Strange Creatures IV

False Shadows

Edited by
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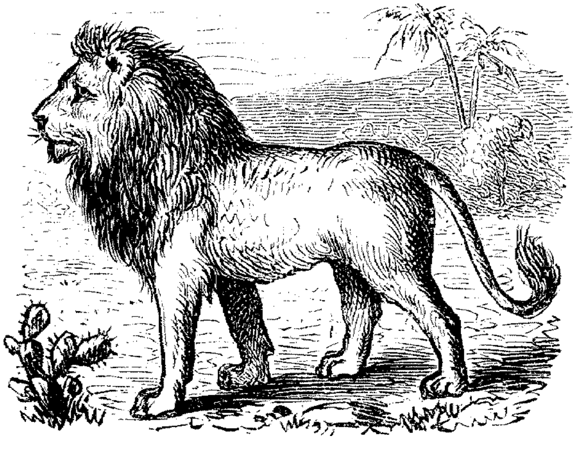

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Editor's Note

This collection of cryptozoological fiction is a little different. Rather than placing mystery animals at the center of each story, these tales revolve around mistaken identities, misidentifications, and outright hoaxes. Those familiar with cryptozoology will recognize many aspects in these tales. Manufactured lake monsters, fake footprints, and out-of-place animals are all found in CZ lore, so it isn't surprising that we find them in fictional literature. This is a fascinating category of cryptozoological fiction and well deserves a closer look. It is certainly easier to find these elements in recent fiction (a search through the writings of various outdoor humorists is bound to run across stories involving fake Bigfoot costumes and lake monster fabrications, for example), but the earlier fiction is particularly imaginitive.

Thanks to Craig Heinselman for discovering and sharing Edward William Thomson's "Red-Headed Wendigo."

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The Water-Devil
A Marine Tale

Frank Richard Stockton

In the village of Riprock there was neither tavern nor inn, for it was but a small place through which few travellers passed; but it could not be said to be without a place of entertainment, for if by chance a stranger—or two or three of them, for that matter—wished to stop at Riprock for a meal, or to pass the night, there was the house of blacksmith Fryker, which was understood to be always open to decent travellers.

The blacksmith was a prominent man in the village, and his house was a large one, with several spare bedrooms, and it was said by those who had had an opportunity of judging, that nobody in the village lived better than blacksmith Fryker and his family.

Into the village there came, late one autumn afternoon, a tall man, who was travelling on foot, with a small valise hanging from his shoulder. He had inquired for lodging for the night, had been directed to the blacksmith's house, had arranged to stop there, had had his supper, which greatly satisfied him, and was now sitting before the fire in the large living-room, smoking blacksmith Fryker's biggest pipe.

This stranger was a red-haired man, with a cheery expression, and a pair of quick, bright eyes. He was slenderly but strongly built, and was a good fellow, who would stand by, with his hands in the pockets of his short pea-jacket, and right willingly tell one who was doing something how the thing ought to be done.

But the traveller did not sit alone before the crackling fire of logs, for the night being cool, a table was drawn near to one side of the fire-place, and by this sat Mistress Fryker and her daughter Joanna, both engaged in some sort of needle-work. The blacksmith sat between the corner of the fire-place and this table, so that when he had finished smoking his after-supper pipe, he might put on his spectacles and read the weekly paper by the light of the big lamp. On the other side of the stranger, whose chair was in front of the middle of the fire-place, sat the school-master, Andrew Cardly by name; a middle-aged man of sober and attentive aspect, and very glad when chance threw in his way a book he had not read, or a stranger who could reinforce his stock of information. At the other corner of the fire-place, in a cushioned chair, which was always given to him when he dropped in to spend an evening with the blacksmith, sat Mr. Harberry, an elderly man, a man of substance, and a man in whom all Riprock, not excluding himself, placed unqualified confidence as to his veracity, his financial soundness, and his deep insight into the causes, the influences, and the final issue of events and conditions.

"On a night like this," said the stranger, stretching his long legs toward the blaze, "there is nothing I like better than a fire of wood, except indeed it be the society of ladies who do not object to a little tobacco smoke," and he glanced with a smile toward the table with a lamp upon it.

Now blacksmith Fryker was a prudent man, and he did not consider that the privileges of his hearthstone—always freely granted to a decent stranger—included an acquaintance with his pretty daughter; and so, without allowing his women-folk a chance to enter into the conversation, he offered the stranger a different subject to hammer upon.

"In the lower country," said he, "they don't need fires as early in the season as we do. What calling do you follow, sir? Some kind of trade, perhaps?"

"No," said the traveller, "I follow no trade; I follow the sea."

At this the three men looked at him, as also the two women. His appearance no more suggested that he was a seaman than the appearance of Mr. Harberry suggested that he was what the village of Riprock believed him to be.

"I should not have taken you for a sailor," said the blacksmith.

"I am not a sailor," said the other; "I am a soldier; a sea-soldier—in fact, a marine."

"I should say, sir," remarked the school-master, in a manner intended rather to draw out information than to give it, "that the position of a soldier on a ship possessed advantages over that of a soldier on land. The former is not required to make long marches, nor to carry heavy baggage. He remains at rest, in fact, while traversing great distances. Nor is he called on to resist the charges of cavalry, nor to form hollow squares on the deadly battle-field."

The stranger smiled. “We often find it hard enough,” said he, “to resist the charges made against us by our officers; the hollow squares form themselves in our stomachs when we are on short rations; and I have known many a man who would rather walk twenty miles than sail one, especially when the sea chops.”

“I am very sure, sir,” said school-master Cardly, “that there is nothing to be said against the endurance and the courage of marines. We all remember how they presented arms, and went down with the *Royal George*.”

The marine smiled.

“I suppose,” said the blacksmith, “that you never had to do anything of that sort?”

The stranger did not immediately answer, but sat looking into the fire. Presently he said: “I have done things of nearly every sort, although not exactly that; but I have thought my ship was going down with all on board, and that’s the next worst thing to going down, you know.”

“And how was that?” inquired Fryker.

“Well,” said the other, “it happened more times than I can tell you of, or even remember. Yes,” said he, meditatively, “more times than I can remember.”

“I am sure,” said the school-master, “that we should all like to hear some of your experiences.”

The marine shrugged his shoulders. “These things,” said he, “come to a man, and then if he lives through them, they pass on, and he is ready for the next streak of luck, good or bad. That’s the way with us followers of the sea, especially if we happen to be marines, and have to bear, so to speak, the responsibility of two professions. But sometimes a mischance or a disaster does fix itself upon a man’s mind so that he can tell about it if he is called upon; and just now there comes to my mind a very odd thing which once happened to me, and I can give you the points of that, if you like.”

The three men assured him that they would very much like it, and the two women looked as if they were of the same opinion.

Before he began the marine glanced about him, with a certain good-natured wistfulness which might have indicated, to those who understood the countenances of the sea-going classes, a desire to wet his whistle; but if this expression were so intended it was thrown away, for blacksmith Fryker took no spirits himself, nor furnished them to anybody else. Giving up all hope in this direction, the marine took a long pull at his pipe and began.

"It was in the winter of 1878 that I was on the Bay of Bengal, on my way to Calcutta, and about five hundred miles distant from that city. I was not on my own ship, but was returning from a leave of absence on an American steamer from San Francisco to Calcutta, where my vessel, the United States frigate *Apache*, was then lying. My leave of absence would expire in three days; but although the *General Brooks*, the vessel I was aboard of, was more of a freight than a passenger vessel, and was heavily laden, we would have been in port in good time if, two days before, something had not happened to the machinery. I am not a machinist myself, and don't know exactly what it was that was out of order, but the engine stopped, and we had to proceed under sail. That sounds like a slow business; but the *Brooks* was a clipper-built vessel with three masts and a lot of sails—square sails, fore-and-aft sails, jib sails, and all that sort of thing. I am not a regular sailor myself, and don't know the names of all the sails; but whatever sails she could have she did have, and although she was an iron vessel, and heavily freighted, she was a good sailer. We had a strong, steady wind from the south, and the captain told me that at the rate we were going he didn't doubt that he would get me aboard my vessel before my leave ran out, or at least so soon afterward that it wouldn't make any difference.

"Well, as I said, the wind blew strong and steady behind us, the sails were full, and the spray dashed up at our bow in a way calculated to tickle the soul of any one anxious to get to the end of his voyage; and I was one of that sort, I can tell you.

"In the afternoon of the second day after our engine stopped, I was standing at the bow, and looking over, when suddenly I noticed that there wasn't any spray dashing up in front of the vessel. I thought we must have struck a sudden calm, but, glancing up, I saw the sails were full, and the wind blew fair in my face as I turned toward the stern. I walked aft to the skipper, and touching my cap, said, 'Captain, how is it that when a ship is dashing along at this rate she doesn't throw up any spray with her cutwater?' He grinned a little, and said, 'But she does, you know.' 'If you will come forward,' said I, 'I'll show you that she doesn't,' and then we walked forward, and I showed him that she didn't. I never saw a man so surprised. At first he thought that somebody had been squirting oil in front, but even if that had been the case, there would have been some sort of a ripple on each side of the bow, and there wasn't anything of the kind. The skipper took off his cap and scratched his head. Then he turned and sang out, 'Mr. Rogers, throw the log.'

"Now the log," said the marine, turning to Mrs. Fryker and her daughter, "is a little piece of wood with a long line to it, that they throw out behind a vessel to see how fast she is going. I am not a regular Jack Tar myself, and don't understand the principle of the thing, but it tells you exactly how many miles an hour the ship is going.

"In about two minutes Mr. Rogers stepped up, with his eyes like two auger-holes, and said he, 'Captain, we're makin' no knots an hour. We're not sailing at all.'

"'Get out,' roared the captain, 'don't you see the sails? Don't you feel the wind? Throw that log again, sir.'

"Well, they threw the log again, the captain saw it done, and sure enough Mr. Rogers was right. The vessel wasn't moving. With a wind that ought to have carried her spinning along, miles and miles in an hour, she was standing stock-still. The skipper here let out one of the strongest imprecations used in navigation, and said he, 'Mr. Rogers, is it possible that there is a sand-bar in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, and that we've stuck on it? Cast the lead.'

"I will just state to the ladies," said the marine, turning toward the table, "that the lead is a heavy weight that is lowered to the bottom of a body of water to see how deep it is, and this operation is called sounding. Well, they sounded and they sounded, but everywhere—fore, aft, and midship—they found plenty of water; in fact, not having a line for deep-sea sounding they couldn't touch bottom at all.

"I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen," said the marine, looking from one to the other of the party, "that things now began to feel creepy. I am not afraid of storms, nor fires at sea, nor any of the common accidents of the ocean; but for a ship to stand still with plenty of water under her, and a strong wind filling her sails, has more of the uncanny about it than I fancy. Pretty near the whole of the crew was on deck by this time, and I could see that they felt very much as I did, but nobody seemed to know what to say about it.

“Suddenly the captain thought that some unknown current was setting against us, and forcing the vessel back with the same power that the wind was forcing her forward, and he tried to put the ship about so as to have the wind on her starboard quarter; but as she hadn’t any headway, or for some other reason, this didn’t work. Then it struck him that perhaps one of the anchors had been accidentally dropped, but they were all in their places, and if one of them had dropped, its cable would not have been long enough to touch bottom.

“Now I could see that he began to look scared. ‘Mr. Browser,’ said he, to the chief engineer, ‘for some reason or other this ship does not make headway under sail. You must go to work and get the engine running.’ And for the rest of that day everybody on board who understood that sort of thing was down below, hard at work with the machinery, hammering and banging like good fellows.

“The chief officer ordered a good many of the sails to be taken in, for they were only uselessly straining the masts, but there were enough left to move her in case the power of the current, or whatever it was that stopped her, had slackened, and she steadily kept her position with the breeze abaft.

“All the crew, who were not working below, were crowded together on deck, talking about this strange thing. I joined them, and soon found that they thought it was useless to waste time and labor on the machinery. They didn’t believe it could be mended, and if it should be, how could an engine move a vessel that the wind couldn’t stir?

“These men were of many nationalities—Dutch, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian, South American, and a lot more. Like many other American vessels that sail from our ports, nearly all the officers and crew were foreigners. The captain was a Finlander, who spoke very good English. And the only man who called himself an American was the chief officer; and he was only half one; for he was born in Germany, came to the United States when he was twenty years old, stayed there five years, which didn’t count either way, and had now been naturalized for twenty years.

“The consequence of this variety in nationality was that the men had all sorts of ideas and notions regarding the thing that was happening. They had thrown over chips and bits of paper to see if the vessel had begun to move, and had found that she didn’t budge an inch, and now they seemed afraid to look over the sides.

“They were a superstitious lot, as might be expected, and they all believed that, in some way or other, the ship was bewitched; and in fact I felt like agreeing with them, although I did not say so.

“There was an old Portuguese sailor on board, an ugly-looking, weather-beaten little fellow, and when he had listened to everything the others had to say, he shuffled himself into the middle of the group. ‘Look here, mates,’ said he, in good enough English, ‘it’s no use talking no more about this. I know what’s the matter; I’ve sailed these seas afore, and I’ve been along the coast of this bay all the way from Negapatam to Jellasore on the west coast, and from Chittagong to Kraw on the other; and I have heard stories of the strange things that are in this Bay of Bengal, and what they do, and the worst of them all is the Water-devil—and he’s got us.”

“When the old rascal said this, there wasn’t a man on deck who didn’t look pale, in spite of his dirt and his sunburn. The chief officer tried to keep his knees stiff, but I could see him shaking. ‘What’s a Water-devil?’ said he, trying to make believe he thought it all stuff and nonsense. The Portuguese touched his forelock. ‘Do you remember, sir,’ said he, ‘what was the latitude and longitude when you took your observation to-day?’ ‘Yes,’ said the other, ‘it was 15° north and 90° east.’ The Portuguese nodded his head. ‘That’s just about the spot, sir, just about. I can’t say exactly where the spot is, but it’s just about here, and we’ve struck it. There isn’t a native seaman on any of these coasts that would sail over that point if he knowed it and could help it, for that’s the spot where the Water-devil lives.’

“It made me jump to hear the grunt that went through that crowd when he said this, but nobody asked any questions, and he went on. ‘This here Water-devil,’ said he, ‘is about as big as six whales, and in shape very like an oyster without its shell, and he fastens himself to the rocks at the bottom with a million claws. Right out of the middle of him there grows up a long arm that reaches to the top of the water, and at the end of this arm is a fist about the size of a yawl-boat, with fifty-two fingers to it, with each one of them covered with little suckers that will stick fast to anything—iron, wood, stone, or flesh. All that this Water-devil gets to eat is what happens to come swimmin’ or sailin’ along where he can reach it, and it doesn’t matter to him whether it’s a shark, or a porpoise, or a shipful of people, and when he takes a grab of anything, that thing never gets away.’

“About this time there were five or six men on their knees saying their prayers, such as they were, and a good many others looked as if they were just about to drop.

"'Now, when this Water-devil gets hold of a ship,' the old fellow went on, 'he don't generally pull her straight down to the bottom, but holds on to it till he counts his claws, and sees that they are all fastened to the rocks; for if a good many of them wasn't fastened he might pull himself loose, instead of pulling the ship down, and then he'd be a goner, for he'd be towed away, and like as not put in a museum. But when he is satisfied that he is moored fast and strong, then he hauls on his arm, and down comes the ship, no matter how big she is. As the ship is sinkin, he turns her over, every now and then, keel uppermost, and gives her a shake, and when the people drop out, he sucks them into a sort of funnel, which is his mouth.'

"'Does he count fast?' asked one of the men, this being the first question that had been asked.

"'I've heard,' said the Portuguese, 'that he's a rapid calculator, and the minute he's got to his millionth claw, and finds it's hooked tight and fast, he begins to haul down the ship.'"

At this point the marine stopped and glanced around at the little group. The blacksmith's wife and daughter had put down their work, and were gazing at him with an air of horrified curiosity. The blacksmith held his pipe in his hand, and regarded the narrator with the steadiness and impassiveness of an anvil. The school-master was listening with the greatest eagerness. He was an enthusiast on Natural History and Mythology, and had written an article for a weekly paper on the reconciliation of the beasts of tradition with the fauna of to-day. Mr. Harberry was not looking at the marine. His eyes were fixed upon the school-master.

"Mr. Cardly," said he, "did you ever read of an animal like that?"

"I cannot say that I have," was his reply; "but it is certain that there are many strange creatures, especially in the sea, of which scientists are comparatively ignorant."

"Such as the sea serpent," added the marine, quickly, "and a great many other monsters who are not in the books, but who have a good time at the bottom of the sea, all the same. Well, to go on with my story, you must understand that, though this Portuguese spoke broken English, which I haven't tried to give you, he made himself perfectly plain to all of us, and I can assure you that when he got through talking there was a shaky lot of men on that deck.

"The chief officer said he would go below and see how the captain was getting on, and the crew huddled together in the bow, and began whispering among themselves, as if they were afraid the Water-devil would hear them. I turned to walk aft, feeling pretty queer, I can tell you, when I saw Miss Minturn just coming up from the cabin below.

"I haven't said anything about Miss Minturn, but she and her father, who was an elderly English gentleman and an invalid, who had never left his berth since we took him up at Singapore, were our only passengers, except, of course, myself. She was a beautiful girl, with soft blue eyes and golden hair, and a little pale from constantly staying below to nurse her father.

"Of course I had had little or nothing to say to her, for her father was a good deal of a swell and I was only a marine; but now she saw me standing there by myself, and she came right up to me. 'Can you tell me, sir,' she said, 'if anything else has happened? They are making a great din in the engine-room. I have been looking out of our port, and the vessel seems to me to be stationary.' She stopped at that, and waited to hear what I had to say, but I assure you I would have liked to have had her go on talking for half an hour. Her voice was rich and sweet, like that of so many Englishwomen, although, I am happy to say, a great many of my countrywomen have just as good voices; and when I meet any of them for the first time, I generally give them the credit of talking in soft and musical notes, even though I have not had the pleasure of hearing them speak."

