere.



"DEFIANTLY GROWLING."

We were not more than eight feet from the beast; indeed, in that tropical undergrowth we could not have seen him at a greater distance. But we had space enough to level our guns, and ere he could make a movement three steel-pointed bullets crashed through his brain.

Our young friend, not at all mutilated, was quite dead, however; and all we could do was to give him Christian burial, and send off a despatch with the sad news to his relatives in Zanzibar before sorrowfully continuing our journey.

8. A South African Leopard.

AS THE ELEPHANT is not exactly a cat, I need not tell here how, while in camp on the Limpopo River, I killed an enormous one over ten feet high, his pair of tusks weighing a good deal over a hundred pounds; nor how the mountain of flesh was consumed by a swarm of wild Matabeles, who flocked in to the feast from forest depths which I had supposed to be entirely unpeopled. My only reason for referring to it is, that because of this "kill," as Rudyard Kipling's jungle people would say, I determined to possess a leopard's skin; a magnificent one worn as a sign of his rank by the "Headman" of the Matabeles at the elephant feast having excited my admiration.

Next morning with my two natives, Tom and Joe, I started out after my leopard's skin. We went prepared to lie in wait all day. We knew this distant part of the forest abounded in monkeys and iguanas (big lizards), on which the leopard is fond of lunching.

Once well within the forest depths, we sat down, each with his back against a tree. There we remained absolutely motionless, but keenly on the watch. As long as we did not stir we knew our presence would not be discovered by any beast which in those darkling woods might be seeking its prey during daylight hours.



AN AFRICAN LEOPARD.

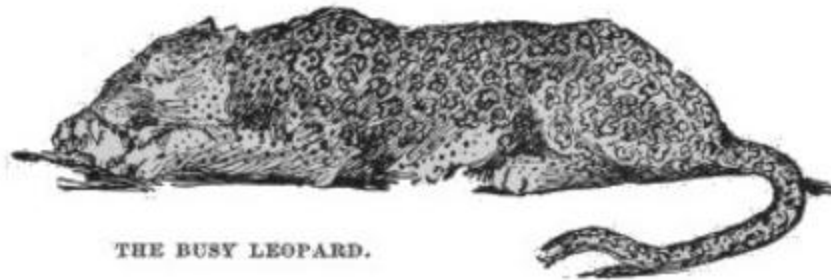
But we were very soon found out by a visitor. Since taking our places, quarter of an hour before, none of us had heard more than the usual forest sounds, made by monkeys, parrots and other dwellers in the tree-tops. Yet there suddenly appeared from behind Tom's tree a native boy, whose only clothing was a feather girdle and a few daubs of red paint, and his only weapon a bow and arrow! The shiny black youngster seemed hardly twelve years old. He had seen us entering the forest, and had given us a lesson in noiseless woodcraft.

He knelt by Tom's side and whispered. Tom came softly over to me. In whispers he said that in a grove of thorny scrub quite near, a big "tiger" was lying upon the ground devouring an iguana.

'Mbengo says," continued Tom, "you give him knife he show you tiger." Africans call leopards "tiger."

I jumped at the offer. Taking off my belt, to which hung an excellent hunting-knife, I drew it up a few holes and buckled it around the urchin's chunky waist. The black imp could not refrain from cutting up some delighted capers, but almost immediately got down on all-fours and motioned us to do the same.

I whispered my men to stay where they were. Then I crept on after the little fellow as well as I could. The soft, moist ground was free of leaves and sticks, so our advance was noiseless. After going about one hundred and fifty yards, Mbengo stopped at the edge of a dense thicket and signed to me to draw up beside him. Then, very dimly through the thick scrub, I saw a splendid leopard stretched out at full length and complacently growling as he tore the prey held between his paws.



I brought my gun round into position and set both locks without making a sound, but then found that from where I knelt it was impossible to make a sure shot at the low-lying beast. My sharp-witted guide saw it too. Before I could prevent, to my horror he disappeared in the thicket. Ten seconds afterwards I saw the upper part of his body as he stood upright not twelve feet behind the busy leopard! Next, I heard the twang of his bow and the whiz of a tiny arrow. The barbed point lodged in the back of the astonished beast. Harshly screaming, the leopard sprang up and around, and made a tremendous leap at its puny assailant. But quick as the motion was, the boys was quicker; while the enraged creature, untouched by my hastily-fired shot, was yet in mid-air, Mbengo dropped behind a matted thorn bush — and as

the leopard passed over him, actually had the audacity to slash at it with his new knife!

It is the nature of the cat kind to retreat when foiled in a first attack. My leopard, instead of turning upon the boy, sprang up the nearest tree. As he rose fairly into view, my second bullet brought him down, and when I reached the dead body the boy was frantically dancing and yelling over it.



"HARSHLY SCREAMING."

Tom and Joe now came running up and, hearing the story, gave a great proof of their admiration of their young countryman's prowess by each bestowing upon him some of their tobacco! I afterwards found that this enterprising youngster was a son of the "Headman" I had noticed at the elephant

feast; and no doubt on returning to his people with his store of tobacco and his knife, even his father's greatness was for a time eclipsed by his own.



“A TREMENDOUS LEAP.”

It was a singular piece of good fortune to have killed, in less than four hours after leaving camp, so fine a leopard. The big reddish-buff creature was truly a “great cat,” over six feet long. His canines or tusks, were an inch and a half long; his claws — five on the fore feet and four on the hind feet — were deeply curved, sharp as needles, and strong, fully accounting for a leopard's wonderful climbing powers.

The African leopard varies very much in ground-color in different localities and at different ages and seasons. I have seen leopards that were almost red, and others that were a dull gray, but the “markings” — the broken circles and spots — were always present.