"Look here," said the blacksmith, "can't you skip the girl and get back to the Devil?"

"No," said the marine, "I couldn't do that. The two are mixed together, so to speak, so that I have to tell you of both of them."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Mrs. Fryker, speaking for the first time, and by no means in soft and musical tones, "that he swallowed her?"

"I'll go on with the story," said the marine; "that's the best way, and everything will come up in its place. Now, of course, I wasn't going to tell this charming young woman, with a sick father, anything about the Water-devil, though what reason to give her for our standing still here I couldn't imagine; but of course I had to speak, and I said, 'Don't be alarmed, miss, we have met with an unavoidable detention; that sort of thing often happens in navigation. I can't explain it to you, but you see the ship is perfectly safe and sound, and she is merely under sail instead of having her engines going.'

"'I understood about that,' said she, 'and father and I were both perfectly satisfied; for he said that if we had a good breeze we would not be long in reaching Calcutta; but we seem to have a breeze, and yet we don't go.' 'You'll notice,' said I, 'that the sails are not all set, and for some reason the wind does not serve. When the engines are mended, we shall probably go spinning along.' She looked as if she was trying to appear satisfied. 'Thank you, sir,' she said. 'I hope we may shortly proceed on our way, but in the meantime I shall not say anything to my father about this detention. I think he has not noticed it.' 'That would be very wise,' I replied, and as she turned toward the companionway I was wild to say to her that it would be a lot better for her to stay on deck, and get some good fresh air, instead of cooping herself up in that close cabin; but I didn't know her well enough for that."

"Mow that you are through with the girl," said the blacksmith, "what did the Devil do?"

"I haven't got to him yet," said the marine, "but after Miss Minturn went below I began to think of him, and the more I thought of him, the less I liked him. I think the chief officer must have told the men below about the Water-devil, for pretty soon the whole kit and boodle of them left their work and came on deck, skipper and all. They told me they had given up the engine as a bad job, and I thought to myself that most likely they were all too nervous to rightly know what they were about. The captain threw out the log again, but it floated alongside like a cork on a fishing-line, and at this he turned pale and walked away from the ship's side, forgetting to pull it in again.

"It was now beginning to grow dark, and as nobody seemed to think about supper, I went below to look into that matter. It wouldn't do for Miss Minturn and her father to go without their regular meal, for that would be sure to scare them to death; and if I'm to have a big scare I like to take it on a good square meal, so I went below to see about it. But I wasn't needed, for Miss Minturn's maid, who was an elderly woman, and pretty sharp set in her temper, was in the cook's galley superintending supper for her people, and after she got through

I superintended some for myself.

"After that I felt a good deal bolder. and I lighted a pipe and went on deck. There I found the whole ship's company, officers and crew, none of them doing anything, and most of them clustered together in little groups, whispering or grunting.

"I went up to the captain and asked him what he was going to do next. 'Do?' said he; 'there is nothing to do; I've done everything that I can do. I'm all upset; I don't know whether I am myself or some other man'; and then he walked away.

"I sat there and smoked and looked at them, and I can tell you the sight wasn't cheerful. There was the ship, just as good and sound, as far as anybody could see, as anything that floated on the ocean, and here were all her people, shivering and shaking and not speaking above their breath, looking for all the world, under the light of the stars and the ship's lamps, which some of them had had sense enough to light, as if they expected in the course of the next half-hour, to be made to walk the plank; and, to tell the truth, what they were afraid of would come to pretty much the same thing."

"Mr. Cardly," here interrupted Mr. Harberry, "how long does it take to count a million?"

"That depends," said the school-master, "on the rapidity of the calculator; some calculators count faster than others. An ordinary boy, counting two hundred a minute, would require nearly three days and a half to count a million."

"Very good," said Mr. Harberry; "please go on with your story, sir."

"Of course," said the marine, "there is a great difference between a boy and a Water-devil, and it is impossible for anybody to know how fast the latter can count, especially as he may be supposed to be used to it. Well, I couldn't stand it any longer on deck, and having nothing else to do, I turned in and went to sleep."

"To sleep! Went to sleep!" exclaimed Mrs. Fryker. "I don't see how you could have done that."

"Ah, madam," said the marine, "we soldiers of the sea are exposed to all sorts of dangers,—combination dangers, you might call them,—and in the course of time we get used to it; if we didn't we couldn't do our duty.

"As the ship had been in its present predicament for six or seven hours, and nothing had happened, there was no reason to suppose that things would not remain as they were for six or seven hours more, in which time I might get a good sleep, and be better prepared for what might come. There's nothing like a good meal and a good sleep as a preparation for danger.

"It was daylight when I awakened, and rapidly glancing about me, I saw that everything appeared to be all right. Looking out of the port-hole, I could see that the vessel was still motionless. I hurried on deck, and was greatly surprised to find nobody there—no one on watch, no one at the wheel, no one anywhere. I ran down into the fo'castle, which is the sailors' quarters, but not a soul could I see. I called, I whistled, I searched everywhere, but no one answered; I could find no one. Then I dashed up on deck, and glared around me. Every boat was gone.

"Now I knew what had happened: the cowardly rascals, from captain to cook, had deserted the ship in the night, and I had been left behind!

"For some minutes I stood motionless, wondering how men could be so unfeeling as to do such a thing. I soon became convinced, from what I had seen of the crew, that they had not all gone off together, that there had been no concerted action. A number of them had probably quietly lowered a boat and sneaked away; then another lot had gone off, hoping their mates would not hear them and therefore crowd into their boat. And so they had all departed, not one boat-load thinking of anybody but themselves; or if they thought at all about others, quieting their consciences by supposing that there were enough boats on the vessel, and that the other people were as likely to get off as they were.

"Suddenly I thought of the other passengers. Had they been left behind? I ran down below, and I had scarcely reached the bottom of the steps when I met Miss Minturn's maid. 'It seems to me,' she said, sharply, 'that the people on this ship are neglecting their duty. There's nobody in the kitchen, and I want some gruel.' 'My good woman,' said I, 'who do you want it for?' 'Who!' she replied; 'why, for Mr. Minturn, of course; and Miss Minturn may like some, too.'

"Then I knew that all the passengers had been left behind!

"'If you want any gruel,' said I, 'you will have to go into the galley and make it yourself '; and then in a low tone I told her what had happened, for I knew that it would be much better for me to do this than for her to find it out for herself. Without a word she sat right down on the floor, and covered her head with her apron. 'Now don't make a row,' said I, 'and frighten your master and mistress to death; we're all right so far, and all you've got to do is to take care of Mr. and Miss Minturn, and cook their meals. The steamer is tight and sound, and it can't be long before some sort of a craft will come by and take us off.' I left her sniffling with her apron over her head, but when I came back, ten minutes afterward, she was in the galley making gruel.

"I don't think you will be surprised, my friends," continued the marine, "when I tell you that I now found myself in a terrible state of mind. Of course I hadn't felt very jovial since the steamer had been so wonderfully stopped; but when the captain and all the crew were aboard, I had that sort of confidence which comes from believing that when there are people about whose duty it is to do things, when the time comes to do the things, they will do them; but now, practically speaking, there was nobody but me. The others on board were not to be counted, except as encumbrances. In truth, I was alone,—alone with the Water-devil!

"The moment I found no one to depend upon but myself, and that I was deserted in the midst of this lonely mass of water, in that moment did my belief in the Water-devil begin to grow. When I first heard of the creature, I didn't consider that it was my business either to believe in it, or not to believe in it, and I could let the whole thing drop out of my mind, if I chose; but now it was a different matter. I was bound to think for myself, and the more I thought, the more I believed in the Water-devil.

"The fact was, there wasn't anything else to believe in. I had gone over the whole question, and the skipper had gone all over it, and everybody else had gone all over it, and no one could think of anything but a Water-devil that could stop a steamer in this way in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, and hold her there hour after hour, in spite of wind and wave and tide. It could not be anything but the monster the Portuguese had told us of, and all I now could do was to wonder whether, when he was done counting his million claws, he would be able to pull down a vessel of a thousand tons, for that was about the size of the *General Brooks*.

"I think I should now have begun to lose my wits if it had not been for one thing, and that was the coming of Miss Minturn on deck. The moment I saw her lovely face I stiffened up wonderfully. ‘Sir,’ said she, ‘I would like to see the captain.’ ‘I am representing the captain, miss,’ I said, with a bow; ‘what is it that I can do for you?’ ‘I want to speak to him about the steward,’ she said; ‘I think he is neglecting his duty.’ ‘I also represent the steward,’ I replied; ‘tell me what you wish of him.’ She made no answer to this, but looked about her in a startled way. ‘Where are all the men?’ she said. ‘Miss Minturn,’ said I, ‘I represent the crew—in fact, I represent the whole ship’s company except the cook, and his place must be taken by your maid.’ ‘What do you mean?’ she asked, looking at me with her wide-opened, beautiful eyes.

“Then, as there was no help for it, I told her everything, except that I did not mention the Water-devil in connection with our marvellous stoppage. I only said that that was caused by something which nobody understood.

“She did not sit down and cover her head, nor did she scream or faint. She turned pale, but looked steadily at me, and her voice did not shake as she asked me what was to be done. ‘There is nothing to be done,’ I answered, ‘but to keep up good hearts, eat three meals a day, and wait until a ship comes along and takes us off.’

“She stood silent for about three minutes. ‘I think,’ she then said, ‘that I will not yet tell my father what has happened’; and she went below.

“Now, strange to say, I walked up and down the deck with my hat cocked on one side and my hands in my pockets, feeling a great deal better. I did not like Water-devils any more than I did before, and I did not believe in this one any less than I did before, but, after all, there was some good about him. It seems odd, but the arm of this submarine monster, over a mile long for all that I knew, was a bond of union between the lovely Miss Minturn and me. She was a lady; I was a marine. So far as I knew anything about bonds of union, there wasn’t one that could have tackled itself to us two, except this long, slippery arm of the Water-devil, with one end in the monstrous flob at the bottom, and the other fast to our ship.

“There was no doubt about it, if it hadn’t been for that Water-devil she would have been no more to me than the Queen of Madagascar was; but under the circumstances, if I wasn’t everything to her, who could be anything—that is, if one looked at the matter from a practical point of view?”

The blacksmith made a little movement of impatience. “Suppose you cut all that," said he. "I don't care about the bond of union; I want to know what happened to the ship."

"It is likely," said the marine, "if I could have cut the bond of union that I spoke of, that is to say, the Water-devil's arm, that I would have done it, hoping that I might safely float off somewhere with Miss Minturn; but I couldn't cut it then, and I can't cut it now. That bond is part of my story, and it must all go on together.

"I now set myself to work to do what I thought ought to be done under the circumstances, but, of course, that wasn't very much. I hoisted a flag upside down, and after considering the matter I concluded to take in all the sails that had been set. I thought that a steamer without smoke coming from her funnel, and no sails set, would be more likely to attract attention from distant vessels than if she appeared to be under sail.

"I am not a regular sailor, as I said before, but I got out on the yard, and cut the square sail loose and let it drop on the deck, and I let the jib come down on a run, and managed to bundle it up some way on the bowsprit. This sort of thing took all the nautical gymnastics that I was master of, and entirely occupied my mind, so that I found myself whistling while I worked. I hoped Miss Minturn heard me whistle, because it would not only give her courage, but would let her see that I was not a man who couldn't keep up his spirits in a case like this.

"When that work was over, I began to wonder what I should do next, and then an idea struck me. 'Suppose,' thought I, 'that we are not stationary, but that we are in some queer kind of a current, and that the water, ship and all are steadily moving on together, so that after awhile we shall come in sight of land, or into the track of vessels!'

"I instantly set about to find out if this was the case. It was about noon, and it so happened that on the day before, when the chief officer took his observation, I was seized with a desire to watch him and see how he did it. I don't see why I should have had this notion, but I had it, and I paid the strictest attention to the whole business, calculation part and all, and I found out exactly how it was done.

"Well, then, I went and got the quadrant,—that's the thing they do it with,—and I took an observation, and I found that we were in latitude 15° north, 90° east, exactly where we had been twenty-four hours before!

"When I found out this, I turned so faint that I wanted to sit down and cover up my head. The Water-devil had us, there was no mistake about it, and no use trying to think of anything else. I staggered along the deck, went below, and cooked myself a meal. In a case like this there's nothing like a square meal to keep a man up.

"I know you don't like to hear her mentioned," said the marine, turning to the blacksmith, "but I am bound to say that in course of the afternoon Miss Minturn came on deck several times, to ask if anything new had happened, and if I had seen a vessel. I showed her all that I had done, and told her I was going to hang out lights at night, and did everything I could to keep her on deck as long as possible; for it was easy to see that she needed fresh air, and I needed company. As long as I was talking to her I didn't care a snap of my finger for the Water-devil. It is queer what an influence a beautiful woman has on a man, but it's so, and there's no use arguing about it. She said she had been puzzling her brains to find out what had stopped us, and she supposed it must be that we had run onto a shallow place and stuck fast in the mud, but thought it wonderful that there should be such a place so far from land. I agreed with her that it was wonderful, and added that that was probably the reason the captain and the crew had been seized with a panic. But sensible people like herself and her father, I said, ought not to be troubled by such an occurrence, especially as the vessel remained in a perfectly sound condition.

"She said that her father was busily engaged in writing his memoirs, and that his mind was so occupied, he had not concerned himself at all about our situation, that is, if he had noticed that we were not moving. 'If he wants to see the steward, or anybody else,' I said, 'please call upon me. You know I represent the whole ship's company, and I shall be delighted to do anything for him or for you.' She thanked me very much and went below.

"She came up again, after this, but her maid came with her, and the two walked on deck for a while. I didn't have much to say to them that time; but just before dark Miss Minturn came on deck alone, and walked forward, where I happened to be. 'Sir,' said she, and her voice trembled a little as she spoke, 'if anything should happen, will you promise me that you will try to save my father?' You can't imagine how these touching words from this beautiful woman affected me. 'My dear lady,' said I, and I hope she did not take offence at the warmth of my expression, 'I don't see how anything can happen; but I promise you, on the word of a sea-soldier, that if danger should come upon us, I will save not only your father, but yourself and your maid. Trust me for that.'

"The look she gave me when I said these words, and especially the flash of her eye when I spoke of my being a sea-soldier, made me feel strong enough to tear that sea-monster's arm in twain, and to sail away with the lovely creature for whom my heart was beginning to throb."

"It's a pity," said the blacksmith, 'that you hadn't jumped into the water while the fit was on you, and done the tearing."

"A man often feels strong enough to do a thing," said the marine, "and yet doesn't care to try to do it, and that was my case at that time; but I vowed to myself that if the time came when there was any saving to be done, I'd attend to Miss Minturn, even if I had to neglect the rest of the family.

"She didn't make any answer, but she gave me her hand; and she couldn't have done anything I liked better than that. I held it as long as I could, which wasn't very long, and then she went down to her father."

"Glad of it," said the blacksmith.

"When I had had my supper, and had smoked my pipe, and everything was still, and I knew I shouldn't see anybody any more that night, I began to have the quakes and the shakes. If even I had had the maid to talk to, it would have been a comfort; but in the way of faithfully attending to her employers that woman was a trump. She cooked for them, and did for them, and stuck by them straight along, so she hadn't any time for chats with me.

"Being alone, I couldn't help all the time thinking about the Water-devil, and although it seems a foolish thing now that I look back on it, I set to work to calculate how long it would take him to count his feet. I made it about the same time as you did, sir,' nodding to the school-master, "only I considered that if he counted twelve hours, and slept and rested twelve hours, that would make it seven days, which would give me a good long time with Miss Minturn, and that would be the greatest of joys to me, no matter what happened afterward.

"But then nobody could be certain that the monster at the bottom of the bay needed rest or sleep. He might be able to count without stopping, and how did I know that he couldn't check off four hundred claws a minute? If that happened to be the case, our time must be nearly up.

"When that idea came into my head, I jumped up and began to walk about.

What could I do? I certainly ought to be ready to do something when the time came. I thought of getting life-preservers, and strapping one on each of us, so that if the Water-devil turned over the vessel and shook us out, we shouldn't sink down to him, but would float on the surface.

"But then the thought struck me that if he should find the vessel empty of live creatures, and should see us floating around on the top, all he had to do was to let go of the ship and grab us, one at a time. When I thought of a fist as big as a yawl-boat, clapping its fifty-two fingers on me, it sent a shiver through my bones. The fact was there wasn't anything to do, and so after a while I managed to get asleep, which was a great comfort."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "what reason can you assign why a sea-monster, such as has been described to us, should neglect to seize upon several small boats filled with men who were escaping from a vessel which it held in custody?"

"I do not precisely see," answered Mr. Cardly, "why these men should have been allowed this immunity, but I—"

"Oh, that is easily explained," interrupted the marine, "for of course the Water-devil could not know that a lot more people were not left in the ship, and if he let go his hold on her, to try and grab a boat that was moving as fast as men could row it, the steamer might get out of his reach, and he mightn't have another chance for a hundred years to make fast to a vessel. No, sir, a creature like that isn't apt to take any wild chances, when he's got hold of a really good thing. Anyway, we were held tight and fast, for at twelve o'clock the next day I took another observation, and there we were, in the same latitude and longitude that we had been in for two days. I took the captain's glass, and I looked all over the water of that bay, which, as I think I have said before, was all the same as the ocean, being somewhere about a thousand miles wide. Not a sail, not a puff of smoke could I see. It must have been a slack season for navigation, or else we were out of the common track of vessels; I had never known that the Bay of Bengal was so desperately lonely.

"It seems unnatural, and I can hardly believe it, when I look back on it, but it's a fact, that I was beginning to get used to the situation. We had plenty to eat, the weather was fine—in fact, there was now only breeze enough to make things cool and comfortable. I was head-man on that vessel, and Miss Minturn might come on deck at any moment, and as long as I could forget that there was a Water-devil fastened to the bottom of the vessel, there was no reason why I should not be perfectly satisfied with things as they were. And if things had stayed as they were, for two or three months, I should nave been right well pleased, especially since Miss Minturn's maid, by order of her mistress, had begun to cook my meals, which she did in a manner truly first-class. I believed then, and I stand to it now, that there is no better proof of a woman's good feeling toward a man, than for her to show an interest in his meals. That's the sort of sympathy that comes home to a man, and tells on him, body and soul."

As the marine made this remark, he glanced at the blacksmith's daughter; but that young lady had taken up her sewing and appeared to be giving it her earnest attention. He then went on with his story.

"But things did not remain as they were. The next morning, about half an hour after breakfast, I was walking up and down the upper deck, smoking my pipe, and wondering when Miss Minturn would be coming up to talk to me about the state of affairs, when suddenly I felt the deck beneath me move with a quick, sharp jerk, something like, I imagine, a small shock of an earthquake.

"Never, in all my life, did the blood run so cold in my veins; my legs trembled so that I could scarcely stand. I knew what had happened,—the Water-devil had begun to haul upon the ship!

"I was in such a state of collapse that I did not seem to have any power over my muscles; but for all that, I heard Miss Minturn's voice at the foot of the companion-way, and knew that she was coming on deck. In spite of the dreadful awfulness of that moment, I felt it would never do for her to see me in the condition I was in, and so, shuffling and half-tumbling, I got forward, went below, and made my way to the steward's room, where I had already discovered some spirits, and I took a good dram; for although I am not by any means an habitual drinker, being principled against that sort of thing, there are times when a man needs the support of some good brandy or whiskey.

"In a few minutes I felt more like myself, and went on deck, and there was Miss Minturn, half scared to death. 'What is the meaning of that shock?' she said; 'have we struck anything?' 'My dear lady,' said I, with as cheerful a front as I could put on, 'I do not think we have struck anything. There is nothing to strike.' She looked at me for a moment like an angel ready to cry, and clasping her hands, she said, 'Oh, tell me, sir, I pray you, sir, tell me what has happened. My father felt that shock. He sent me to inquire about it. His mind is disturbed.'

At that moment, before I could make an answer, there was another jerk of the ship, and we both went down on our knees, and I felt as if I had been tripped. I was up in a moment, however, but she continued on her knees. I am sure she was praying, but very soon up she sprang. 'Oh, what is it, what is it?' she cried; 'I must go to my father.'

"'I cannot tell you,' said I; 'I do not know, but don't be frightened; how can such a little shock hurt so big a ship?'

"It was all very well to tell her not to be frightened, but when she ran below she left on deck about as frightened a man as ever stood in shoes. There could be no doubt about it; that horrible beast was beginning to pull upon the ship. Whether or not it would be able to draw us down below, was a question which must soon be solved.

"I had had a small opinion of the maid, who, when I told her the crew had deserted the ship, had sat down and covered her head; but now I did pretty much the same thing; I crouched on the deck and pulled my cap over my eyes. I felt that I did not wish to see, hear, or feel anything.

"I had sat in this way for about half an hour, and had felt no more shocks, when a slight gurgling sound came to my ears. I listened for a moment, then sprang to my feet. Could we be moving? I ran to the side of the ship. The gurgle seemed to be coming from the stern. I hurried there and looked over. The wheel had been lashed fast, and the rudder stood straight out behind us. On each side of it there was a ripple in the quiet water. We were moving, and we were moving backward!

"Overpowered by horrible fascination, I stood grasping the rail, and looking over at the water beneath me, as the vessel moved slowly and steadily onward, stern foremost. In spite of the upset condition of my mind, I could not help wondering why the vessel should move in this way.

"There was only one explanation possible: The Water-devil was walking along the bottom, and towing us after him! Why he should pull us along in this way I could not imagine, unless he was making for his home in some dreadful cave at the bottom, into which he would sink, dragging us down after him.

"While my mind was occupied with these horrible subjects, some one touched me on the arm, and turning, I saw Miss Minturn. 'Are we not moving?'

she said. ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘we certainly are.’ ‘Do you not think,’ she then asked, ‘that we may have been struck by a powerful current, which is now carrying us onward?’ I did not believe this, for there was no reason to suppose that there were currents which wandered about, starting off vessels with a jerk, but I was glad to think that this idea had come into her head, and said that it was possible that this might be the case. ‘And now we are going somewhere,’ she said, speaking almost cheerfully. ‘Yes, we are,’ I answered, and I had to try hard not to groan as I said the words. ‘And where do you think we are going?’ she asked. It was altogether out of my power to tell that sweet creature that in my private opinion she, at least, was going to heaven, and so I answered that I really did not know. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘if we keep moving, we’re bound at last to get near land, or to some place where ships would pass near us.’

“There is nothing in this world,” said the marine, “which does a man so much good in time of danger as to see a hopeful spirit in a woman—that is, a woman that he cares about. Some of her courage comes to him, and he is better and stronger for having her alongside of him.”

Having made this remark, the speaker again glanced at the blacksmith’s daughter. She had put down her work and was looking at him with an earnest brightness in her eyes.

“Yes,” he continued, “it is astonishing what a change came over me, as I stood by the side of that noble girl. She was a born lady, I was a marine, just the same as we had been before, but there didn’t seem to be the difference between us that there had been. Her words, her spirits, everything about her, in fact, seemed to act on me, to elevate me, to fill my soul with noble sentiments, to make another man of me. Standing there beside her, I felt myself her equal. In life or death I would not be ashamed to say, ‘Here I am, ready to stand by you, whatever happens.’”

Having concluded this sentiment, the marine again glanced toward the blacksmith’s daughter. Her eyes were slightly moist, and her face was glowing with a certain enthusiasm.

“Look here,” said the blacksmith, “I suppose that woman goes along with you into the very maw of the sunken Devil, but I do wish you could take her more for granted, and get on faster with the real part of the story.”

“One part is as real as another,” said the marine; “but on we go, and on we did go for the whole of the rest of that day, at the rate of about half a knot an hour, as near as I could guess at it. The weather changed, and a dirty sort of fog came down on us, so that we couldn't see far in any direction.

"Why that Water-devil should keep on towing us, and where he was going to take us, were things I didn't dare to think about. The fog did not prevent me from seeing the water about our stern, and I leaned over the rail, watching the ripples that flowed on each side of the rudder, which showed that we were still going at about the same uniform rate.

"But toward evening the gurgling beneath me ceased, and I could see that the rudder no longer parted the quiet water, and that we had ceased to move. A flash of hope blazed up within me. Had the Water-devil found the ship too heavy a load, and had he given up the attempt to drag it to its under-ocean cave? I went below and had my supper; I was almost a happy man. When Miss Minturn came to ask me how we were getting along, I told her that I thought we were doing very well indeed. I did not mention that we had ceased to move, for she thought that a favorable symptom. She went back to her quarters greatly cheered up. Not so much, I think, from my words, as from my joyful aspect; for I did feel jolly, there was no doubt about it. If that Water-devil had let go of us, I was willing to take all the other chances that might befall a ship floating about loose on the Bay of Bengal.

"The fog was so thick that night that it was damp and unpleasant on deck, and so, having hung out and lighted a couple of lanterns, I went below for a comfortable smoke in the captain's room. I was puffing away here at my ease, with my mind filled with happy thoughts of two or three weeks with Miss Minturn on this floating paradise, where she was bound to see a good deal of me, and couldn't help liking me better, and depending on me more and more every day, when I felt a little jerking shock. It was the same thing that we had felt before. The Water-devil still had hold of us!

"I dropped my pipe, my chin fell upon my breast, I shivered all over. In a few moments I heard the maid calling to me, and then she ran into the room. 'Miss Minturn wants to know, sir,' she said, 'if you think that shock is a sudden twist in the current which is carrying us on?' I straightened myself up as well as I could, and in the dim light I do not think she noticed my condition. I answered that I thought it was something of that sort, and she went away.

"More likely, a twist of the Devil's arm, I thought, as I sat there alone in my misery.

"In ten or fifteen minutes there came two shocks, not very far apart. This showed that the creature beneath us was at work in some way or another. Perhaps he had reached the opening of his den, and was shortening up his arm before he plunged down into it with us after him. I couldn't stay any longer in that room alone. I looked for the maid, but she had put out the galley light, and had probably turned in for the night.

"I went up, and looked out on deck, but everything was horribly dark and sticky and miserable there. I noticed that my lanterns were not burning, and then I remembered that I had not filled them. But this did not trouble me. If a vessel came along and saw our lights she would probably keep away from us, and I would have been glad to have a vessel come to us, even if she ran into us. Our steamer would probably float long enough for us to get on board the other one, and almost anything would be better than being left alone in this dreadful place, at the mercy of the Water-devil.

"Before I left the deck I felt another shock. This took out of me whatever starch was left, and I shuffled below and got to my bunk, where I tumbled in and covered myself up, head and all. If there had been any man to talk to, it would have been different, but I don't know when I ever felt more deserted than I did at that time.

"I tried to forget the awful situation in which I was; I tried to think of other things; to imagine that I was drilling with the rest of my company, with Tom Rogers on one side of me, and old Humphrey Peters on the other. You may say, perhaps, that this wasn't exactly the way of carrying out my promise of taking care of Miss Minturn and the others. But what was there to do? When the time came to do anything, and I could see what to do, I was ready to do it; but there was no use of waking them up now and setting their minds on edge, when they were all comfortable in their beds, thinking that every jerk of the Devil's arm was a little twist in the current that was carrying them to Calcutta or some other desirable port.

"I felt some shocks after I got into bed, but whether or not there were many in the night, I don't know, for I went to sleep. It was daylight when I awoke, and jumping out of my bunk I dashed on deck. Every thing seemed pretty much as it had been, and the fog was as thick as ever. I ran to the stern and looked over, and I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw that we were moving again, still stern foremost, but a little faster than before. That beastly Water-devil had taken a rest for the night, and had probably given us the shocks by turning over in his sleep, and now he was off again, making up for lost time.

"Pretty soon Miss Minturn came on deck, and bade me good morning, and then she went and looked over the stern. 'We are still moving on,' she said, with a smile, 'and the fog doesn't seem to make any difference. It surely cannot be long before we get somewhere.' 'No, miss,' said I, 'it cannot be very long.' 'You look tired,' she said, 'and I don't wonder, for you must feel the heavy responsibility on you. I have told my maid to prepare breakfast for you in our cabin. I want my father to know you, and I think it is a shame that you, the only protector that we have, should be shut off so much by yourself; so after this we shall eat together. 'After this,' I groaned to myself, 'we shall be eaten together.' At that moment I did not feel that I wanted to breakfast with Miss Minturn."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "have you ever read, in any of your scientific books, that the Bay of Bengal is subject to heavy fogs that last day after day?"

"I cannot say," answered the school-master, "that my researches into the geographical distribution of fogs have resulted—"

"As to fogs," interrupted the marine, "you can't get rid of them, you know. If you had been in the habit of going to sea, you would know that you are likely to run into a fog at any time, and in any weather; and as to lasting, they are just as likely to last for days as for hours. It wasn't the fog that surprised me. I did not consider that of any account at all. I had enough other things to occupy my mind." And having settled this little matter, he went on with his story.

"Well, my friends, I did not breakfast with Miss Minturn and her father. Before that meal was ready, and while I was standing alone at the stern, I saw coming out of the water, a long way off in the fog, which must have been growing thinner about this time, a dark and mysterious object, apparently without any shape or form. This sight made the teeth chatter in my head. I had expected to be pulled down to the Water-devil, but I had never imagined that he would come up to us!

"While my eyes were glued upon this apparition, I could see that we were approaching it. When I perceived this, I shut my eyes and turned my back—I could look upon it no longer. My mind seemed to forsake me; I did not even try to call out and give the alarm to the others. Why should I? What could they do?"

“If it had been me,” said Mrs. Fryker, in a sort of gasping whisper, “I should have died right there.” The marine turned his eyes in the direction of the blacksmith’s daughter. She was engaged with her work, and was not looking at him.

“I cannot say,” he continued, “that, had Miss Minturn been there at that moment, that I would not have declared that I was ready to die for her or with her; but there was no need of trying to keep up her courage, that was all right. She knew nothing of our danger. That terrible knowledge pressed on me alone. Is it wonderful that a human soul should sink a little under such an awful load?” Without turning to observe the effect of these last words, the marine went on. “Suddenly I heard behind me a most dreadful sound. ‘Good Heavens,’ I exclaimed, ‘can a Water-devil bray?’

“The sound was repeated. Without knowing what I did, I turned. I heard what sounded like words; I saw in the fog the stern of a vessel, with a man above it, shouting to me through a speaking-trumpet.

“I do not know what happened next; my mind must have become confused. When I regained my senses, Miss Minturn, old Mr. Minturn, and the maid were standing by me. The man had stopped shouting from his trumpet, and a boat was being lowered from the other ship. In about ten minutes there were half-a-dozen men on board of us, all in the uniform of the British navy. I was stiff enough now, and felt myself from top to toe a regular marine in the service of my country. I stepped up to the officer in command and touched my cap.

“He looked at me and my companions in surprise, and then glancing along the deck, said, ‘What has happened to this vessel? Who is in command?’ I informed him, that, strictly speaking, no one was in command, but that I represented the captain, officers, and crew of this steamer, the *General Brooks*, from San Francisco to Calcutta, and I then proceeded to tell him the whole story of our misfortunes; and concluded by telling the officer, that if we had not moved since his vessel had come in sight, it was probably because the Water-Devil had let go of us, and was preparing to make fast to the other ship; and therefore it would be advisable for us all to get on board his vessel, and steam away as quickly as possible.

“The Englishmen looked at me in amazement. ‘Drunk!’ ejaculated the officer I had addressed. ‘Cracked, I should say,’ suggested another. ‘Now,’ spoke up Mr. Minturn, ‘I do not understand what I have just heard,’ he said.

‘What is a Water-devil? I am astounded.’ ‘You never said a word of this to me!’ exclaimed Miss Minturn. ‘You never told me that we were in the grasp of a Water-devil, and that that was the reason the captain and the crew ran away.’ ‘No,’ said I, ‘I never divulged the dreadful danger we were in. I allowed you to believe that we were in the influence of a current, and that the shocks we felt were the sudden twists of that current. The terrible truth I kept to myself. Not for worlds would I have made known to a tenderly nurtured lady, to her invalid father, and devoted servant, what might have crushed their souls, driven them to the borders of frenzy; in which case the relief which now has come to us would have been of no avail.’

“The officer stood and steadily stared at me. ‘I declare,’ he said, ‘you do not look like a crazy man. At what time did this Water-devil begin to take you in tow?’

“‘Yesterday morning,’ I answered. ‘And he stopped during last night?’ he asked. I replied that that was the case. Then he took off his cap, rubbed his head, and stood silent for a minute. ‘We’ll look into this matter!’ he suddenly exclaimed, and turning, he and his party left us to ourselves. The boat was now sent back with a message to the English vessel, and the officers and men who remained scattered themselves over our steamer, examining the engine-room, hold, and every part of her.

“I was very much opposed to all this delay; for although the Englishmen might doubt the existence of the Water-devil, I saw no reason to do so, and in any case I was very anxious to be on the safe side by getting away as soon as possible; but, of course, British officers would not be advised by me, and as I was getting very hungry I went down to breakfast. I ate this meal alone, for my fellow-passengers seemed to have no desire for food.

“I cannot tell all that happened during the next hour, for, to tell the truth, I did not understand everything that was done. The boat passed several times between the two vessels, bringing over a number of men—two of them scientific fellows, I think. Another was a diver, whose submarine suit and air-pumping machines came over with him. He was lowered over the side, and after he had been down about fifteen minutes he was hauled up again, and down below was the greatest hammering and hauling that ever you heard. The *General Brooks* was put in charge of an officer and some men; a sail was hoisted to keep her in hand, so that she wouldn’t drift into the other ship; and in the midst of all the rowdy-dow we were told that if we liked we might go on board the English vessel immediately.

"Miss Minturn and her party instantly accepted this invitation, and although under ordinary circumstances I would have remained to see for myself what these people found out, I felt a relief in the thought of leaving that vessel which is impossible for me to express, and I got into the boat with the others.

"We were treated very handsomely on board the English vessel, which was a mail steamship, at that time in the employment of the English Government. I told my story at least half-a-dozen times, sometimes to the officers and sometimes to the men, and whether they believed me or not, I don't think any one ever created a greater sensation with a story of the sea.

"In an hour or so the officer in charge of the operations on the *General Brooks* came aboard. As he passed me on his way to the captain, he said, 'We found your Water-devil, my man.' 'And he truly had us in tow?' I cried. 'Yes, you are perfectly correct,' he said, and went on to make his report to the captain."

"Now, then," said the blacksmith, "I suppose we are going to get to the pint. What did he report?"

"I didn't hear his report," said the marine, "but everybody soon knew what had happened to our unlucky vessel, and I can give you the whole story of it.

"The *General Brooks* sailed from San Francisco to Calcutta, with a cargo of stored electricity, contained in large, strongly made boxes. This I knew nothing about, not being in the habit of inquiring into cargoes. Well, in some way or other, which I don't understand, not being a scientific man myself, a magnetic connection was formed between these boxes, and also, if I got the story straight, between them and the iron hull of our vessel, so that it became, in fact, an enormous floating magnet, one of the biggest things of the kind on record. I have an idea that this magnetic condition was the cause of the trouble to our machinery; every separate part of it was probably turned to a magnet, and they all stuck together."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "I do not suppose you have given much attention to the study of commerce, and therefore are not prepared to give us any information in regard to stored electricity as an article of export from this country; but perhaps you can tell us what stored electricity is, and how it is put into boxes."