Both in Asia and Africa I have observed the common leopard moving about in the tree-tops, and unless I had seen it, I would not believe that any creature so large could be so agile. Sometimes its motions are so quick that one's eye can scarce follow them among the branches, or distinguish the animal's lithe, graceful form from that of a swiftly-darting python — a great serpent, sometimes attaining a length of more than thirty feet, and quite capable of swallowing a much larger animal than the leopard, who in common with other tree-climbing quadrupeds is mortally afraid of this huge “boa”; and not without reason; for quick as the leopard is, and formidable as are his means of defense, all avail him nothing when once within the crushing folds of this dread enemy.



MBENGO SLASHED AT HIM.

Several varieties of the python family are found in the tropical parts of Africa. English-speaking people there call them “rock-snakes,” because they love to bask among stones and boulders on the hot hillside, I presume. Although differing from each other in size of individuals, all the varieties are beautifully marked, much like the true boa of South America, to which, however, they are dissimilar in many structural points, though almost exactly identical in habits.

Some ancient writers — who, I do think, must have drawn upon imagination for their facts — claim that the python sometimes grows to a length of sixty-five, and even seventy feet! This seems to me very much of a “snake-story”; but I really did see and measure one { dead, you may be sure) which lacked only an inch or two of thirty-two feet. This occurred in the

Ulunda country, some time after the tragic death of poor Berstein, while four of our party were engaged in trying to find a large leopard, which after being once fired at had disappeared among a mass of huge broken rocks, near the foothills of Mosamba Mountains.

As we knew the beast had been more or less severely wounded, we expected to come upon it without much trouble. But after searching the rocky labyrinth for fully two hours, we concluded that it had got clear away — probably into some fissure inaccessible to us.

So we reluctantly gave up the hunt and were scrambling down through the rocks, intending to try our luck with a herd of antelopes then feeding on the plain below, when the man in advance suddenly stopped on turning the corner of a big boulder, and silently signaled the other three of us to join him.

We crept cautiously to his side and then saw, on the ground, not twenty feet away, a great heap of brilliantly colored coils which seemed to be gradually contracting still more, with a horrid inexorable force, upon some luckless prey, invisible as yet to us.

“It’s the great-grandfather of all rock-snakes,” whispered Jack Horton. “Wait till we can see his head and neck, boys. Then we’ll blow him to flinders!”

Those parts of the monstrous reptile we could not see, however, as the big bundle of coils intervened between us and its head, which seemed to be fastened upon the encircled prey, and it was altogether too risky an operation to fire, haphazard, into the coils themselves. But after a few minutes the compressing motions ceased — their deadly work being done — and the python raised his flat head and comparatively slender neck, as if about to unfold his fearful length preparatory to the gorging process.

If the terrible creature saw us at all, it was but for the fraction of a second; for the instant his head and neck came into view both were shattered to fragments by four simultaneously-striking bullets. Then, with a shuddering convulsive movement, the hideous coils fell apart, and we saw that the serpent had done what we could not — caught and killed the wounded leopard! That was all right so far as the great cat’s fine pelt was concerned, for

although every bone in its body seemed to be broken, the skin was not in any way damaged.

After stretching the dead python out perfectly straight and putting the head and neck in place, we measured it accurately and found the total length to be thirty-one feet, nine and a half inches! Some of our blacks afterwards took off the skin and said it was the longest one they had ever seen.

9. A Family Of Tigers.

FROM AFRICA I went to Eastern India, partly to indulge in tiger-shooting and partly to see a very dear cousin and schoolmate, one Fred Stuart, who was a lieutenant in the British army and at that time stationed with his regiment at Calcutta.

Shortly after my arrival Fred and five of his brother officers obtained a month's leave of absence. With a good retinue of servants and horses we set off for the Province of Nagpoor, about two hundred miles northwest of Calcutta.

Here we had great hunting; but a week had passed and we had not yet seen the first hair of a tiger. In that part of India the tiger was then hunted on foot, trained elephants not being obtainable. Tiger-hunting on foot is fearfully dangerous sport, but all the more attractive to a crowd like ours on that account.

One morning a native came into camp and told us a pair of old tigers and three well-grown cubs had nearly ruined the people of his village, only two miles away. They had killed their cattle and goats. The night before a woman had been carried off while going to the tank for water, only a few rods from her own door.

A family of tigers is always more destructive than a dozen singly-roaming beasts. The parent pair kill ten times more prey than the whole family can consume, on purpose to show their young ones how to kill! I myself, posted on a platform in a tree-top, once saw a large tigress watching two cubs in their attempt to pull down a half-grown buffalo. When the buffalo beat them off, the old tigress bounded out of cover, broke the buffalo's neck in an instant and then, proudly standing over the body, recalled the retreating cubs by a peculiar purr, and actually cuffed them for their cowardice!