"In regard to the transportation," answered the school-master, speaking a little slowly, “of encased electric potency, I cannot—”

“Oh, bless me!” interrupted the marine; “that is all simple enough; you can store electricity and send it all over the world, if you like; in places like Calcutta, I think it must be cheaper to buy it than to make it. They use it as a motive power for sewing-machines, apple-parers, and it can be used in a lot of ways, such as digging post-holes and churning butter. When the stored electricity in a box is all used up, all you have to do is to connect a fresh box with your machinery, and there you are, ready to start again. There was nothing strange about our cargo. It was the electricity leaking out and uniting itself and the iron ship into a sort of conglomerate magnet that was out of the way.”

“Mr. Cardly,” said Mr. Harberry, “if an iron ship were magnetized in that manner, wouldn’t it have a deranging effect upon the needle of the compass?”

The marine did not give the school-master time to make answer. “Generally speaking,” said he, “that sort of thing would interfere with keeping the vessel on its proper course, but with us it didn’t make any difference at all. The greater part of the ship was in front of the binnacle where they keep the compass, and so the needle naturally pointed that way, and as we were going north before a south wind, it was all right.

“Being a floating magnet, of course, did not prevent our sailing, so we went along well enough until we came to longitude 90°, latitude 15° north. Now it so happened that a telegraphic cable which had been laid down by the British Government to establish communication between Madras and Rangoon, had broken some time before, and not very far from this point.

“Now you can see for yourselves that when an enormous mass of magnetic iron, in the shape of the *General Brooks*, came sailing along there, the part of that cable which lay under us was so attracted by such a powerful and irresistible force that its broken end raised itself from the bottom of the bay and reached upward until it touched our ship, when it laid itself along our keel, to which it instantly became fastened as firmly as if it had been bolted and riveted there. Then, as the rest of this part of the cable was on the bottom of the bay all the way to Madras, of course we had to stop; that’s simple enough. That’s the way the Water-devil held us fast in one spot for two days.

“The British Government determined not to repair this broken cable, but to take it up and lay down a better one; so they chartered a large steamer, and fitted her up with engines, and a big drum that they use for that sort of thing, and set her to work to wind up the Madras end of the broken cable. She had been at this business a good while before we were caught by the other end, and when they got near enough to us for their engines to be able to take up the slack from the bottom between us and them, then of course they pulled upon us, and we began to move. And when they lay to for the night, and stopped the winding business, of course we stopped, and the stretch of cable between the two ships had no effect upon us, except when the big mail steamer happened to move this way or that, as they kept her head to the wind; and that's the way we lay quiet all night except when we got our shocks.

"When they set the drum going again in the morning, it wasn't long before they wound us near enough for them to see us, which they would have done sooner if my lights hadn't gone out so early in the evening."

"And that," said the blacksmith, with a somewhat severe expression on his face, "is all that you have to tell about your wonderful Water-devil!"

"All!" said the marine; "I should say it was quite enough, and nothing could be more wonderful than what really happened. A Water-devil is one of two things: he is real, or he's not real. If he's not real, he's no more than an ordinary spook or ghost, and is not to be practically considered. If he's real, then he's an alive animal, and can be put in a class with other animals, and described in books, because even if nobody sees him, the scientific men know how he must be constructed, and then he's no more than a great many other wonderful things, which we can see alive, stuffed, or in plaster casts.

"But if you want to put your mind upon something really wonderful, just think of a snake-like rope of wire, five or six hundred miles long, lying down at the very bottom of the great Bay of Bengal, with no more life in it than there is in a ten-penny nail.

"Then imagine that long, dead wire snake to be suddenly filled with life, and to know that there was something far up above it, on the surface of the water, that it wants to reach up to and touch. Think of it lifting and flapping its broken end, and then imagine it raising yard after yard of itself up and up, through the solemn water, more and more of it lifting itself from the bottom, curling itself backward and forward as it rises higher and higher, until at last, with a sudden jump that must have ripped a mile or more of it from the bottom, it claps its end against the thing it wants to touch, and which it can neither see, nor hear, nor smell, but which it knows is there. Could there be anything in this world more wonderful than that?

"And then, if that isn't enough of a wonder, think of the Rangoon end of that cable squirming and wriggling and stretching itself out toward our ship, but not being able to reach us on account of a want of slack; just as alive as the Madras part of the cable, and just as savage and frantic to get up to us and lay hold of us; and then, after our vessel had been gradually pulled away from it, think of this other part getting weaker and weaker, minute by minute, until it falls flat on the bay, as dead as any other iron thing!"

The marine ceased to speak, and Mrs. Fryker heaved a sigh.

"It makes me shiver to think of all that down so deep," she said; "but I must say I am disappointed."

"In what way?" asked the marine.

"A Water-devil," said she, "as big as six whales, and with a funnelly mouth to suck in people, is different; but, of course, after all, it was better as it was."

"Look here," said the blacksmith, "what became of the girl? I wanted her finished up long ago, and you haven't done it yet."

"Miss Minturn, you mean," said the marine. "Well, there is not much to say about her. Things happened in the usual way. When the danger was all over, when she had other people to depend upon besides me, and we were on board a fine steamer, with a lot of handsomely dressed naval officers, and going comfortably to Madras, of course she thought no more of the humble sea-soldier who once stood between her and—nobody knew what. In fact, the only time she spoke to me after we got on board the English steamer, she made me feel, although she didn't say it in words, that she was not at all obliged to me for supposing that she would have been scared to death if I had told her about the Water-devil."

"I suppose," said the blacksmith, "by the time you got back to your ship you had overstayed your leave of absence a good while. Did your captain let you off when you told him this story of the new-fashioned Water-devil?"

The marine smiled. "I never went back to the *Apache*," he said. "When I arrived at Madras I found that she had sailed from Calcutta. It was, of course, useless for me to endeavor to follow her, and I therefore concluded to give up the marine service for a time and go into another line of business, about which it is too late to tell you now."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "have you ever read that the British Government has a submarine cable from Madras to Rangoon?"

The marine took it upon himself to answer this question. "The cable of which I spoke to you," he said, "was taken up, as I told you, and I never heard that another one was laid. But it is getting late, and I think I will go to bed; I have a long walk before me to-morrow." So saying he rose, put his pipe upon the mantel-piece, and bade the company good night. As he did so, he fixed his eyes on the blacksmith's daughter, but that young lady did not look at him; she was busily reading the weekly newspaper, which her father had left upon the table.

Mr. Harberry now rose, preparatory to going home; and as he buttoned up his coat, he looked from one to another of the little group, and remarked, "I have often heard that marines are a class of men who are considered as fit subjects to tell tough stories to, but it strikes me that the time has come when the tables are beginning to be turned."

The Snakes And Norah

Jane Barlow

The Kennys' little farmstead was a somewhat amphibious one, occupying the southern end of the isthmus which keeps the Atlantic foam from riding into Lough Fintragh, a small, dark-watered nook niched in the shadow of steep mountain slopes. Another murkier shadow brooded over it in the opinion of the Kennys, who, like most of their neighbours, at least half-believed that its recesses harboured a monstrous indweller. Their thin white house stood fronting the seashore, with a narrow grazing strip behind, while their yard and sheds lay along the dwindling isthmus, which becomes a mere reef-like bar of boulders and shingle before it again touches the mainland. In calm weather Joe Kenny might see his unimposing ricks reflected from ridge to butt, with gleams of ochre and amber and gold in both salt and fresh water; but in stormy times, which came oftener, it might befall him to witness a less pleasing spectacle of hay-wisps and straw stooks strewn bodily, floating and soaking on the wasteful waves. So he was not surprised to find that this had happened when he walked out one December morning after a wild night whose blustering had mingled menace with his dreams. Despite its close-meshed roping and thick fringe of dangling stone weights, the more exposed haystack had been seriously wrecked and pillaged. "Och, bad cess to the ould win' and its whillaballoos!" said Joe, as he surveyed the distorted outlines, and made a rueful estimate of the damage. "If I got the chance to slit its bastely bellows for it, 'twould be apt to keep its huffin' and puffin' quiet for one while—it would so." This was not, however, the limit of his losses. Presently he stood looking vexedly over the door of a half-roofed shed, which contained a good deal of sea-water and weed; also a very small red calf, and a large jelly-fish. The calf was drowned dead, but the jellyfish seemingly lived as much as usual. "Eyah, get out wid you, you unnathural-lookin' blob of a baste!" said Joe, giving this unprofitable addition to his stock a contumelious flick with his blackthorn. "There's another good fifteen shillin's gone on me. I'd never ha' thought 'twould ha' tuk and slopped over the wall that way. Sorra the bit of a Christmas box I'll be able to conthrive her this year, and that's a fac'; and to-morra fair day and all—weary on it!"

"Her" was Rose O'Meara, Joe's sweetheart; and since he had long looked forward to the opportunity of the Christmas gift as likely to bring about a favourable crisis in his courtship, the falling through of his plan made him feel dejectedly out of humour, in which unenjoyable mood he strolled on towards the pigstye. Traces of the spent storm lay all around him. The tide had receded some way, but the waves were fast by, still hissing and seething, and flinging themselves down with hollow booms and thuds. They had evidently been beating high against the yard-wall, for all along it they had left great masses of brown sea-wrack tossed in bales and clumps, as if loaded out of a cart; and these were connected by trails of green and black weed, skeleton branches, shells, clotted froth, driftwood, and other debris, all in an indescribable tangle. As Joe stumped through it, he trucks his foot sharply against something hard, and nearly tripped up. When he recovered his balance, he saw that the obstruction was not the boulder which he had already execrated in haste. It was a wooden box. In much excitement Joe picked it up, and set it on the top of the wall for exacter scrutiny. The tides were constantly sweeping in with miscellaneous fringes on the Kennys' demesne, but seldom did they bring anything that might not be justly termed "quare ould rubbish." During all the course of Joe's life, and he was not in his first youth, no waif had been washed up so promising in appearance as this box. About ten inches square it was, and made of a fine grained dark wood, which seemed to have been very highly polished. The corners were clamped with bronze-like metal, elaborately wrought, and plates of the same inlaid the keyhole and hinges. So strong was the lock, that when he tried to wrench off the lid he seemed to have a solid block in his hands, and it shut so tightly that the lines of juncture were almost invisible. Its weight was considerable enough to increase his conviction that it held something very precious.

Joe's first impulse was to rush home with his prize, exhibit and examine it. Immediately afterwards, however, it flashed across him like an inspiration that here was Rose's Christmas box; and upon this followed a more leisurely resolve to keep it a secret until he should present her with it intact on Christmas morning, still distant three whole days. This course would cost him the repression of much impatient curiosity, but it was recommended to him by a sense that it would enhance the value of the gift. He would be making over to Rose all the vague and wonderful possibilities of the treasure-trove, which in his imagination were more splendid than any better-defined object, as they loomed through a haze of unseen gold and jewels. Disappointment had scanty room among his forecasts. "Sure, I 'd a right to give it to her just the way it is, wid anythin' at all inside it, for amn't I axin' her to take meself in a manner like that, whether good, bad, or indiff'rint comes of it?—on'y it's scarce as apt, worse luck, to be any great things as the full of a grand lookin' box is. But she might understand 'twas as much as to say I'd be wishful she had every chance of the best that I could git for her, the crathur, if it was all the gold and silver and diamonds that ever were dhrownded under the say-wather, and'd never think to be lookin' to reckon them, no more than if they were so many handfuls of ould pebbles off of the strand." Thus reflected Joe, who had a vein of sentiment, which sometimes outran his powers of expression. And thereupon, leaving the box atop of the wall, he went to look after the pigs. He found them all surviving, though the storm had caused some dilapidations in their abode, which obliged him to do a little rough carpentry, and kept him hammering and thumping for several minutes. And when he returned to the place where he had left the box, the box was gone.

He searched wildly for it among the litter on both sides of the wall, and nowhere could it be seen. Yet at that hour what man or mortal was there abroad to have stirred it? Then he thought that the weeds looked wetter than they had been, and he said to himself that "one of them waves must ha' riz up permiscuous and swep' it off in a flurry while his back was turned; and a fine gomeral he'd been to go lave it widin raich of such a thing happenin' it." So as no more satisfactory explanation was forthcoming, he turned homeward, empty-handed and crestfallen. But before he had taken many steps, he saw sitting under the lee of the yard-wall Tom O'Meara, Rose's brother, who was generally recognised to be courting Mary Kenny, Joe's youngest sister. The O'Mearas lived a good step beyond the other end of the isthmus, and Joe had begun to speculate what so early a visit might signify, when the greater wonder abruptly swallowed the less as he became aware that Tom had the twice-lost box in his hands.

"Look-a, Joe, at what I'm after findin'," he called jubilantly.

"Findin'? Musha moyah! that 's fine talkin'," said Joe. "And where at all did you find it, then?"

"Where it was to be had," said Tom, promptly adjusting his tone to Joe's, which was offensive.

"Then it's sitting atop of our wall there it was," said Joe. "Whethen, now, some people has little enough to do that they can't keep their hands off meddlin' wid things they find sittin' on other people's yard-walls."

"And suppose it was sittin' on anybody's ould wall," said Tom, "what else except a one of them rowlin' waves set it sittin' there wid itself, and it all dhreepin' wet out of the say? Be the same token it's quare if one person hasn't got as good a right to be liftin' it off as another. Troth and bedad, I'd somethin' betther to do than to be standin' star-gazin' at it all day, waitin' to ax lave of the likes of yous."

"I'll soon show you the sort of rowlin' wave there was, me man, if you don't throuble yourself to be handin' it over out of that, and I after pickin' it up this half-hour ago," said Joe, with furious irony.

"Come on wid you, come on!" Tom shouted, jumping to his feet with a general flourish of defiance. At this point the dispute bade fair to become an argument without words, and would probably have done so had it not been that the two young men were the brothers of their sisters. As it was, a sort of Roman-Sabine complication fettered and handcuffed them. "Divil a thing else I was intendin' to do wid it, but bring it straight ways in to your sister Mary," said Tom, "that you need go for to be risin' rows about the matter."

"It's for Rose's Christmas box; that's what I think bad of," said Joe.

"Let's halve it between the two of them, then, whatever it is," said Tom, feeling that a compromise was the utmost he could reasonably expect from circumstances.

And so it was arranged, rather weakly on Joe's part, he being the better man of the two, and well within his rights, if he had chosen to claim the box unconditionally. The joint presentation should take place, they agreed, on Christmas Eve, the next day but one, when Rose O'Meara would be visiting the Kennys; and then Tom departed whistling, with the pick he had come to borrow the loan of, while Joe consoled himself as best he could for this arbitrary subtraction of more than half the pleasure and romance from his morning's find.

Late on Christmas Eve, when the Kennys' kitchen was full of glancing firelight, and the widow Kenny, with her son and daughters and her guests, Tom and Rose O'Meara, had all had their tea, Joe and Tom were seen to often whisper and nudge one another, until at last Joe got up and produced the box from its secret hiding-place. But Tom hastened to forestall him as spokesman, placing considerable confidence in his own perspicacity and grace of diction. He said—

"See you here, Mary and Rose. This consarn's a prisint the two of us is after gettin' the two of yous—I mane it was Joe found it aquilly the same as me, that picked it up somethin' later. And it's he's givin' the whole of his half of the whole of it to Rose; but he's nothin' to say to the rest of it; and it's meself that's givin' Mary the half of the whole of the half—och no, botheration! it's the whole of the—it's the other whole half of it—"

"You've got it this time," Joe remarked in a sarcastic aside.

"—I'm givin' Mary. So that's the way of it, and when we've got the lid prized off for yous, you'll just have to regulate it between yous, accordin' to what there is inside."

"And if it's all the gold and diamonds in the riches of the world," said Joe, "you're kindly welcome to every grain of it, Rose jewel—ay, bedad, are you."

"To the one half of it," corrected Tom, with emphasis. But his sister tapped him with the pot-stick, and said, "Whisht, you big omadhawn, whisht."

"It's a pity of such a thing to be knockin' about and goin' to loss," said Mary, rubbin' her finger on the embossed metal-work; "and I wonder what's gone wid whatever crathur owned it. Under the salt say he's very apt to be lying this night—the Lord be good to him!" The rustle of the waves climbing up the shingle outside seemed to swell louder as she spoke.

"For anythin' we can tell, he might be takin' a look in at us through the windy there this minute to see what we're doin' wid it," said Joe.

Everybody's eyes turned towards the dark little square of the window, and Mary left off handling the box as suddenly as if it had become red-hot.

"Oh, blathers!" said Tom. "Just raich me the rippin'-chisel that's lyin' on the windy-stool, Norah, and we'll soon thry what it is at all."

Norah, the elder sister, made a very long arm, and secured the tool with as little approximation as might be to the deep-set panes. She had neither sweetheart nor Christmas box, and was disposed to take a rather languid and cynical view of affairs.

"There 's apt not to be any great things in it, I'm thinkin'," said the widow Kenny from her elbow-chair by the hearth. The truth was that she had been reflecting with some bitterness how not so many years since Joe would have "come flourishin' in to her wid any ould thrifle of rubbish he might ha' picked up outside," whereas now he had kept this valuable property silently in his possession for three days, for the purpose of bestowing it upon the O'Mearas' slip of a girl. Consequently, Joe's mother held aloof from the eager group round the table, and uttered disparaging predictions of the event. Tom and Mary did make a prudent attempt to fend off their collision with the disappointment which might emerge from the mists ahead by repeating, as the chisel wrestled with the stubborn hasps and springs, "Sure, all the while belike there's on'y some quare ould stuff in it, no good to anybody." Joe and Rose, on the contrary, chose to run under crowded sail towards the possible wreck of their hopes, and talked of sovereigns and bank-notes and jewels while the lid creaked and resisted.

But when at length it yielded with a final splinter, it disclosed what no one had anticipated—namely, nothing. The box was quite empty. Daintily lined with glossy satinwood, as if for the reception of something delicate and precious, but bare as the palm of your hand. There was not even so much vacant space as might have been expected, for the sides were disproportionately thick. Very blank faces exchanged notes with one another upon this result. Almost any contents, however inappropriate and worthless, would have been their "advantage to exclaim upon," and more tolerable for that reason than mere nullity, about which there was little to be said. Rose was the first to rally from the general mortification, observing with forced cheerfulness that "sure 'twould make an iligant sort of workbox, at all ivints, and 'twas maybe just as handy there bein' nothin' in it, because 'twould hould anythin' you plased." To which Mary rejoined, dejectedly refusing to philosophise, "Bedad, then, you may keep it yourself, girl alive, for the lid's every atom all smashed into smithereens."

The young people were not, however, with one exception, in the mood for dwelling upon the dark side of things. Their depression caused by the collapse of the Christmas box was superficial, and soon passed away. When in course of the evening the two young men went out to feed the pigs, Rose and Mary accompanied them to the back door, where they all loitered so long that the patience waiting round the empty trough must have been sorely tried. Sounds of their talking and laughing came down the passage and were heard plainly in the kitchen, whence Mrs. Kenny had slipped up her ladder stairs to say her rosary, so that Norah was for the time left quite alone. She was decidedly out of humour, albeit by no means on account of the others' rapid reverse of fortune. Rather, we may apprehend, she had viewed that incident as a not regrettable check to a tide of affairs which was unduly sweeping all manner of good luck her neighbours' way, and unjustly leaving her high and dry. This grudging spirit had forbidden her to appear interested in the examination of the box, but now she could satisfy without betraying her curiosity. As she drew her fingers aimlessly round its smooth inner surface, there was a sudden snap and jerk, and out slid a secret drawer, which had been concealed by a false bottom. It was filled with rose-pink wadding, amongst which lay the coils of a long gold snake necklace. She lifted it out amazedly, and held it up in the firelight, with jewelled head gleaming and enamelled scales, a far finer piece of workmanship than she knew, though the flash of brilliants and rubies assured even her uninstructed eyes that she had come on something of much value.

While she was still looking at it she heard steps returning up the passage, and forthwith tried hastily to replace it in the box. But at a clumsy touch the drawer, flew back into its former invisibility, and her flurried fumbling failed to press the lurking spring. Then, as the steps came very near, she thrust her ornament into her pocket, and moved away from the table on which the box stood. In doing so, she was conscious only of a proud perversity which made her loth to be found meddling with what she sullenly called "no consarn of mine." Presently, however, other motives for concealment grew clearer and stronger. Of course, the longer she retained it the more difficult would the restoring of it be. Her crossness made it impossible for her to imagine a joke as a natural explanation of her conduct. Moreover, a covetous wish to keep the beautiful thing for its own sake sprang up, and had a swift growth. She said to herself that "she didn't see why she need have any call to be givin' it up, after all. Wasn't she after findin' it in the quare little slitherin' tray, and the rest of them wid no more notion of it bein' there at all than ould Sally the goat had? It might be lyin' where it was till the world's end on'y for her? And sure, for the matter of that, the ould box itself was no more a belongin' of the lads to give away than of any other body that might ha' happened on it tossin' about the shore. So if it wasn't theirs be rights, she thought she'd be a fine fool to not keep what she'd got." Sophistical arguments such as these convinced her reason easily enough, but her conscience was less amenable to them. They were reinforced by some further considerations which possessed no ethical value at all, and which she had the grace to be ashamed of putting into clearly outlined thoughts. She allowed herself to have only a vague sense of grievance at the fact that Rose and Mary had "presents, and people to be makin, fools of them, and all manner," whereas none of these desirable things were bestowed on her. Yet it formed a mental atmosphere which made the prospect of yielding up her discovery seem incongruous and odious, in the same way that a bitter wind blowing makes us loth to throw open our doors and windows.

"Cock them up to be gettin' everythin'," she said to herself, as she sat in a corner with her hand in her pocket, and drew through her fingers the cold, smooth coils, remembering how the gem-encrusted head had blazed in the firelight. She wished that she could venture to take it out and proudly display it as her property; but she was far from daring to do so. On the contrary, she felt herself laden with a guilty secret, and was presently beset by all the misgivings, suspicions, and surmises which infest people who carry about such a burden. Whenever anyone went near the box her heart thumped with terror lest the drawer should be detected, and its rifled condition somehow traced to her. Then she trembled to think that the lads perhaps knew all the time of the necklace's existence, and were just reserving it for a grand surprise; or she imagined herself letting it drop accidentally and being unable to account for her possession of it. These speculations so preoccupied her that she was obliged to explain her absent-mindedness by declaring herself "intirely disthracted wid the toothache"; upon which the condolences and sympathy of the others aggravated her uneasiness with remorseful gratitude. Her conscience nipped her shrewdly when Rose said, "Ah, the crathur, I'll run over to-morra early and bring you the bottle ould Matt Farren gev me mother; it's the grandest stuff at all for the toothache,"—Rose whom she was defrauding of a share in that golden marvel! At length she had resource to a plan which promised her temporary relief from urgent fears and self-reproaches. This was to hide away the necklace in some cranny of the rocks on the shore, where, if it should be rediscovered, nothing would implicate her in the matter. She said to herself, indeed, that they would have just as much chance of finding it there as in the mysterious drawer; but beneath that soothing reflection lay a resolve to minimise the chance by choosing the most unlikely chink possible. Since the evening was by this time far spent, and the O'Mearas had already taken leave, she knew that she must hurry to execute her design before Joe came in from seeing after the cattle, when the house would be shut up. So she slipped quietly out of doors.

It was a dark, gusty night, and the waves, still turbulent after their late uproar, were clattering noisily up the shingly ridges of the beach. As Norah ran along she could barely discern the glimmering of pale grey stones and white foam-crests. She kept on by the lough side of the isthmus, because the walking there was smoother, but when she thought she had come a safe distance she stopped, intending to cross over and seek a hiding-place for her spoil among a small chaos of weeded boulders. Looking for a moment athwart the black water, she saw a dim streak of light in the sky above it. The moon was glimpsing out of an eastern cloud-rift, and throwing down a meagre web of rays, which the unquiet dark surface caught fitfully and shredded into the broken coils of a writhing silver serpent. Perhaps it was this, or perhaps the golden snake-chain in her hands, that suggested the thing, but at any rate Norah suddenly bethought her of the *Piast*. For Lough Fintragh is haunted by the terror of one of these monsters, a huge and grisly worm, dwelling down in the shadowy end of the lake, where the water is said to have no bottom, and to wander in labyrinthine caverns about the roots of the mountains. The creature had not been very often seen, but Norah well knew what a direful fate had overtaken every soul to whom its shag-maned, lurid-eyed head and rood-length of livid scales had disastrously appeared. One of its least appalling habits, ran report, was to glare fixedly at its victim, until fascinated and distraught he leaped wildly into the jaws gaping for their prey. In the lonesome, murmurous dimness by the shore, Norah did not care to linger over such incidents, and she was turning away quickly, when a shock of fright almost paralysed her. Within a few yards of her feet she saw two reddish amber eyes glowing through the gloom, and from the same place came a sound of something in rustling, flapping motion.

It was, in fact, only a harmless and rather bewildered seal, who, during the past night's turmoil, had somehow got into the lough, and who now, instinctively aware of the rising tide, had set out eager to quit the insipid fresh water for his strong-flavoured Atlantic brine. But Norah naturally jumped to the conclusion that nothing less fearsome than the *Piast* itself was flopping towards her, and she fled away before it in a headlong panic, which culminated a moment afterwards when she ran against some large moving body. This, again, was simply her brother Joe, returned from setting his friends on their way; but Norah, with a wild shriek, gave herself up for lost, and did actually come near putting an end to herself by tumbling in frantic career over one stone, and striking her head violently on another. She had to be carried home insensible, and Christmas Day had come and gone before she found her way back gropingly to consciousness.

Meanwhile conjectures, of course, were rife as to the origin of her mishap, and the antecedents of the "iligant gold snaky chain" that she was grasping. "Sclutched that tight she had it in her sclenched fist, we were hard set to wrench it out of her hand," Mrs. Kenny volubly told her neighbours. The favourite theory held that she "was after pickin' it up on the shore, and would be skytin' home wid it in a hurry, not mindin' where she was goin', and that was the way she got the ugly toss." And when Norah had recovered from the effects of it sufficiently to be asked for her own account of the matter, she could throw but little light thereon. Her accident had left, as so often happens, a strange misty gap in her memory, which it was vain to scan. The space between her first sight of the box and her blinding crash down on the shingle was all a confused blank. However, two results of the affair emerged, and, though their cause remained untraceable, had a distinct influence upon her future. One of them was, that she would on no account permit the snake necklace to be regarded as her property. She persistently asserted that it belonged to Mary and Rose; and when Dr. Mason, who had undertaken to dispose of it in Dublin, remitted an incredible number of pounds, she would hear of no arrangement save dividing them between her sister and sister-in-law elect. The other had more important consequences to the whole course of her life. It was an abiding dread of their connecting isthmus, which had become so horrible a place to her that never again would she cross over it, even when promised the protection of the most stalwart escort. Now, as the isthmus is very much the nearest way from the Kennys' farm to any other habitations, this peculiarity of Norah's cut her off greatly from whatever society the neighbourhood afforded, besides gaining her a reputation for "quareness" not likely to increase her popularity. Probably, therefore, it may have been part of the reason why the years as they came and went that way found her rooted fast and growing into a settled old maid.

Those glowering yellow eyes being blurred out of her recollection, the *Piast* did not occur to her as the object of her fear. But some people were not slow to connect it with the uncanny inhabitant of the lough, and in process of time their various imaginations hardened into a circumstantial narrative of an especially terrific appearance of the monster. To this day, indeed, so current is the story, that many a wayfarer along the bleak shingle strip goes the faster for a doubt whether such an awful experience as befell Norah Kenny may not be writhing towards him beneath the sunless waters of Lough Fintragh.

A Lion in New Mexico

Frank Welles Calkins

Barney Terril, of La Lacha ranch, on his way home from a northern round-up one hot day in May, halted his mustang at the railway crossing between Separ and Lisbon. There was a new landmark at the crossing. A fresh post had been set near the “lookout” board, and the side of a big packing-box, nailed against this, was painted in red letters. The cowboy tried in vain to spell out the inscription. What he should have been able to read, had he not run away frorn his Texas home at an early age to ride the range, was this:

Beware! A full-grown Persian lion escaped from the wreck of a special train in the cut below on the 6th inst. Was last seen twenty miles south among the foot-hills of Las Animas. Look out for him. He is a rascal, netted only a year since on the desert of Iran. He will attack a man on sight, and should be approached or hunted only on fleet horses. Any information of his whereabouts or fate will be thankfully received by the undersigned. Delos Berkeley.
Los Angeles, Cal.

“Wisht Aleck was here to read that notice,” said the cowboy. “Some o’ them Mexican greasers ben a-rushin’ stock agin, an’ ther’s a reward out an’ a duscription of ‘em on that bo’d, I guess.”

Five times that year such notices had been posted on the La Lacha range. Mexican half-breeds and rascally Mescaleros had made things extremely lively for the stockmen.

Barney, grumbling his discontent at the art of handwriting, crossed the railroad track and jogged on toward Las Animas mountains. The trail was hot and dusty, leading over a high mesa stuck with candlewood spikes and Spanish bayonet. For nearly twenty miles the country was barren of water, with a dreary aspect of desolation. No habitation, no living thing bigger than a sand-lizard, was to be seen. It was late in the afternoon when the cowboy reached the crest of a long descent which stretched away to the arroyo La Lacha.

As he came upon this rise a flurry of dust away upon the right attracted his attention. A sharp glance revealed a horseman, with two led animals, coming toward the trail ahead at a smart gallop.

Under the circumstances, Barney's suspicions were easily aroused, and he increased his pony's lagging gait. Almost unconsciously, too, he slipped his Colt from its holster and twirled the cylinder, noting that none of its chambers were empty.

Despite the clattering pace at which he rode, however, the stranger reached La Lacha trail a couple of hundred yards in advance, and then drew rein sharply and sat motionless, awaiting Barney.

Defeated for the moment, Barney slowed up and came on at an easy canter; but as he drew nearer, his eyes narrowed and he whistled softly to himself. He recognized those two led horses; they were a couple of half-breed "Americans," raised at old Boheen's ranch among the foothills of the Pyramids, and the owner's corrals were not twenty miles distant.

"Wal," he muttered, "ef that feller ain't cooler an' sassier 'n a rattlesnake in a mesquitbush!"

By this time, too, the cowboy saw that the stranger was a Spaniard, mounted upon a fine Comanche pony, with silver-mounted saddle and trappings. He wore a Panama hat and a thin, braided jacket. A dark serape hung about his hips, protecting his legs from the fierce heat. He was a young fellow, with just a suspicion of mustachios—a gay dandy, whose like the cowboy had seen before among men of questionable character.

"Buenos dias, senor!" he cried, cheerfully, showing a row of white teeth in a smile which was certainly pleasant, as Barney drew rein. This, too, was surprising, for the Mexicans, Spanish and greasers were wont to show glum faces to men from "The States." This was a tricky rascal who had some fine story to tell, so Barney decided.

"No wano," answered the cowboy, bluntly. "Whar'd you git them hosses?"

"Muy buy heem, senor," said the young fellow, who had evidently some knowledge of English. "Jo hava eexchange muy hoss long o' Sehor Don Boheen."

"Yaas, egsackly; I understand," drawled the cowboy, dryly. "Where you frum—what town er ranch?"

“San Diego, Mexico,” was the prompt reply.

“Jest es I projecked!” muttered Barney. “Glib es a chipmuck!”

There was no question in Barney’s mind as to his duty in this case, and his interest also. If it should be known at La Lacha ranch that he, Barney Terril, had let a thief go by with two of Boheen’s horses, they would be wanting a new hand down the arroyo. Besides, there was the reward! The cowboy’s eyes fell carelessly upon the armament at the Mexican’s belt. The fellow wore two single-barreled Spanish pistols and the inevitable narrow-bladed knife. He carried a long, braided lariat upon the pommel of his saddle. This speculation and observation occupied but a moment. The Mexican sat, evidently waiting further interrogatory.

“Wat’s your name?” demanded Barney.

“Don Jose Maria Mendoza y Sancharella,” replied the young man, still apparently willing to give account of himself in this land of Americanos.

“Waal, Don Seenyore Hozy Dozy Snatcherelly, I’ll trouble you fer that belt—them pistols—savey?” and with an indescribably quick and emphatic motion the cowboy jerked his big six-shooter from its holster and leveled it.

With a look of surprise and anger, either feigned or real, the stranger unbuckled his belt and tossed it across the intervening space. One does not hesitate in that country to comply with such demands, when the advantage is decidedly with the other party.

“You stole them hosses!” was Bamey’s curt explanation, as he slipped the pistols into his capacious boot-legs, and disdaining the knife, handed back the belt.

“No, no, senor, muy no steal!” declared the other. “See, sehor!” and from somewhere beneath his jacket, and with the muzzle of the cowboy’s pistol in his face, he drew forth a folded paper and spread it eagerly for inspection.

But bills of sale in writing were Greek to Barney, and he was not to be caught napping by sharp tricks in any event. He snorted in contempt and righteous indignation.

“Vamose!” he said. “Down the trail, an’ don’t you try no tricks on me!”

Without a word further, the young Mexican turned his animals into the La Lacha road. Barney rode close behind, well knowing the thief could not start three horses into a run quickly enough to get out of the way, even had he, Barney, had no "gun." Nevertheless, he kept the revolver in hand and a watchful eye upon every movement of his captive.

It was after sunset when the pair descended a winding trail into the rough gorge of La Lacha creek. Barney ordered a halt at the first water-hole, and while the animals were drinking compelled his captive to dismount and fill a canteen. He noted that the fellow looked sober and anxious, but not frightened.

From this water-hole—Twelve-Mile Hole, as it was known on the range—the trail led for a mile or more along a tortuous and difficult natural causeway, with beetling heights above and the gaping cut of a waterway below. Progress was slow. Barney now forced the Mexican to drive the horses he had been leading single file ahead, and the animals now and then gave trouble.

Twilight faded, and a dazzling Southern moon, apparently nearly twice the size of our Northern one, climbed the eastern sky and dropped a flood of white light into the bottom of the gorge. Grotesque shadows fell athwart the steep slopes. The manzanita bush became a giant live-oak in its shade. Bowlders and projections blackened acres of space, and mirrored their silvered tips in the placid little lakes below.

While the small cavalcade crawled along the slopes a shadow followed in its rear—a shadow which, like that of riders and horses, shifted its length upon the uneven surface, but one that shortened and lengthened and moved forward in a stealthy, uncanny fashion. It did not follow long.

As horses and riders came out at length upon a slight bench where the trail wound among stunted chaparral above the creek-bed, Barney's horse suddenly plunged forward, with a shrill snort of terror, and the substance of the shadow fell with terrific force upon the animal's flank and rump. Horse and rider rolled together in the bush.

Barney gained his feet somehow instantly, and stood for a moment dazed and half-stunned, his eyes glued upon a ferocious yellow shape struggling with his fallen pony. He heard the mustang's despairing shriek and the cracking of bones in its neck, and saw the Mexican lashing his animals along the trail farther down; then he turned and sprang away through the bush.