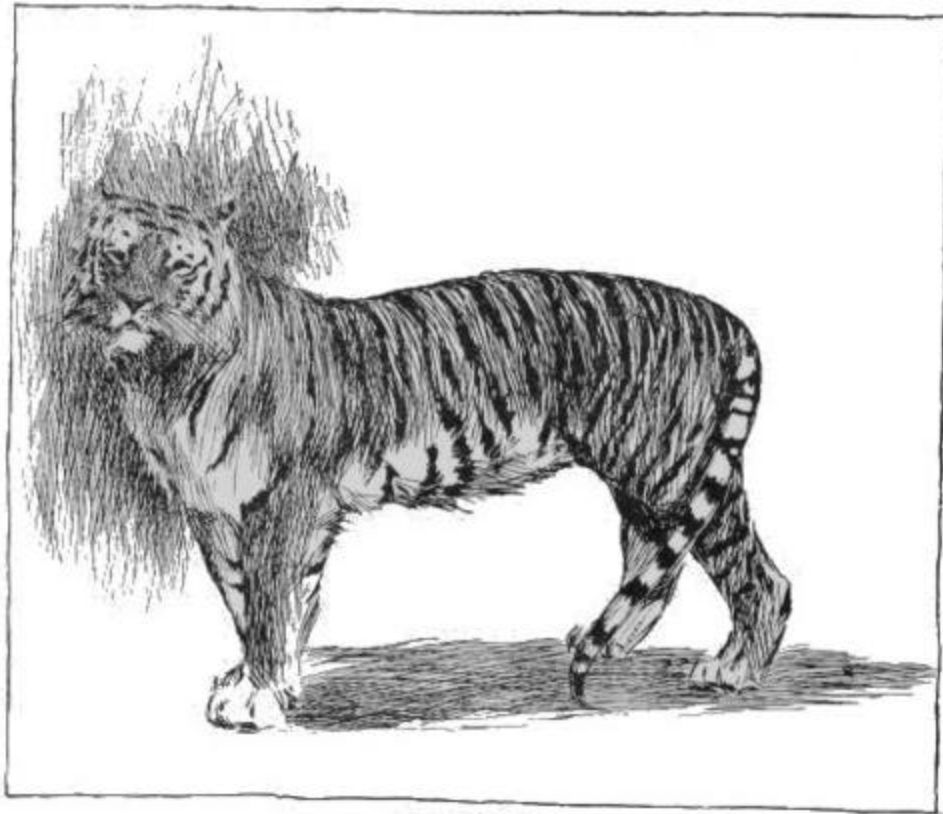
The native said the tigers had been “marked down” in a patch of jungle near his village:

“Would the sahibs come out and kill them?”

We would try. We loaded our big road-wagon up with fireworks, hand grenades, ground-rockets, fiery serpents and giant crackers, and started. We soon reached the village, a collection of mud-daubed bamboo huts. There were perhaps three hundred inhabitants.

Made brave by our presence, all the men, nearly a hundred, volunteered to drive the tigers out of cover. They had provided themselves with tin pans, horns and wooden drums. We distributed the fireworks, and then went on foot to a piece of bush jungle which was fifteen or twenty acres in extent. The “beaters” went around to the far side, while we took up our positions in front. Fred Stuart and I kept together, but the other live men extended their line so as to cover a length of a hundred yards or more on our right.

Then there began such a din, such screeching, yelling, tin-panning, horn-blowing, and drumbeating, such a screaming of rockets, darting of fiery serpents and explosion of grenades and crackers, that even a Fourth-of-July boy couldn't have stood the racket; much less could a respectable family of tigers.



THE TIGRESS.

The tigress and cubs were first to take alarm, the beaters being yet some distance away when the whole four sneaked out in a bunch, opposite the middle of the line held by our five comrades. All firing together, they were lucky enough to kill the old "she" and one cub; the others got away until next day.

"But where is the old tiger?" I asked.

"I'm afraid he's given us the slip," said Fred.

Our companions were standing around their prizes. We were about to join them, when suddenly, directly in our front, not fifty feet away, the long-bearded father-tiger thrust his wicked head out of the jungle, caught sight of us, and drew quickly back. But he could not retreat; closing in behind him, was the line of beaters amid a rain of flashing fire!

My old chum had never before seen an enraged and really dangerous wild beast. I had served a hunter's apprenticeship among the great cats of Brazil and Africa. So, presuming on my experience, I said:

"Now, old fellow, keep cool and shoot straight. The old man-eater may charge us."

Fred smiled, but I could see he was excited.

We were both armed with double-barreled rifles, but Fred's was loaded with round balls, while mine made expressly for big game, carried, in front of extra heavy charges of powder, long steel-pointed bolt-like bullets.

The beaters were now near at hand, and the tiger, maddened by the storm of fire, broke cover for good and bounded toward us. He did not roar as he came on — indeed, I have never heard a tiger emit a roar. He uttered a hoarse, horrible, grunting screech.

As the magnificent beast touched the ground after his first spring, Fred and I shot together. We found the terrible cat quite dead, but the mark of only one bullet to be seen. This was in the center of the creature's breast. "There!" cried Fred, "I aimed right at that spot."

"And so did I, because his head was held in such a way that I could not make sure of piercing his brain," I rejoined. "But we'll see directly who made the lucky shot." And so we did. When half a dozen of the delighted natives had removed the skin, we found that my steel-pointed slug, after passing through nearly the whole length of the old man-eater's body, had lodged in the backbone, not six inches from the root of the tail. My chum yielded; but next day, after I had outrageously missed, he killed one of the young tigers while it was in full flight.



"MADDENED BY THE STORM OF FIRE."

Almost everyone has seen the tiger in menageries; but the captive beast is a poor representative of the free-roaming "terror of the jungle." It is generally of inferior size, and more or less flabby in flesh, and its markings much dulled.

A full-grown royal Bengal tiger weighs, when in good condition, nearly six hundred pounds; he stands four feet high, and sometimes from snout to tail-tip attains a length of eleven feet. The beast's strength is amazing; much greater indeed than might be expected even from his great size and wondrously muscular form. A tiger has more than once been known, after killing an Indian bullock by one stroke of his paw, to leap with the carcass over a six-foot wall — a most astonishing feat; for, although much smaller

than the common American ox, an average Indian bullock is somewhat heavier than the largest tiger.

Generally, a man-eating tiger is one which by reason of old age has lost much of his agility and whose teeth have, perhaps, become broken or blunted by many years of bone-crushing. Finding it easier to capture human beings than more swift and stronger prey, such a beast sometimes takes up his quarters near an Indian village and continues to infest the neighborhood until some white sportsman comes along and puts a stop to his murderous career; for the natives, after one or two of their number have been carried off, become completely panic-stricken. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for a single tiger to so terrorize a village that its inhabitants wholly forsake the place and move off to some other locality, their utmost vigilance proving no match for the diabolical cunning of their cruel enemy.

The old man-eater seems to know perfectly well that the people must have water. Therefore he ingeniously conceals himself — in a different spot each time and often where there is apparently no cover at all — near a tank, or reservoir.

In the early morning, at midday, or in the evening, a woman, or possibly a group of women accompanied by men, will come out for water, taking a circuitous route, if feasible, and peering cautiously about on all sides. They can see no signs of danger, catch no scent of the tiger's strong odor, nor perceive on the course ahead of them any object behind which he can possibly be hidden. So they go on, perhaps laughing at their own fears, when suddenly, rising from an open patch of sun-burned grass, the waiting tiger bounds upon one of their number and has disappeared in the jungle with his prey before the horrified survivors gather their senses sufficiently even to shriek.

It may easily be imagined, then, how welcome to such villagers is the coming of well-armed white men who not only look upon tiger-killing as a legitimate sport, but also impart to the timorous natives themselves a little courage.

It is hard to say which of those two monstrous cats, the lion and tiger, is the more formidable, or to tell for certain which can conquer the other. Except in mere outside covering, the beasts are much alike — that is, in size,

strength, disposition and habits. If either has the advantage in point of weight, I think it lies with the tiger.

As each one, or each family, of these destructive beasts requires a quite large territory for its support, lions and tigers seldom range in common over any particular locality; hence fights between them are rarely witnessed. I myself have never seen one, but it must be a truly terrific spectacle. A veteran English sportsman, whom I met in Calcutta, had witnessed such a combat. He told me, that once, while watching a water hole on a moonlit night, he had seen a lion and a male tiger engage in deadly fight. Both, he said, were full grown beasts and apparently in perfect health and strength. The tiger began the battle by leaping on the lion while the latter was lapping up water, but was at once thrown off. Then, as the savage creatures struggled a few yards away from the pond's margin, the combat began in good earnest and was watched by the unsuspected spectator, who with two double rifles at hand peered curiously out from the edge of his pit. Sometimes one beast, sometimes the other, seemed to have the advantage as the battle royal progressed amid frightful howls and shrieks of rage; but, finally, after it had lasted about thirty minutes, the lion was killed outright, and the victorious tiger, dragging himself painfully down to the water, died while attempting to drink.

Thus the sportsman secured two magnificent pelts, though badly torn, without firing a shot; and his native servants, after stripping them off next morning, managed to cleanse the fur and patch up the rents so perfectly that no one, without inspecting the flesh side, could have guessed through what a fearful ordeal the grand trophies had passed.

10. How I Met The True Panther.

WE HAD BEEN more than three weeks in our Nagpoor camp. We had had wonderful success in hunting dangerous game — man-eaters and cattle-slayers. But now it was time to go back to Calcutta. On the afternoon of the day before our intended break-up, Fred Stuart and I were toiling homeward through a tract of forest, some miles from camp. We were loaded down with feathered game for the camp breakfast, and had sat down on an old log to rest. Each of us had a bottle of cold tea, our preferred drink on a hunting foray. Fred had just thrown back his head and tipped up his bottle, when he suddenly lowered it again.



HEAD OF PANTHER.

“Take a look at the top of that big live-oak. Will,” said he. “I believe there’s some kind of an animal there. That thick clump of leaves, just over the middle of the second limb, appears more solid than it ought to be.”

“So it does,” I replied; “but I don’t see anything.”

We left the log and threaded our way through the undergrowth. We tried four different positions to get a better view of the mysterious object; but the foliage was so dense that we could not determine whether it was a hiding beast or a great knot on a horizontal limb.

Some time passed, but the thing showed no signs of life. Nor could we detect the slightest rustle in the leaves. If it really were a lurking beast it was doubtless watching us.



THE PANTHER HIDING.

“Well,” said Fred, after we had circled the tree several times, “I guess it’s a knot. Let’s go on.”

“Not so fast,” said I. “It is a living creature, and has made a grand mistake.” Just as Fred spoke, I had detected something remarkably like the end of a tail, hanging down from the limb!

After looking for a while, Fred, too, caught sight of the pendant object. " 'Tis a bit of a tail, sure enough," said he. "See, it's moving." So it was, with a sort of tremulous twitching like that of a cat's tail when watching prey. But no more than a finger-length of it was visible.

“It's probably a leopard,” I said. “We'd better get further away from the tree. There's no telling what a leopard will do when he finds that he is discovered.” And we moved off twenty yards or so.

Neither shotgun nor double rifle would be of any use unless we could get a good sight of the creature. On reflection, I said: “Fred, as you've never had a chance at a leopard, give me your gun and take my rifle. I'll fire a charge of shot into the tree. That will rout the cat out, for it's probably a cat. The moment you see it plainly, shoot for certain.”

“I do want to bring down one at least of the murderous rascals,” said Stuart.

We exchanged guns, and I discharged the contents of both smooth-bore barrels into the mysterious mass of foliage and cut off a perfect shower of leaves.



“ A SHRILL, SNARLING SCREAM.”

Instantly came a shrill, snarling scream of fifty-cat power. Both of us caught a glimpse of a spotted beast darting out to the extremity of the great limb. Thence it sprang to another tree.

In its haste, the leopard, as we both still thought it to be, made another fatal mistake; the tree to which it fled was nearly destitute of concealing leaves. When it finally crouched in the upper crotch, we could see it.

The scared animal evidently knew it. He reared up as if about to climb higher. The next instant Fred brought him to the ground.

“A most magnificent leopard!” cried the fortunate marksman.

I had already seen too many of the various great cats not to be caught by peculiarities at a glance.

“It’s not a leopard at all, but a panther!” I answered, “I’ve secured several leopards, and this beast certainly is not one.”

“Why, it seems to me exactly like all leopards I’ve seen in shows, though it’s plumper and glossier,” persisted my comrade.

“Tis not like them,” I said. “See, now. This creature is shorter, chunkier and thicker-limbed than any leopard ever seen by anyone. The ground color of its fur is darker than any leopard’s. Its spots are larger and very differently arranged; the inner edges of the spottings are more nearly black. The ears are more rounded and the tips of a deeper buff than a leopard’s.