With a frightful roar the creature behind followed, crashing among the chaparral.

Barney reached the precipitous bank of the creek, jumped off and plunged down a clean flight of thirty feet or more. He alighted in mud and sand up to his knees. Then, finding himself unharmed, he jerked his feet loose and rushed into the middle of a pool of water that lay at hand.

There, in water waist-deep, he sank to his neck, cowering in fright. He saw the big animal above making its way with huge plunges down a spur of the cailon at the head of the water-hole. A Mexican lion! The cowboy had heard great tales of the beast, but he had never seen one before—nothing larger than a catamount.

Before he ducked beneath the water he had felt for his revolver to hold it above the surface, but it was gone! As the huge brute stopped in a great bound, lashing its tail and snarling at the edge of the hole, Barney saw the shining barrel of his weapon upon the sand not three paces from where the animal stood. The Mexican's pistols were still in Barney's boots, but they were certainly of no use to him now.

The lion, having located its prey, stalked about in the mud and sand at the edge of the pool, switching its great tail nervously and emitting hoarse, whining growls. It crouched now and then as if for a mighty leap. Barney watched in frightful suspense, ready to dive and hold to the bottom as long as breath should last.

Minutes passed. Several times the creature waded out belly-deep, and then returned to land, whining with fierce eagerness. Finally it sat upon its haunches and glowered upon him from its shaggy front.

There was no chance of escape save by water. Barney knew this hole; it consisted of a perpendicular wall of sand, rock and earth behind, an open channel below, and a jagged ascent of rocks and debris above. There could be no escape if the beast chose to watch, and a night in a La Lacha water-hole meant chills, fever and probable death.

Terror seized upon the helpless cowboy, and he already shivered miserably, squatting upon his knees. Meanwhile the huge brute sat ominously glum and watchful.

Presently Barney heard a slight snapping of twigs overhead. He looked up, and if the moon had fallen he could not have felt greater amazement. There, upon the edge of the bank, above the lion's head, plainly outlined against the brilliant sky, stood his late captive, the Mexican, leaning forward and peering cautiously down into the channel.

Evidently the thief had come back to see what had become of his foe—hoping to find him dead, no doubt, and the beast gone, so that he might recover his own weapons with Barney's saddle and trappings. So the cowboy thought. He splashed in the water to attract the fellow's attention. Any diversion was better than his present situation.

The figure upon the bank disappeared instantly—frightened off, as Barney believed. The lion shifted its position and snarled hoarsely.

If only the Mexican above there would make some noise so the beast might be tempted to follow him! But the rascal was too sly and sharp for that.

And yet in a minute or so the Mexican reappeared, silently as a ghost, upon the bank overhead. He stood directly above the lion.

In the white moonlight Barney saw, with a thrill of surprise, that the man held the coils of his lariat in hand.

Breathless the cowboy watched, and saw the slender figure lean far over, swing the lariat noose gently outward to and fro, and with nice calculation drop it outspread in a flat fold. He saw the shining thing descend like the sinuous coils of a snake, then stiffen taut and clean as the lion bounded to one side with a startled roar.

Then he watched the snared beast hauling at the slender strand, fighting and growling along the foot of the ledge. The animal swayed back and forth, pawing the air, and rolling in the mud in a struggle frightful both to see and hear.

Barney, alert now, watched with the critical eye of the best roper at La Lacha ranch, and the situation became quickly apparent to him. That rawhide lariat, strong enough to hold the biggest bull, was securely fastened to bowlder or bushes above, while the practiced hand of the Mexican was upon it with a grip that admitted no relaxing of the noose.

And this daring and successful maneuver was to save him—Barney Terril! He sprang out of the water in long, splashing leaps, snatched up his revolver, which had fallen butt down in the muddy sands, and standing perilously close to the fighting beast, fired every chamber of the weapon into its body as swiftly as he could crook his finger. Then he ran to the steep slope above, and climbed like a cat to the top. He heard below him the gurgling snarls of the lion, and guessed truly that his big pistol had done its work.

His late captive had felt the collapse of the creature, and had dropped his hold upon the lariat. He stood proudly, like the Spanish don that he was, his arms folded, his white teeth again gleaming in a smile.

"Seenyore Don Hozy," said the cowboy, his voice husky with emotion, "you're a trump—a genooine, shore 'nough brave man, straight an' squar', an' here's my han', ef you'll take it!"

The young man permitted his hand to be wrung, and the cowboy, awkwardly enough, tried to find words to befit the occasion.

Together they took the lion's skin, which Don Jose was anxious to carry home as a new specimen of the Mexican lion. He explained to Barney that he had heard the Yaqui Indians tell of the big beast in the mountains beyond San Rosa. He had never truly believed in its existence before, but this must indeed be the creature they had told of.

The mystery was cleared an hour later at La Lacha ranch. Aleck Wingate, one of the riders, had come in ahead of Barney, and had read the notice at the railroad crossing.

No scion of a Mexican house, it is safe to say, was ever made more welcome among Americans than was Senor Don Jose, quite incorrectly supposed by Barney to be a horsethief, at La Lacha ranch that night.

The Triumphs of a Taxidermist

H. G. Wells

Here are some of the secrets of taxidermy. They were told me by the taxidermist in a mood of elation. He told me them in the time between the first glass of whiskey and the fourth, when a man is no longer cautious and yet not drunk. We sat in his den together; his library it was, his sitting and his eating room—separated by a bead curtain, so far as the sense of sight went, from the noisome den where he plied his trade.

He sat on a deck chair, and when he was not tapping refractory bits of coal with them, he kept his feet—on which he wore, after the manner of sandals, the holey relics of a pair of carpet slippers—out of the way upon the mantelpiece, among the glass eyes. And his trousers, by-the-by—though they have nothing to do with his triumphs—were a most horrible yellow plaid, such as they made when our fathers wore side-whiskers and there were crinolines in the land. Further, his hair was black, his face rosy, and his eye a fiery brown; and his coat was chiefly of grease upon a basis of velveteen. And his pipe had a bowl of china showing the Graces, and his spectacles were always askew, the left eye glaring nakedly at you, small and penetrating; the right, seen through a glass darkly, magnified and mild. Thus his discourse ran: "There never was a man who could stuff like me, Bellows, never. I have stuffed elephants and I have stuffed moths, and the things have looked all the livelier and better for it. And I have stuffed human beings—chiefly amateur ornithologists. But I stuffed a [negro] once.

"No, there is no law against it. I made him with all his fingers out and used him as a hat-rack, but that fool Homersby got up a quarrel with him late one night and spoilt him. That was before your time. It is hard to get skins, or I would have another.

"Unpleasant? I don't see it. Seems to me taxidermy is a promising third course to burial or cremation. You could keep all your dear ones by you. Bric-a-brac of that sort stuck about the house would be as good as most company, and much less expensive. You might have them fitted up with clockwork to do things.

"Of course they would have to be varnished, but they need not shine more than lots of people do naturally. Old Manningtree's bald head— Anyhow, you could talk to them without interruption. Even aunts. There is a great future before taxidermy, depend upon it. There is fossils again—"

He suddenly became silent.

"No, I don't think I ought to tell you that." He sucked at his pipe thoughtfully. "Thanks, yes. Not too much water.

"Of course, what I tell you now will go no further. You know I have made some dodos and a great auk? No! Evidently you are an amateur at taxidermy. My dear fellow, half the great auks in the world are about as genuine as the handkerchief of Saint Veronica, as the Holy Coat of Treves. We make 'em of grebes' feathers and the like. And the great auk's eggs too!"

"Good heavens!"

"Yes, we make them out of fine porcelain. I tell you it is worth while. They fetch—one fetched £300 only the other day. That one was really genuine, I believe, but of course one is never certain. It is very fine work, and afterwards you have to get them dusty, for no one who owns one of these precious eggs has ever the temerity to clean the thing. That's the beauty of the business. Even if they suspect an egg they do not like to examine it too closely. It's such brittle capital at the best.

"You did not know that taxidermy rose to heights like that. My boy, it has risen higher. I have rivalled the hands of Nature herself. One of the *genuine* great auks—" his voice fell to a whisper—"one of the *genuine* great auks *was made by me*.

"No. You must study ornithology, and find out which it is yourself. And what is more, I have been approached by a syndicate of dealers to stock one of the unexplored skerries to the north of Iceland with specimens. I may—some day. But I have another little thing in hand just now. Ever heard of the dinornis?

"It is one of those big birds recently extinct in New Zealand. 'Moa' is its common name, so-called because extinct; there is no moa now. See? Well, they have got bones of it, and from some of the marshes even feathers and dried bits of skin. Now, I am going to—well, there is no need to make any bones about it—going to *forge* a complete stuffed moa. I know a chap out there who will pretend to make the find in a kind of antiseptic swamp, and say he stuffed it at once, as it threatened to fall to pieces. The feathers are peculiar, but I have got a simply lovely way of dodging up singed bits of ostrich plume. Yes, that is the new smell you noticed. They can only discover the fraud with a microscope, and they will hardly care to pull a nice specimen to bits for that.

"In this way, you see, I give my little push in the advancement of science.

"But all this is merely imitating Nature. I have done more than that in my time. I have—beaten her."

He took his feet down from the mantel-board, and leant over confidentially towards me. "I have *created* birds," he said in a low voice. "*New* birds. Improvements. Like no birds that was ever seen before."

He resumed his attitude during an impressive silence.

"Enrich the universe; *rath*-er. Some of the birds I made were new kinds of humming-birds, and very beautiful little things, but some of them were simply rum. The rummest, I think, was the *Anomalopteryx Jejuna. Jejunus-a-um*—empty—so-called because there was really nothing in it; a thoroughly empty bird—except for stuffing. Old Javvers has the thing now, and I suppose he is almost as proud of it as I am. It is a masterpiece, Bellows. It has all the silly clumsiness of your pelican, all the solemn want of dignity of your parrot, all the gaunt ungainliness of a flamingo, with all the extravagant chromatic conflict of a mandarin duck. *Such* a bird. I made it out of the skeletons of a stork and a toucan and a job lot of feathers. Taxidermy of that kind is just pure joy, Bellows, to a real artist in the art.

"How did I come to make it? Simple enough, as all great inventions are. One of those young genii who write us Science Notes in the papers got hold of a German pamphlet about the birds of New Zealand, and translated some of it by means of a dictionary and his mother-wit—he must have been one of a very large family with a small mother—and he got mixed between the living apteryx and the extinct anomalopteryx; talked about a bird five feet high, living in the jungles of the North Island, rare, shy, specimens difficult to obtain, and so on. Javvers, who even for a collector, is a miraculously ignorant man, read these paragraphs, and swore he would have the thing at any price. Raided the dealers with inquiries. It shows what a man can do by persistence—will-power. Here was a bird-collector swearing he would have a specimen of a bird that did not exist, that never had existed, and which for very shame of its own profane ungainliness, probably would not exist now if it could help itself. And he got it. *He got it.*

"Have some more whiskey, Bellows?" said the taxidermist, rousing himself from a transient contemplation of the mysteries of will-power and the collecting turn of mind. And, replenished, he proceeded to tell me of how he concocted a most attractive mermaid, and how an itinerant preacher, who could not get an audience because of it, smashed it because it was idolatry, or worse, at Burslem Wakes. But as the conversation of all the parties to this transaction, creator, would-be preserver, and destroyer, was uniformly unfit for publication, this cheerful incident must still remain unprinted.

The reader, unacquainted with the dark ways of the collector, may perhaps be inclined to doubt my taxidermist; but so far as great auks' eggs, and the bogus stuffed birds are concerned, I find that he has the confirmation of distinguished ornithological writers. And the note about the New Zealand bird certainly appeared in a morning paper of unblemished reputation, for the taxidermist keeps a copy and has shown it to me.

The Ballad Of The Ice-Worm Cocktail

Robert Service

To Dawson Town came Percy Brown from London on theThames.
A pane of glass was in his eye, and stockings on his stems.
Upon the shoulder of his coat a leather pad he wore,
To rest his deadly rifle when it wasn't seeking gore;
The which it must have often been, for Major Percy Brown,
According to his story was a hunter of renown,
Who in the Murrumbidgee wilds had stalked the kangaroo
And killed the cassowary on the plains of Timbuctoo.
And now the Arctic fox he meant to follow to its lair,
And it was also his intent to beard the Arctic hare....
Which facts concerning Major Brown I merely tell because
I fain would have you know him for the Nimrod that he was.

Now Skipper Grey and Deacon White were sitting in the shack,
And sampling of the whisky that pertained to Sheriff Black.
Said Skipper Grey: "I want to say a word about this Brown:
The piker's sticking out his chest as if he owned the town."
Said Sheriff Black: "He has no lack of frigorated cheek;
He called himself a Sourdough when he'd just been here a week."
Said Deacon White: "Methinks you're right, and so I have a plan
By which I hope to prove to-night the mettle of the man.
Just meet me where the hooch-bird sings, and though our ways be rude
We'll make a *proper* Sourdough of this Piccadilly dude."

Within the Malamute Saloon were gathered all the gang;
The fun was fast and furious, and loud the hooch-bird sang.
In fact the night's hilarity had almost reached its crown,
When into its storm-centre breezed the gallant Major Brown.
And at the apparition, with its glass eye and plus-fours,
From fifty alcoholic throats resounded fifty roars.
With shouts of stark amazement and with whoops of sheer delight,
They surged around the stranger, but the first was Deacon White.
"We welcome you," he cried aloud, "to this the Great White Land.
The Arctic Brotherhood is proud to grip you by the hand.
Yea, sportsman of the bull-dog breed, from trails of far away,

To Yukoners this is indeed a memorable day.
Our jubilation to express, vocabularies fail....
Boys, hail the Great Cheechako!" And the boys responded: "Hail!"

"And now," continued Deacon White to blushing Major Brown,
"Behold assembled the *eelight* and cream of Dawson Town.
And one ambition fills their hearts and makes their bosoms glow—
They want to make you, honoured sir, a *bony feed* Sourdough.
The same, some say, is one who's seen the Yukon ice go out,
But most profound authorities the definition doubt.
Ad to the genial notion of this meeting, Major Brown,
A Sourdough is a guy who drinks . . . an ice-worm cocktail down."

"By Gad!" responded Major Brown, "that's ripping, don't you know.
I've always felt I'd like to be a *certified* Sourdough.
And though I haven't any doubt your Winter's awf'ly nice,
Mayfair, I fear, may miss me ere the break-up of your ice.
Yet (pray excuse my ignorance of matters such as these)
A cocktail I can understand—but what's an ice-worm, please?
Said Deacon White: "It is not strange that you should fail to know,
Since ice-worms are peculiar to the Mountain of Blue Snow.
Within the Polar rim it rears, a solitary peak,
And in the smoke of early Spring (a spectacle unique)
Like flame it leaps upon the sight and thrills you through and through,
For though its cone is piercing white, its base is blazing blue.
Yet all is clear as you draw near—for coyly peering out
Are hosts and hosts of tiny worms, each indigo of snout.
And as no nourishment they find, to keep themselves alive
They masticate each other's tails, till just the Tough survive.
Yet on this stern and Spartan fare so rapidly they grow,
That some attain six inches by the melting of the snow.
Then when the tundra glows to green and [negro] heads appear,
They burrow down and are not seen until another year."

"A toughish yarn," laughed Major Brown, "as well you may admit.
I'd like to see this little beast before I swallow it."
"'Tis easy done," said Deacon White. "Ho! Barman, haste and bring
Us forth some pickled ice-worms of the vintage of last Spring."
But sadly still was Barman Bill, then sighed as one bereft:
"There's been a run on cocktails, Boss; there ain't an ice-worm left.

Yet wait.... By gosh! it seems to me that some of extra size
Were picked and put away to show the scientific guys."

Then deeply in a drawer he sought, and there he found a jar,
The which with due and proper pride he put upon the bar;
And in it, wreathed in queasy rings, or rolled into a ball,
A score of grey and greasy things were drowned in alcohol.
Their bellies were a bilious blue, their eyes a bulbous red;
Their backs were grey, and gross were they, and hideous of head.
And when with gusto and a fork the barman speared one out,
It must have gone four inches from its tail-tip to its snout.
Cried Deacon White with deep delight: "Say, isn't that a beaut?"
"I think it is," sniffed Major Brown, "a most disgustin' brute.
It's very sight gives me the pip. I'll bet my bally hat,
You're only spoofin' me, old chap. You'll never swallow that."
"The hell I won't!" said Deacon White. "Hey! Bill, that fellow's fine.
Fix up four ice-worm cocktails, and just put that wop in mine."

So Barman Bill got busy, and with sacerdotal air
His art's supreme achievement he proceeded to prepare.
His silver cups, like sickle moon, went waving to and fro,
And four celestial cocktails soon were shining in a row.
And in the starry depths of each, artistically piled,
A fat and juicy ice-worm raised its mottled mug and smiled.
Then closer pressed the peering crowd, suspended was the fun,
As Skipper Grey in courteous way said: "Stranger, please take one."
But with a gesture of disgust the Major shook his head.
"You can't bluff me. You'll never drink that ghastly thing," he said.
"You'll see all right,'' said Deacon White, and held his cocktail high,
Till its ice-worm seemed to wiggle, and to wink a wicked eye.
Then Skipper Grey and Sheriff Black each lifted up a glass,
While through the tense and quiet crowd a tremor seemed to pass.
"Drink, Stranger, drink," boomed Deacon White. "Proclaim you're of the best,
A doughty Sourdough who has passed the Ice-worm Cocktail Test."
And at these words, with all eyes fixed on gaping Major Brown,
Like a libation to the gods, each dashed his cocktail down.
The Major gasped with horror as the trio smacked their lips.
He twiddled at his eye-glass with unsteady finger-tips.
Into his starry cocktail with a look of woe he peered,
And its ice-worm, to his thinking, most incontinently leered.