“IT SPRANG TO ANOTHER TREE.”

Just wait till you see the two pelts side by side. The old Major has a leopard-skin in camp now. Side by side you’ll see the difference instantly.”

So it proved. When we got in with our new cat-pelt Major H at once pronounced it to be a panther’s.

“A much rarer animal than the leopard,” he said consolingly to Stuart, “though nine sportsmen out of ten cannot tell one beast from the other.”

I myself afterwards killed, at different times and in different parts of India, one male and two female panthers; and I found that, while exactly like one another, all differed from the leopard in the particulars I have named.

The two cats are of identical habits. Both are equally well armed in the way of teeth and claws; yet, if native hunters are right, they are not equally dangerous. All agree in saying that one leopard will commit greater havoc, especially among domestic cattle, than three panthers.

By the description of this great cat, it will be at once seen that it is an error for so many of our North American people to call the cougar, or puma, a panther, even though the great novelist, J. Fenimore Cooper, did so.

No, the true panther is not found in any part of America. It ranges over a great part of Africa, Southern Asia and many islands of the East India seas in common with the leopard, with which many writers confound it, though it is nowhere so plentiful as is the last-named beast.

One day while we were enjoying a rest at noon.

Major H told us that his son Charlie, a boy fourteen years of age, once in a very remarkable manner, saved himself and little sister from being attacked by a panther.

The children had, as it seems, all unnoticed by their native attendants, strolled out just before dark from their parents' bungalow, then located in the hill-country, and had seated themselves at the edge of a mango grove a hundred yards or so away. Charlie had brought out with him a bundle of lately-arrived English papers and was reading aloud such items of home news as he thought might interest the twelve-year-old little girl, when the latter suddenly clutched his arm and silently, but with evident terror, pointed to a particular spot in the grove.

"What is the matter, Alice?" wonderingly asked the boy.

"Oh, there! there!" tremblingly replied Alice.

"See that awful creature! Oh! we shall be killed!"

Looking toward the point indicated, Charlie saw a great panther, crouched low on the ground, creeping slowly forward with its glowing eyes fixed intently upon his companion and its tail excitedly twitching as it drew nearer and nearer to its hoped-for prey.

For one moment the boy gave his sister and himself up for lost; but then his AngloSaxon courage and soldierly instincts reasserted themselves, and with them returned his presence of mind. His ready wit — nothing less than wonderful in so young a boy — had suggested a possible means of saving his sister. Even if his own life should be lost in trying the experiment, she would have time to escape; for, he reflected, the panther would certainly be satisfied, or, at all events, detained by the body of one victim.



PANTHERS AT PLAY.

So the gallant little fellow hastily rolled lightly together several immense sheets of the London Times, drew a match from the pocket of his linen blouse, touched it to the paper, and with the blazing torch and a vigorous shout ran directly at the threatening beast! The charge of a dozen troopers could hardly have proved a more successful mode of defense; for on seeing the swiftly advancing flames the panther uttered a shrill scream of affright and instantly disappeared in the now fast darkening grove.

But believing her brother to be rushing on certain death, the little girl had meantime fainted. The strong boy did not delay a moment. He caught

her up in his arms and was hurrying to the bungalow, when the father, mother and a whole bevy of native servants — some of whom had heard his cries — met the young hero midway. Under their care the little girl quickly revived.

“Then,” said the Major, his face glowing with pride, as he told the story, “the youngsters managed to tell us what had occurred, though Charlie seemed to think nothing of his achievement — one which might well do honor to the bravest grown man. I at once called up all the forces, natives and soldiers, which I could muster and posted them as sentries around the mango grove; and next morning, after a long hunt, one of my brother officers shot the panther, a remarkably large and handsome male, whose beautiful pelt he presented to my boy.”

11. A Black Leopard.

SHORTLY BEFORE SUNSET, on the first night of our return journey to Calcutta, we had pitched our tents near one of the large water-tanks scattered here and there throughout the country for irrigation purposes. The spot was not far from an extensive tree-jungle — a jungle where great forest trees grow amidst jungle-brush.

We went to bed about eleven o'clock. Everything was silent in camp. Except the barking of distant jackals, no outside sounds were to be heard. Two persons were wide awake, however; for Fred Stuart and I had made up a bit of a plot to have yet one more try for big game.

As soon as our tent-mates were peacefully snoring, we took our rifles and stole out towards the tank. The moon, which shines with peculiar brilliancy in India, was full. All unshaded spots were almost as light as day. To reach the tank, we had to go about one hundred and fifty yards over a perfectly open piece of ground. We moved cautiously. We had not gone half way when we saw a number of deer scampering away from the tank out into the bush. We felt sure other wild animals would come to drink. We concealed ourselves in two rifle-pits which previous hunters had dug in the bank within twenty-five yards of the well-tramped drinking place.

Silent and motionless as the earth itself, we lay for half an hour. Then a small herd of antelopes, perhaps fifty, came softly out of the forest, and after looking about in every direction prepared to drink. Our larder was well stocked and we wanted none of them.

The sloping approach being narrow, all of the pretty creatures could not drink at one time. Those which first drank drew back to give place to others. Grouped in a bunch on the bank, they began to sport and play like so many lambs. They were unsuspecting of our presence. What little wind there was blew from them to us. The interior of our pit was as black as a wolf's throat, and we could not be seen.

We remained quiet and kept a lookout for the coming of beasts of prey. We had thought it possible we might get one more shot at a tiger! No tiger appeared, but we had better luck still, as we secured a much rarer animal that night, one so very rare, that not even old Major H had ever before seen the like.

All of the antelopes had now quenched their thirst, and the whole herd were sportively gamboling on the bank in the moonlight. Suddenly Stuart and I both noticed a low-crouching black object stealing toward them along the almost equally black ground. No eye not purposely watching would have distinguished it, and to take good aim at it was impossible. On and on, like an imperceptibly moving ridge of black soil, it came, until within twenty feet of the nearest antelope. Then it stopped, arched up its back a little and launched itself by one astounding spring upon the animal. The poor creature, with a single plaintive bleat, sank to the earth. Its frightened companions scurried away.



"A LOW-CROUCHING BLACK OBJECT."

Now, in the moonlight, we could see the murderous beast quite plainly. I gave the signal, a low whistle, and we fired. Both bullets passed through the

black body, yet with cat-like tenacity of life, and uttering a hideous cry, it bounded away for fully one hundred yards before it dropped.



"ARCHED UP ITS BACK."

"What in the world can the animal be?" asked Fred, as he stood looking down on the long, lithe body. "It's black as a bear, but evidently some kind of a cat."

I was puzzled. I had never heard of any of the great cats of India being black', though in South America I had shot a black puma.

The creature was too heavy to be carried. We fastened our rifle slings around its neck and began to drag it along the dry ground to camp. We wished the others of the party to see it while yet in perfect shape. The shooting had awakened our comrades. Well armed, but only half-dressed, all came hurrying out to see what the midnight fusilade might mean.

After minutely examining our prize, Major H said: "I congratulate you young fellows.

You've killed a black leopard! During all my years of hunting I've never before seen one, but that this is a genuine specimen of that very rare animal I have no doubt whatever. It is, except in color, precisely like that spotted leopard we killed a few days ago."

"Do you really think it is of the same species?" I asked.

"Identically so, though some naturalists think differently," he replied. "The color is a mere freak of nature. I have seen white crows, white Virginia deer, and in Canada an occasional white one among black squirrels. The black color of the leopard is a similar freak."

While looking the beast over next morning, I became convinced that the major was right; for, in certain lights the characteristic leopard-spots could be seen outlined in shape, though not in color, everywhere among the beautifully glossy fur which, from a deep black on the creature's back, shaded off to a slate-gray on its under parts.



"WE COULD SEE THE MURDEROUS BEAST QUITE PLAINLY."

Since then I have seen "black leopards" in menageries, but none of these captives was much more like our grand India specimen than is a "singed cat" like a royal Bengal tiger!

This midnight adventure of Fred's and mine so thoroughly roused the party that every one thought it necessary to have a smoke before again turning in. So the big tent was lighted up, pipes and cigars produced, and we all sat down on the canvas-topped camp stools to enjoy a comfortable hour.

Naturally, the talk fell upon leopards; and after several of his brother officers had given us interesting anecdotes in regard to those beasts, Captain Graham, a splendid-looking fellow of thirty-five or thereabout, told us of a thrilling experience of his own.

"It was fifteen years ago," he began. "I was a griffin (newly-commissioned ensign) then, and had come out with a detachment of recruits to join my regiment, the Forty-second Highlanders, then stationed in the city of Bombay. But on landing from the troop-ship and reporting at Headquarters, I found that the company to which I had been assigned was just then doing duty at Yikar Lake, a dozen or more miles to the north, where some important government work was being done.

"I was greener at that time than I am now; was very proud of my new uniform and, until laughed out of it by my comrades, was fool enough to lug my basket-hilted claymore around from morning till night. This sword had never been ground to a sharp edge, but yet was not altogether useless for cutting and thrusting — most fortunately for me, as it happened.

"The weather was frightfully hot at this time — often above a hundred degrees in the shade — and after sixty-four days of a cool sea-voyage I felt it severely; still, being absurdly zealous, I reported to my own captain as quickly as palanquin bearers could carry me to his quarters. I was most graciously welcomed, principally, I presume, because I had brought many home letters for him and his subs.

"At the mess dinner that evening all the officers and their guests wore their linen or nankeen; but I stuck to my gorgeous uniform, which made me look like a peacock amid a flock of white swans. And oh, the heat! It was something terrible. The profuse perspiration oozed from every pore.

"Noticing my distress, the captain kindly said: 'Don't make a martyr of yourself, Mr. Graham, but leave us without ceremony. Go to your room and let your man give you a hot bath; then get into the coolest things you have.'

"A hot bath, indeed. That did seem to my inexperience rather too ridiculous. But I gladly excused myself, and leaving the mess-room went out into the open air — uniform, claymore and all!

"Instead of taking the captain's advice, I started off to the lake and, after getting beyond all sounds from the barracks, sat down under a tamarind tree, hoping to get cool in the course of time. Then, while idly wondering whether any sane being ever really did take a hot bath in such weather, it occurred to me that I might as well have a plunge in the lake, whose water was certainly several degrees lower in temperature than my own overheated body.

"So, with no onlooker save the full moon, so far as I knew, I threw off my clothing and dashed recklessly in, only to come more hurriedly out; for I had not made five strokes when I saw a huge crocodile coming at me with wide-open jaws! I had totally forgotten that such creatures were almost as common in that latitude as trout are in our Highland lochs.

"Hastily scrambling ashore, I had stooped to take up one of my garments when low on the ground, between two small bushes, about twelve feet away, I saw the murderous glare of a pair of yellow-green eyes and caught a shadowy glimpse of their owner's spotted hide!

"Of course I had not grown to man's estate without having many times seen leopards in menageries; and I realized at once that here was a genuine wild one, evidently bent on trying the flavor of a tender, newly-imported European. I didn't pick up my clothes — not just then — but, instead, snatched up and drew from its sheath my claymore; whether it was a "trusty" one or not I had as yet no means of knowing.

"I was in rather a pretty fix — a gaping crocodile, perhaps a dozen crocodiles, on one side, and a hungry leopard on the other, being for a modest young man, clothed only with a naked sword, a somewhat embarrassing conjunction of circumstances. But I was a fairly strong fellow in those days and didn't feel much alarmed. My chief concern was that my maiden sword should meet its first stain from the blood of such a foe. Yet, after all, the weapon could surely be put to no better use than in defending the life of its owner!