Yet on him were a hundred eyes, though no one spoke aloud,
For hushed with expectation was the waiting, watching crowd.
The Major's fumbling hand went forth—the gang prepared to cheer;
The Major's falt'ring hand went baclc, the mob prepared to jeer.
The Major gripped his gleaming glass and laid it to his lips,
And as despairfully he took some nauseated sips,
From out its coil of crapulence the ice-worm raised its head;
Its muzzle was a murky blue, its eyes a ruby red.
And then a roughneck bellowed forth: "This stiff comes here and struts,
As if he'd bought the blasted North—jest let him show his guts."
And with a roar the mob proclaimed: "Cheechako, Major Brown,
Reveal that you're of Sourdough stuff, and drink your cocktail down."

The Major took another look, then quickly closed his eyes,
For even as he raised his glass he felt his gorge arise.
Aye, even though his sight was staled, in fancy he could see
That grey and greasy thing that reared and sneered in mockery.
Yet round him ringed the callous crowd—and how they seemed to gloat!
It must be done... He swallowed hard... The brute was at his throat.
He choked... he gulped... Thank God! at last he'd got the horror down.
Then from the crowd went up a roar: "Hooray for Sourdough Brown!"
With shouts they raised him shoulder high, and gave a rousing cheer,
But though they praised him to the sky the Major did not hear.
Amid their demonstrative glee delight he seemed to lack;
Indeed it almost seemed that he—was "keeping something back."
A clammy sweat was on his brow, and pallid as a sheet:
"I feel I must be going now," he'd plaintively repeat.
Aye, though with drinks and smokes galore, they tempted him to stay,
With sudden bolt he gained the door, and made his get-away.

And ere next night his story was the talk of Dawson Town,
But gone and reft of glory was the wrathful Major Brown;
For that ice-worm (so they told him) of such formidable size
Was—*a stick of stained spaghetti with two red ink spots for eyes.*

Red-Headed Windego

Edward William Thomson

Big Baptiste Seguin, on snow-shoes nearly six feet long, strode mightily out of the forest, and gazed across the treeless valley ahead.

"Hooraw! No choppin' for two mile!" he shouted.

"Hooraw! Bully! Hi-yi!" yelled the axemen, Pierre, "Jawnny" and "Frawce," two hundred yards behind. Their cries were taken up by the two chain-bearers still farther back.

"It is a lake, Baptiste?" cried Tom Dunscombe, the young surveyor, as he hurried forward through balsams that edged the woods and concealed the open space from those among the trees.

"No, seh; only a beaver meddy."

"Clean?"

"Clean! Yesseh! Clean's your face. Hain't no tree for two mile if de line is go right."

"Good! We shall make seven miles to-day," said Tom as he came forward with immense strides, carrying a compass and Jacob's-staff. Behind him the axemen slashed along, striking white slivers from the pink and scaly columns of red pines that shot up a hundred and twenty feet without a branch. If any underbrush grew there, it was beneath the eight-feet-deep February snow, so that one could see far away down a multitude of vaulted, converging aisles.

Our young surveyor took no thought of the beauty and majesty of the forest he was leaving. His thoughts and those of his men were set solely on getting ahead; for all hands had been promised double pay for their whole winter, in case they succeeded in running a line round the disputed Moose Lake timber berth before the tenth of April.

Their success would secure the claim of their employer, Old Dan McEachran, whereas their failure would submit him perhaps to the loss of the limit, and certainly to a costly lawsuit with Old Rory Carmichael, another potentate of the Upper Ottawa.

At least six weeks more of fair snow-shoeing would be needed to "blaze" out the limit, even if the unknown country before them should turn out to be less broken by cedar swamps and high precipices than they feared. A few days' thaw with rain would make slush of the eight feet of snow, and compel the party either to keep in camp or risk *mal de raquette*,—strain of legs by heavy snow-shoeing. So they were in great haste to make the best of fine weather.

Tom thrust his Jacob's-staff into the snow, set the compass sights to the right bearing, looked through them, and stood by to let Big Baptiste get a course along the line ahead. Baptiste's duty was to walk straight for some selected object far away on the line. In woodland the axeman "blazed" trees on both sides of his snow-shoe track.

Baptiste was as expert at his job as any Indian, and indeed he looked as if he had a streak of Iroquois in his veins. So did "Frawce," "Jawnny," and all their comrades of the party.

"The three pines will do," said Tom, as Baptiste crouched.

"Good luck to-day for sure!" cried Baptiste, rising with his eyes fixed on three pines in the foreground of the distant timbered ridge. He saw that the line did indeed run clear of trees for two miles along one side of the long, narrow beaver meadow or swale.

Baptiste drew a deep breath, and grinned agreeably at Tom Dunscombe.

"De boys will look like dey's all got de double pay in deys' pocket when dey's see dis open," said Baptiste, and started for the three pines as straight as a bee.

Tom waited to get from the chainmen the distance to the edge of the wood. They came on the heels of the axemen, and all capered on their snow-shoes to see so long a space free from cutting.

It was now two o'clock; they had marched with forty pound or "light" packs since daylight, lunching on cold pork and hard-tack as they worked; they had slept cold for weeks on brush under an open tent pitched over a hole in the snow; they must live this life of hardship and huge work for six weeks longer, but they hoped to get twice their usual eighty-cents-a-day pay, and so their hearts were light and jolly.

But Big Baptiste, now two hundred yards in advance, swinging along in full view of the party, stopped with a scared cry. They saw him look to the left and to the right, and over his shoulder behind, like a man who expects mortal attack from a near but unknown quarter.

“What’s the matter?” shouted Tom.

Baptiste went forward a few steps, hesitated, stopped, turned, and fairly ran back toward the party. As he came he continually turned his head from side to side as if expecting to see some dreadful thing following.

The men behind Tom stopped. Their faces were blanched. They looked, too, from side to side.

“Halt, Mr. Tom, halt! Oh, monjee, M’sieu, stop!” said Jawnny.

Tom looked around at his men, amazed at their faces of mysterious terror.

“What on earth has happened?” cried he.

Instead of answering, the men simply pointed to Big Baptiste, who was soon within twenty yards.

“What is the trouble, Baptiste?” asked Tom.

Baptiste’s face was the hue of death. As he spoke he shuddered:—

“Monjee, Mr. Tom, we’ll got for stop de job!”

“Stop the job! Are you crazy?”

“If you’ll not b’lieve what I told, den you go’n’ see for you’se’f.”

“What is it?”

“De track, seh.”

“What track? Wolves?”

“If it was only wolfs!”

"Confound you! can't you say what it is?"

"Ee's de—it ain't safe for told its name out loud, for dass de way it come—if it's call by its name!"

"Windego, eh?" said Tom, laughing.

"I'll know its track jus' as quick's I see it."

"Do you mean you have seen a Windego track?"

"Monjee, seh, don't say its name! Let us go back," said Jawnny. "Baptiste was at Madores' shanty with us when it took Hermidas Dubois."

"Yesseh. That's de way I'll come for know de track soon's I see it," said Baptiste. "Before den I mos' don' b'lieve dere was any of it. But ain't it take Hermidas Dubois only last New Year's?"

"That was all nonsense about Dubois. I'll bet it was a joke to scare you all."

"Who's kill a man for a joke?" said Baptiste.

"Did you see Hermidas Dubois killed? Did you see him dead? No! I heard all about it. All you know is that he went away on New Year's morning, when the rest of the men were too scared to leave the shanty, because some one said there was a Windego track outside."

"Hermidas never come back!"

"I'll bet he went away home. You'll find him at Saint Agathe in the spring. You can't be such fools as to believe in Windegos."

"Don't you say dat name some more!" yelled Big Baptiste, now fierce with fright. "Hain't I just seen de track? I'm go'n' back, me, if I don't get a copper of pay for de whole winter!"

"Wait a little now, Baptiste," said Tom, alarmed lest his party should desert him and the job. "I'll soon find out what's at the bottom of the track."

"Dere is blood at de bottom—I seen it!" said Baptiste.

“Well, you wait till I go and see it.”

“No! I go back, me,” said Baptiste, and started up the slope with the others at his heels.

“Halt! Stop there! Halt, you fools! Don’t you understand that if there was any such monster it would as easily catch you in one place as another?”

The men went on. Tom took another tone.

“Boys, look here! I say, you are going to desert me like cowards?”

“Hain’t goin’ for desert you, Mr. Tom, no seh!” said Baptiste, halting. “Honly I’ll hain’ go for cross de track.” They all faced round.

Tom was acquainted with a considerable number of Windego superstitions.

“There’s no danger unless it’s a fresh track,” he said. “Perhaps it’s an old one.”

“Fresh made dis mornin’,” said Baptiste.

“Well, wait till I go and see it. You’re all right, you know, if you don’t cross it. Isn’t that the idea?”

“No, seh. Mr. Humphreys told Madore ‘bout dat. Eef somebody cross de track and don’t never come back, den de magic ain’t in de track no more. But it’s watchin’, watchin’ all round to catch somebody what cross its track; and if nobody don’t cross its track and get catched, den de—de Ting mebby get crazy mad, and nobody don’ know what it’s goin’ for do. Kill every person mebby.”

Tom mused over this information. These men had all been in Madore’s shanty; Madore was under Red Dick Humphreys; Red Dick was Rory Carmichael’s head foreman; he had sworn to stop the survey by hook or by crook, and this vow had been made after Tom had hired his gang from among those scared away from Madore’s shanty. Tom thought he began to understand the situation.

“Just wait a bit, boys,” he said, and started.

“You ain’t surely go’n’ for cross de track?” cried Baptiste.

“Not now, anyway,” said Tom. “But wait till I see it.”

When he reached the mysterious track it surprised him so greatly that he easily forgave Baptiste’s fears.

If a giant having ill-shaped feet as long as Tom’s snow-shoes had passed by in moccasins, the main features of the indentations might have been produced. But the marks were no deeper in the snow than if the huge moccasins had been worn by an ordinary man. They were about five and a half feet apart from centres, a stride that no human legs could take at a walking pace.

Moreover, there were on the snow none of the dragging marks of striding; the gigantic feet had apparently been lifted straight up clear of the snow, and put straight down.

Strangest of all, at the front of each print were five narrow holes which suggested that the mysterious creature had travelled with bare, claw-like toes. An irregular drip or squirt of blood went along the middle of the indentations! Nevertheless, the whole thing seemed of human devising.

This track, Tom reflected, was consistent with the Indian superstition that Windegos are monsters who take on or relinquish the human form, and vary their size at pleasure. He perceived that he must bring the maker of those tracks promptly to book, or suffer his men to desert the survey, and cost him his whole winter’s work, besides making him a laughing stock in the settlements.

The young fellow made his decision instantly. After feeling for his match-box and sheath-knife, he took his hatchet from his sash, and called to the men.

“Go into camp and wait for me!”

Then he set off alongside of the mysterious track at his best pace. It came out of a tangle of alders to the west, and went into such another tangle about a quarter of a mile to the east. Tom went east. The men watched him with horror.

“He’s got crazy, looking at de track,” said Big Baptiste, “for that’s the way,—one is enchanted,—he must follow.”

“He was a good boss,” said Jawnny, sadly.

As the young fellow disappeared in the alders the men looked at one another with a certain shame. Not a sound except the sough of pines from the neighboring forest was heard. Though the sun was sinking in clear blue, the aspect of the wilderness, gray and white and severe, touched the impressionable men with deeper melancholy. They felt lonely, masterless, mean.

“He was a good boss,” said Jawnny again.

“Tort Dieu!” cried Baptiste, leaping to his feet. “It’s a shame for desert the young boss. I don’t care; the Windego can only kill me. I’m going for help Mr. Tom.”

“Me also,” said Jawnny.

Then all wished to go. But after some parley it was agreed that the others should wait for the portageurs, who were likely to be two miles behind, and make camp for the night.

Soon Baptiste and Jawnny, each with his axe, started diagonally across the swale, and entered the alders on Tom’s track.

It took them twenty yards through the alders, to the edge of a warm spring or marsh about fifty yards wide. This open, shallow water was completely encircled by alders that came down to its very edge. Tom’s snow-shoe track joined the track of the mysterious monster for the first time on the edge—and there both vanished!

Baptiste and Jawnny looked at the place with the wildest terror, and without even thinking to search the deeply indented opposite edges of the little pool for a reappearance of the tracks, fled back to the party. It was just as Red Dick Humphreys had said; just as they had always heard. Tom, like Hermidas Dubois, appeared to have vanished from existence the moment he stepped on the Windego track!

The dimness of early evening was in the red-pine forest through which Tom’s party had passed early in the afternoon, and the belated portageurs were tramping along the line. A man with a red head had been long crouching in some cedar bushes to the east of the “blazed” cutting. When he had watched the portageurs pass out of sight, he stepped over upon their track, and followed it a short distance.

A few minutes later a young fellow, over six feet high, who strongly resembled Tom Dunscombe, followed the red-headed man.

The stranger, suddenly catching sight of a flame far away ahead on the edge of the beaver meadow, stopped and fairly hugged himself.

“Camped, by jiminy! I knowed I’d fetch ‘em,” was the only remark he made.

“I wish Big Baptiste could see that Windego laugh,” thought Tom Dunscombe, concealed behind a tree.

After reflecting a few moments, the red-headed man, a wiry little fellow, went forward till he came to where an old pine had recently fallen across the track. There he kicked off his snow-shoes, picked them up, ran along the trunk, jumped into the snow from among the branches, put on his snow-shoes, and started northwestward. His new track could not be seen from the survey line.

But Tom had beheld and understood the purpose of the manouvre. He made straight for the head of the fallen tree, got on the stranger’s tracks and cautiously followed them, keeping far enough behind to be out of hearing or sight.

The red-headed stranger went toward the wood out of which the mysterious track of the morning had come. When he had reached the little brush-camp in which he had slept the previous night, he made a small fire, put a small tin pot on it, boiled some tea, broiled a venison steak, ate his supper, had several good laughs, took a long smoke, rolled himself round and round in his blanket, and went to sleep.

Hours passed before Tom ventured to crawl forward and peer into the brush camp. The red-headed man was lying on his face, as is the custom of many woodsmen. His capuchin cap covered his red head.

Tom Dunscombe took off his own long sash. When the red-headed man woke up he found that some one was on his back, holding his head firmly down.

Unable to extricate his arms or legs from his blankets, the red-headed man began to utter fearful threats. Tom said not one word, but diligently wound his sash round his prisoner’s head, shoulders, and arms.

He then rose, took the red-headed man's own "tump-line," a leather strap about twelve feet long, which tapered from the middle to both ends, tied this firmly round the angry live mummy, and left him lying on his face.

Then, collecting his prisoner's axe, snow-shoes, provisions, and tin pail, Tom started with them back along the Windego track for camp.

Big Baptiste and his comrades had supped too full of fears to go to sleep. They had built an enormous fire, because Windegos are reported, in Indian circles, to share with wild beasts the dread of flames and brands. Tom stole quietly to within fifty yards of the camp, and suddenly shouted in unearthly fashion. The men sprang up, quaking.

"It's the Windego!" screamed Jawnny.

"You silly fools!" said Tom, coming forward. "Don't you know my voice? Am I a Windego?"

"It's the Windego, for sure; it's took the shape of Mr. Tom, after eatin' him," cried Big Baptiste.

Tom laughed so uproariously at this that the other men scouted the idea, though it was quite in keeping with their information concerning Windegos' habits.

Then Tom came in and gave a full and particular account of the Windego's pursuit, capture, and present predicament.

"But how'd he make de track?" they asked.

"He had two big old snow-shoes, stuffed with spruce tips underneath, and covered with dressed deerskin. He had cut off the back ends of them, you shall see them to-morrow. I found them down yonder where he had left them after crossing the warm spring. He had five bits of sharp round wood going down in front of them. He must have stood on them one after the other, and lifted the back one every time with the pole he carried. I've got that, too. The blood was from a deer he had run down and killed in the snow. He carried the blood in his tin pail, and sprinkled it behind him. He must have run out our line long ago with a compass, so he knew where it would go. But come, let us go and see if it's Red Dick Humphreys."

Red Dick proved to be the prisoner. He had become quite philosophic while waiting for his captor to come back. When unbound he grinned pleasantly, and remarked:

"You're Mr. Dunscombe, eh? Well, you're a smart young feller, Mr. Dunscombe. There ain't another man on the Ottaway that could 'a' done that trick on me. Old Dan McEachran will make your fortun' for this, and I don't begrudge it. You're a man—that's so. If ever I hear any feller saying to the contrayry he's got to lick Red Dick Humphreys."

And he told them the particulars of his practical joke in making a Windego track round Madore's shanty.

"Hermidas Dubois?—oh, he's all right," said Red Dick. "He's at home at St. Agathe. Man, he helped me to fix up that Windego track at Madore's; but, by criminy! the look of it scared him so he wouldn't cross it himself. It was a holy terror!"

An Unauthenticated Serpent

William Sidney Rossiter

"You're about the only man," he said slowly, "that ever asked what his first name was."

"Why is that?"

"Well, sir, I never knew why. He was just 'Walker' to everybody. Always was, from a boy. I knowed him from a little chap at school, and he was just Walker, then. His name was Edward, but bless your soul, there wa'n't a dozen folks in Wyoming County knew it, and after awhile it did seem like the Edward sort of mildewed off, from lack of use, and left him plain 'Walker.'"

I was a stranger on the lake, and I had idly asked the weather-beaten old fellow fishing from a flat-bottomed scow near me who kept the timeworn hotel which stood on the further shore. My neighbor's luck had been no better than mine, and he was quite willing to talk.

"Yes," he said reflectively, "It's Walker's. Walker is dead, but it's Walker's Hotel. It always has been and it always will be, I suppose, till it burns down or dries up. I reckon," he added, after a pause, "that no other house in America was ever built in the way that was."