"Thus, for perhaps twenty seconds, I and the leopard gazed at each other, and I began to think that the brute would not dare to attack me — not then knowing that it was a female, with two half-grown cubs, both killed next day.

"If I had been more elaborately clothed, I might have walked away, or tried to; but as it was I stooped once more and reached out my left hand, intending to grasp part of my apparel. This might well have proved a fatal move; for the instant I lowered my head and the glittering sword the leopard made a tremendous upward leap, and but for my watchfulness would have descended upon my bare back!

"I had never, however, removed my eyes from the creature, and quickly straightening up I lunged with all my strength at its open mouth as it came down. The not very sharp-pointed blade drove along its throat and came out between its shoulders, piercing, as I afterwards found, the heart itself! The big cat was not yet dead, however. The impetus of its attack bore me down, and we came to the ground together, though, as I had kept fast hold of my sword-hilt and thus could hold the beast off, I did not receive a scratch from its sharp claws, which for a moment or two were fiercely plied in a vain attempt to reach my outstretched hand.

"So soon as I thought it safe to do so, I withdrew the sword-blade and with a single downright stroke laid open the leopard's skull, not being aware as yet that I had already mortally wounded it.

"After cleansing my claymore in the lake, I dressed and went back to the mess-room, where the company still sat at dessert. On seeing the sword by my side, my captain laughingly exclaimed: Good heavens, boy! what are you carrying that thing around for?"

"I've found it quite useful," I quietly replied, and notwithstanding a hundred eager inquiries, would say no more. And it was not until next morning that the mystery was solved, much to the surprise of my comrades, none of whom had ever seen a leopard in the neighborhood. All the fellows went out to the scene of my little adventure, with the servants who were sent to bring the leopard in, and it was then that the two cubs were discovered and killed."

“Well, you had rare luck,” said Fred Stuart after Graham’s story was finished. Then we all climbed into our hammocks, to sleep the remainder of the night away.

12. Two Girls And A Tortoise-shell Tiger.

ON LEAVING CALCUTTA, I went to Sumatra, one of the largest islands of the East Indian Archipelago. Near the southern point of the island, a few miles inland from Sunda Strait, there lived at this time two American families named Gordon and Whitney. The Gordons had but one child, a fine manly boy of fifteen. The Whitneys had two charming little girls, Ethel and Amy.

I became acquainted with both these families, but found that although their homes were separated only by a wide bayou neither knew of the other's existence, owing to the fact of their recent arrival in the country.

The pleasant task of introduction was taken out of my hands in a rather singular manner. One day the two little Whitney girls slipped away from their attendant and strolled nearly a mile from home. They were gathering flowers along the edge of a bridle-path which ran through a grove of sago palms, when they were so startled by the sudden appearance of a horseman, who came around the bend on a gallop, that both cried out in fright.

The rider, a bright-faced boy, carrying a light rifle and bestriding a beautiful Arab mare, instantly drew up. Lifting his hat to the children he said, "I beg pardon, young ladies. I did not see you at all. My name is Frank Gordon, and my father's coffee plantation is about six miles from here, on the other side of the big bayou."

"O, we're not a bit frightened now," said Ethel.

"We are Mrs. Whitney's little girls. Our papa and mama lives close to here. We were just picking some of these flowers; they are so different from those we had in the United States."

While the child was speaking, Frank removed his hat entirely, and when she had finished he bowed to them once more and rode away.

“What a nice polite boy, and he spoke English, too! not that horrid Dutch and Malay we hear every day,” exclaimed Ethel.

“Yes, and he called us young ladies!” chimed in little Amy.

“Well, we are young ladies. I’m ten and you’re nine,” sagely replied Ethel. “I do wish we could have had a longer look at his lovely horse! I don’t suppose we’ll ever see him again” — wherein the little maid was greatly mistaken.

After a while the children left the path. Always finding something new, they strayed deeper into the wood. As they came in sight of a giant cactus, growing in a small cleared space, Amy cried out, “Oh, sister, see that curious-looking dog right there beside the cactus! He’s got a pretty red bird and he’s going to eat it. Let’s go and make him drop it!”

Then the two innocents walked straight toward a full-grown tortoise-shell tiger, a species of cat found only in Sumatra. The natives call it “ri-mau-dahan.” It is nearly as large as a leopard, but its head is more like that of a domestic cat, and it is not ordinarily as fierce and dangerous as the leopard. Its markings are curious, somewhat resembling both those of the true tiger and leopard, yet not like either; but a strange admixture of tiger-stripes, leopard-spots and hollow disc-like patches. The ground color of the fur is ashy-gray. Along the back run two glossy black bands. The tail is very long, with dark rings. Its limbs are thick and powerful, and its teeth and talons long and sharp. It generally preys, I was told, upon birds, monkeys, young deer and other weak creatures.



“BEGAN TO LEAP AND FRISK ABOUT.”

When the little girls got close to the “dog,” Ethel said: “Why, Amy, that is not a dog at all! See how its hair is bristling and its tail puffing out, just like our cat when she’s angry; and oh! it’s beginning to snarl and spit! Let’s run!”

So soon as the children turned to fly, the rimau-dahan, which would itself have run away the next moment, took courage and with a long, light bound pounced upon them, knocking both down to the ground with two taps of its padded paws, the formidable talons being, as yet, closely sheathed. Then, seeming to be delighted with such novel prey, the sportive creature began to leap and frisk about, exactly as does a domestic cat when tantalizing a mouse. Sometimes, after crouching low, it would spring clear over the prostrate little ones. Then it would lie down with a paw upon each and loudly purr. After that it would roll them gently over and over, perhaps

wondering what their outside wear, neither fur nor feathers, could possibly be.

At first the poor children were so frightened that they could not cry out. But soon both began to scream: "Papa! papa! papa! Come, oh, come quick!"

Their cries seemed to make the big cat angry; it began to handle its prisoners a little more roughly, to protrude its claws and catch hold of their clothes whenever they attempted to get up.

Their danger was truly terrible. This strange situation had lasted, Ethel thought, about fifteen minutes; she and Amy, exhausted by screaming, lay silently clasped in each other's arms, and the "tiger," no longer irritated by their cries, was standing a few feet away, watching them. Suddenly, swift as a falcon's flight, Frank Gordon and his trained Arab burst from the encircling wood, and before the beast could escape rode straight over it, hurling it, now screeching with rage, to the ground!

By the time the horse and rider had checked their headlong speed, the cowed cat had sprung into the crotch of a tree. This was precisely what Frank wanted. He had feared to fire while it was so close to the little girls. Now, still sitting in the saddle, he raised his rifle, took a deliberate aim, and tumbled the creature, stone-dead, to the ground.

The next moment he was helping the children to their feet. Beyond some tearing and soiling of their dainty frocks, the little girls were none the worse for their dangerous adventure — every word of which Ethel told, when Frank had taken them home, very much as I have described it, for I happened to be at Mr. Whitney's house when the trio got in.

Of course, after this event, the Gordons and Whitneys were always warm friends and I believe the three children, now middle-aged people still reside on the island of Sumatra.

As I had never before seen a "rimau-dahan" (the compound word means, I believe, a climber of forked trees), I was anxious to secure the beautiful pelt. I offered Frank an absurdly big price for it, but he declared, "no money could buy it" — very properly, too, considering the circumstances attending its acquisition.

Before leaving the island, however, I was lucky enough myself to kill a particularly fine tortoiseshell tiger, and I yet have its pelt, with head, tail and claws complete. Having been carefully protected from moths, the fur after all these years is still bright, and its spots, rings and stripes show quite plain¹³ I came by the beautiful cat which they once adorned in a very simple and uneventful manner.

Although an almost infinite variety of wild birds exist in Sumatra, Mr. Whitney had brought with him from America several pairs of choice domestic fowls, and these had now increased to a considerable flock, in which he took much pride, as a reminder of his former home.



"FRANK GORDON AND HIS TRAINED ARAB HORSE FROM THE EMERALD WOOD."

One evening, after our six o'clock tea, he asked me to come out with him to look at the pretty things, their yard and roosting place being not far from the house. As we neared the enclosure, surrounded by a light open paling, a fat, jolly-looking Dutch woman who had carried out some boiled rice for the chickens' supper came running to meet us, excitedly exclaiming, "Mynheer! mynheer!" and then followed a torrent of mixed Dutch and English; I could recognize only the oft-repeated word, "tiger."



"She says," interpreted Mr. Whitney, laughing heartily at my perplexity, "that a spotted tiger has just run into that clump of ironwood saplings with the handsomest of all the game roosters in his mouth. He had scaled the fence, it seems; for the moment she opened the gate the beast clashed past her with its prey."

"It must be another rimau-dahan!" I exclaimed. And back to the house I scampered for my rifle, as both of us were quite unarmed.

Then we began a careful search of the grove — a mere two-acre patch of second-growth trees which, however, grew so close together that the grove's interior was strangely dark though the sun was yet considerably more than an hour high.

After crossing and recrossing the thicket in all directions without seeing anything but monkeys and parrots, I said, "Let us lie down and keep perfectly still, as we used to do sometimes when squirrel-hunting in America." (I've had red and black squirrels, and even coons and rabbits, actually run over me while playing this trick.)

“A good idea,” said my host. “Maybe the chicken-thief will betray his whereabouts.”

So we stretched ourselves, face up, on the ground and remained for some fifteen minutes motionless and silent as two logs. By-and-by, as we stared placidly upward at such glimpses of the sky as were visible from our position, there came fluttering down, straight above our own face, two or three yellowish-red feathers!

“We’ve found the rascal; he’s beginning to pick his prize!” Mr. Whitney whispered. And, sure enough, on looking keenly up at the spot whence the telltale feathers came, I saw the marauder humped up on a limb and holding the stolen bird between his forepaws. In another second, shot through the head, he tumbled down, almost on top of us; and then — being young at that time — I joyfully yelled: “It is a rimau-dahan, and a bigger one than Frank Gordon killed!”

Gretchen, the Dutch hen-wife, was much delighted by the great cat’s destruction, but I never saw another tortoise-shell tiger.

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“When you feel your burden of sin weighing heavily upon you, only go to Him.. Only those who will not acknowledge their sin and feel no need of a Savior — only these are rejected. And these are not rejected because the Lord has no pity on them and no desire to deliver them from their wretchedness, but only because they will not come to

Him that they might have life. They reject Him, and therefore stand rejected. But those who come to Him, poor and needy and helpless, but trusting in His mercy, He will receive, to comfort and to save.”

- *The Great Gospel* by Simon Peter Long and *The Eternal Epistle* by Simon Peter Long

“I want you to understand that I have never preached opinions from this pulpit; it is not a question of opinion; I have absolutely no right to stand here and give you my opinion, for it is not worth any more than yours; we do not come to church to get opinions; I claim that I can back up every sermon I have preached, with the Word of God, and it is not my opinion nor yours, it is the eternal Word of God, and you will find it so on the Judgment day. I have nothing to take back, and I never will; God does not want me to.”

- *True Christianity* by John Arndt
- *The Sermons of Theophilus Stork: A Devotional Treasure*

“There are many of us who believe; we are convinced; but our souls do not take fire at contact with the truth. Happy he who not only believes, but believes with fire... This energy of belief, this ardor of conviction, made the commonplaces of the Gospel, the old, old story, seem in his [Stork’s] utterance something fresh and irresistibly attractive. Men listened to old truths from his lips as though they were a new revelation. They were new, for they came out of a heart that new coined them and stamped its own impress of vitality upon them as they passed through its experience...” — From the Introduction

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