"How was that?"

"Perhaps you never heard of the Great Sea Serpent of Silver Lake?"

"I never did."

"Well, the sea serpent built that house, and he built it well. It's stood forty years just as you see it now."

"What was the sea serpent?"

"Well, it all happened before the war. They talk about jokes and schemes and fakes, as they call 'em, nowadays, but that snake was the all-firedest biggest hoax ever heard on in these parts."

"Do you know the story?"

"Know the story?" echoed the occupant of the scow, looking compassionately at me across the water. "Man and boy I've lived here sixty years, and I was in that job from beginning to end. Mebbe you'd like to hear about it?" he added inquiringly.

"I certainly should," I replied, with a sense of satisfaction that the lake might be made to produce some compensation for poor fishing. The old fellow let out his anchor a turn or two, swung around my way, and after putting on a fresh bait he began:

"In 1865 my father owned a farm along the western shore of the lake. If we was a bit further out you could see some of the medder land, just round the point over there. I was a likely young feller in those days, and there wasn't much about this lake I didn't know. It wasn't like it is now around here. To be sure there were picnics and all that in the summer season, but there wasn't a house on the lake shore from end to end, except the old hotel of Walker's, and the water was alive with fish. In the spring of '55 I was twenty-one; I reckon Walker was about twenty-eight. Walker was a curious feller, one of them quiet, deep sort of men. The Perry village people hadn't thought he was very heavy-headed, but since 1855 I hain't seen a man in the whole town of Perry that could have kep' up with Walker in solid brains.

"His father had died the year before, and left him a farm just back from the lake and a good piece of land along the shore with an old hotel and picnic grounds. The Walker family was supposed to run the hotel in the summer and sort of farm it the rest of the time. But Walker wasn't satisfied with that. Si Blodgett and I was his best friends, and he used to talk to us of how things was goin' and wish he could stir 'em up. Si lived next to me up on the West Road. One night early in June Si and me rowed over to Walker's. I could row across the lake in those days quicker than I can now. Well, Walker had been doin' chores around that old hotel, getting ready to open it up for the season, and I tell you it looked dismal enough in the dusk. He seemed to have something on his mind.

"'Boys,' sez he, 'I'll lock up here and then you can come down to the boathouse with me awhile; I've got something to talk to you about.' He locked up the hotel and we three went down to the lake shore. I never see'd a prettier night than that was; there wasn't a cloud in the sky nor a ripple on the whole blessed lake, and every star shone up from the water as though it was sky above and sky below. We sat down on a bench by the boathouse.

"'I've got a plan in my head, boys,' said Walker, 'that's a pretty serious one. I want to know whether you two will stand by me to the end?'

"'Walker,' says Si Blodgett, 'we three was brought up together; if you want any help from us, we're with you till you say no.' Then I told him about the same thing.

"'Well,' he said, 'I knew we three hadn't been friends for nothing, but I've reached a place where I've got to make a big move of some kind or go under. What with a poor season last year and father's death, I don't mind telling you it's as much as I can do to hold on to the farm and hotel. I thought of working the farm and trying to rent the hotel, but I could not see enough in that to pull me through. Fact is, boys, there's only one chance; I need ready money for the mortgages, and if the hotel has a good. season I'm all right. I've been thinking and thinking how to make sure of that sort of season and I've got an idea about it. You see this is a little lake; It's out of the way and not much known, and people come to fish and picnic, but the hotel don't draw much business. Boys, an ordinary season won't pull me through; I want sensation, and I've got to get one or smash. Last winter I read an article in a newspaper about the sea serpent being seen in Long Island Sound, and how city people just poured into the towns around there and kept up a big excitement. Now, Si Blodgett, why can't we have a sea serpent right here in Silver Lake?'

"Walker was excited. He talked low and quiet, but I tell you he was worked up. Well, sir, it fairly took the breath out of Si Blodgett and me. I think Si nearly fell off the bench. 'Wouldn't it be found out?' he asked, sort of shaky.

"'Not if it's worked right.'

"'How's that?'

"'My idea is to have the serpent appear pretty often at first, and get people excited and coming to the lake, and then we can stop when they get too thick.'

"Si Blodgett didn't seem to think much of the plan.

"'I'll tell you what, Walker,' said he, soothingly, 'I'll do anything to help you, but this is dangerous for us all. You want to rig up a log or something, and get people all by the ears, and then when they're worked up they'll find us three down in the marsh pulling a big wooden snake around with a string. I tell you, Walker, they'll tar and feather us.'

"'You're right, Si,' said Walker, just as quiet as you please. 'It we had a lame plan like that, we might as well go to jail beforehand. I've got a safe plan all laid out; listen to it, boys, and then I'll leave it to you whether we try it or not.'

"Well, sir, Si Blodgett and I had always been fond of Walker, but till he began to talk that night we never knew what a head there was on him. He had the whole thing planned out. His serpent was to be a big hosepipe, painted dark green, with white spots. There was to be a keg at one end, made over to resemble a big serpent's head, and painted a bright color. The critter was to be raised by air and sunk by water, and operated from the shore by a small pipe which should be connected with the tail of the snake. Walker's idea was that as the hotel was but a few rods from the lake, the piping should be run underground to the house, and then up to a room which commanded a good outlook and from which the whole thing could be operated.

"The trouble seemed to be to move the thing around, but Walker said that when it was on the surface and full of air it would be easy to work about, and a coil of light rope connecting from the snake to the other shore and then back over a pulley, and another line from the other side, would do. Well, he drew such a vivid picture of the whole thing, the snake's appearance, the fright of the people on the lake, the newspaper accounts and the crowds that would come, that when he ended by saying. 'Now, boys, there's the plan. I said I would leave it to you, and I will. What do you say to it?' neither Si Blodgett nor I hesitated a second. We were really only boys. We jumped off that bench by the boathouse and told him we would go in heart and soul, and swore by all our old friendship to stand by him to the end.

"Well, sir, at that Walker almost broke down, and I began to see how much depended on it for him. We settled that evening what each of us was to do. Walker had about $100 in money, which he thought would get the hose and fittings, and he was to go to Buffalo for them by the end of that week. We arranged while he was gone that Si and I should make the head and a strong bellows in a vacant loft over my father's toolhouse. The fitting together could only be done in Walker's barn at night. We concluded ten days would be enough for that part of the work and that we could be ready for business about

July 6. It was so late by this time that Si and I said a hurried good-night and started across the lake. I shall never forget that trip. In our excited state every shadow was the dim outline of a sea serpent, every ripple the beginning of a head. Well, sir, for a week off and on as we got the chance, without exciting any attention, Si and I worked away on that head, and I tell you we fixed up the reddest and awfullest-looking critter you ever see. We wrapped it up in sacking and rowed it over the lake one quiet night about the end of June. We took it right up to the loft in Walker's barn, where he was collecting all his material. He cut off the sackin' and took a look at the head. You should have seen how pleased he was.

"'Boys,' says he after a minute, 'it almost makes me shiver. That head will pull Wyoming County clean out of its boots.'

"'Well,' says I, 'if that head hadn't been wrapped up coming over in the boat, and them eyes had been out a-lookin' at us, I reckon Si Blodgett and I would have fell overboard.'

"Si and I spent that night with Walker, and we put in some work on the critter, I can tell you. Walker had bought a lot of things in Buffalo piecemeal, and so no one up there was suspicious. As he was getting the hotel ready for summer, Berry people didn't think anything about the bundles that kep' a-comin'. I reckoned he'd have some trouble gettin' the hose, but somehow Walker's luck was always stiddy. He found just the thing. It had been made for a hose company up in the city and rejected because it was too large for them. It was about a foot thick, made of leather, closely riveted. Most hose like that is stiff and heavy, but this was limber and just about the right weight. There was twenty-four feet of that hose, and Walker had painted it green, and mottled it up some with white paint. Well, sir, we fitted the head on and got the critter pretty well into shape that night. The connecting air pipe was left until the last thing. The critter was the first step. The next thing was laying the pipe. Walker said he would attend to that, to prevent suspicion, and Si and I set the pulleys on the east shore. That was no easy job. Walker was always sayin', 'Boys, do everything so well, that you won't be afraid of gettin' found out if the whole of Wyoming County camp out along the lake'; and Si and I set those pulleys into rock under water and then arranged brush and stone over the place along shore. We did it all at night, and if we hadn't set marks we never in the world could have found those pulleys again.

"Walker himself pegged away at them pipes, and I tell you it was a Job. He laid two pipes side by side underground from a swampy place down on the lake shore, a little way below the hotel, right up to the cellar and then up the east chimney, that being boarded up, to the southeast room on the second floor. The air pipe was small, but the other pipe, which was intended to carry the cords to operate the critter, was a two-inch tubing, and strong.

"Walker was anxious to have things all ready by the Fourth of July, because that always brought a crowd to the lake, but it was no use tryin' for that. I never see'd a scheme with so much solid work in it. Si and I was busy round the farms all day, and I tell you when we got through with our night work besides we was petered out. By the 10th of July we was about ready. Si and I was pretty excited when we rowed over that night. We each had a bundle of clothes with us, as Walker had hired us to help at the hotel for a couple of weeks—at least that was the story we told. It was a hard time for both of us to get away, bein' right in the busy season, and my father kicked like a mule about it, but I went just the same.

"That night we sort of put things together. We connected the bellows and air pump with the air pipe, after blowing a small plug through the other tubing. To the plug was fastened a string, and with that we pulled through all the cords, carefully soaped to make them move freely. It may seem sort of unlikely to you that there was any chance of moving this big critter around as we expected to do, and controlling it from such a distance, but it really was not. Walker had such a head on him that he had all the details figured out. His plan was just this: a small leaded rubber pipe, and plenty of it, connecting the air pipe on the shore with the middle of the serpent. This made it easy to raise or lower the serpent at will, water being admitted when the air pressure was removed by a suction valve in the side of the hose. In the other tubing were five cords, one at each side of the head, leading forward, but to opposite shores, and one at each side of the tail, leading the other way. Another cord connected with the head so as to give that an independent motion. Then the work was finished, but night after night we watched and waited for one that was dark enough to be safe. At last on the 16th there came up a hard northeast storm.

"That night was as dark as a pocket, and I tell you, sir, there, were three excited men around Walker's Hotel. About 11 o'clock we crept out to the barn and took the serpent down to the shore, connected the pipes with great care, and Si Blodgett and I towed the snake out to the spot agreed upon. Walker hurried back to the hotel; he was to signal with a light from the southeast room when we were to cast the critter off. We had hardly reached the spot when he gave the signal and we cut loose. Although the night was so dark, we were close enough to the serpent to see it lying on the surface of the lake beside us. The head rode high in the water, being of wood, and those horrible eyes glared straight ahead.

"Minute after minute passed. Each one seemed an hour. The snake's position showed not the slightest change. Was it a failure after all? Si Blodgett and I were so excited that we breathed with difficulty. Suddenly I heard Si's hoarse whisper: 'Hen, the head is sinking.'

"It surely was. Little by little it lowered into the lake until the water rippled over the eyes. Then down the whole dark and mottled length there was a convulsive tremor, so lifelike that it was hideous, and the snake appeared to be moving toward us. The head arose out of the water and swayed slightly from side to side. I never expect to see a more horrible sight than that critter presented. I knowed all about it; I had made that head myself; but I jumped back to my seat, and rowed for the shore till both oars bent. The Great Sea Serpent was in the lake, a reality at last.

"That night Walker, Si Blodgett and I had a long discussion about the serpent's public appearance, and we agreed to let it be seen only at night until we were accustomed to working it. Walker was the proper man to operate the critter, but, of course, he had to be about the hotel and be very careful not to excite suspicion, so he gave Si Blodgett the key of that southeast room and put him in charge. I was to be the outside man, loafing around on the lake, fishing or rowing, near where the serpent was, and ready with a set of signals in case of any trouble. The next day was bright and sunny and we all worked quietly around the house. About suppertime five or six young fellows from Perry drove up to the hotel. One of 'em was Lon Scribner, who worked for the newspaper that came out every week at Perry. Walker gave me a look, and then he went to meet 'em.

"'How's the fishin', Walker?' says Lon.

"'First rate.'

"'Let us have a boat for a couple of hours?'

"'Glad to,' says Walker.

"They got out and hitched, and Lon, says he:

'Where are the bass bitin' this year, Walker?'

"Walker sat down on the horse-block and thought about it. 'Well,' says he, 'I haven't been out much myself, but I hear the best place is over east of the inlet. You might try it there.'

"I knew what was coming. The serpent lay just east of the inlet.

"They started out, and I told Walker I thought I would go fishing myself. So I rowed slowly over a ways, and kept watch on the party. It was about 9 o'clock when they came over by the inlet. It was time for the serpent. I lit my pipe and rowed slowly along. The light was the signal to begin. The fishing party had been having good luck before, but they were perfectly quiet for about five minutes, then Joe McKnight said: 'Guess we're driftin', ain't we, Lon?'

"'No, we ain't.'

"'Well, there's a big log over there.'

"'Can't be,' says Lon.

"There was a silence, and then Joe McKnight said in the scaredest voice I ever heard, 'Boys, that thing is moving!'

"'It's bendin' round!' says one of the others. 'There's a head on it! Great heavens, look at those eyes!'

"Well, sir, there was all creation let loose in that boat. Those fellows just fell over each other to get at the anchor, and they lost their knives in the water trying to cut the rope. They pulled and cussed and shouted, and all the time Lon Scribner was calling loud enough to be heard a mile, 'Pull, pull, or we'll all be killed!'

"Well, they did pull. I never seed a boat move so fast before, and in five minutes they landed, by a medder on the east side, and left the boat there, and walked home. The next morning Lon Scribner came over for the wagon, and before noon the newspaper man come over to see Walker.

"'Mr. Walker,' says he, 'there was a terrible occurrence on the lake last evening.'

"What's that?' says Walker, lookin' surprised.

"'A monster of the deep, sir, pursued a party of young men.'

"'Hoax, isn't it?' said Walker.

"'I thought so myself at first, but I have the sworn statement of every man in the party.'

"'What did it look like?'

"'They describe it, sir, as an enormous serpent, of horrible appearance, fully fifty feet long, with a head as large as a cow, and immense, fiery eyes.'

"'Well,' said Walker, 'I hope it isn't true. It'll stop fishin' and ruin my business if it is, but the fact is I shouldn't be surprised if queer things turned up in the lake now and then. You know that place where they've never been able to find bottom?'

"'Yes,' said the newspaper feller, anxiously.

"'Well, my father always declared that was an underground outlet to Lake Ontario.'

"The newspaper man made a note of that.

Then he went down to the boathouse and looked about; and you should have seed the newspaper he turned out two days after that. There was a picture of a tremendous snake printed on the first page, and eight columns of readin' matter about the monster in Silver Lake, with afferdavits from ten or fifteen people who had seed it. Well, sir, Walker give one glance at that paper and then he sent word over to Perry for a big lot of provisions and rowed down the lake himself and bought up every rowboat at the south end.

"'Now, boys,' says he to Si and me, when he got back, 'watch out sharp, the crowd'll be here to-morrow.' An' it was. There's no use makin' a long story 'bout the people, but I never seed the like of 'em. The population's growed in forty years, and that education business over there in the grove, and the cottages and whatnot brings a crowd here every summer nowadays, but I tell you they're just nothin' to the slathers of people that poured around this lake for five weeks in the summer of '55. They come in wagons, they come a-foot. There was single men and women and whole families. I reckon there were 500 people camped out every clear night through August. The roads all about were lined with teams askin' the way to Silver Lake, and had they caught the serpent?

"As for Walker, he just tended hotel night and day stiddy. He run his prices up out of sight, but it didn't make no difference. There was a crowd a-beggin' and quarrellin' for rooms all day long, and as fer boats, they was 50 cents an hour, and even then the crowd at the boathouse had to draw lots fer next chance. Walker wasn't the only one, though, that was workin' that serpent. The newspaper man was nearly crazy; along in the spring the Sheriff had been lookin' fer him on a judgment, but by the middle of August he had hired a crowd of men and bought two more printing presses. Every other day he run out a sea serpent extra, with cuts and big headlines. It wasn't Wyoming County alone, though, that was broke up over that serpent. The postmaster at Perry was about wild with letters from everywhere askin' was it real. He got 'em from New England and Pennsylvania, and two from Kentucky in one day.

"As fer the serpent, I tell you we was cautious. Up to the latter part of August we had let it appear ten or a dozen times, mostly at night. Twice the thing had been seen in the daytime by people on the shore; somehow it happened no one was on the lake at the time, and I will say that a more lifelike critter I never see. I didn't blame the fellows that walked around and swore to that snake. I'd almost swore myself.

"Well, about the first of September the excitement was so great it began to get hot. Over in Perry they formed a company with a capital of $1,000. They called it the Experiment Company, and the members swore they'd ketch that snake, dead or alive. The president and secretary went to Buffalo to consult fishermen and divers, and three days afterward they come over to Walker's bringin' a tall feller with chin whiskers and a harpoon. Blamed if he wasn't a whaler, and the company had imported him from Nantucket. They bought a boat and that whaler sat there on the lake all day with his harpoon on his arm.

"The day after that feller came the crowd was twice as big, just to see the whaler, I reckon. Walker began to look worried. Well, about 1 o'clock the next day a Rochester man turned up with a tremendous iron fish hook, an old clothesline and two live hens.

"Everybody laughed fit to kill, but he didn't. He hired a boat, rowed out on the lake and somehow drifted over east of the inlet. Then he stuck one of them squawkin' chickens on his hook and dropped it over. About ten minutes after that the feller give a screech, and there he was, a-hangin' to the clothesline, and it was pullin' his boat along! The effect of that screech was wonderful. People on the shore ran along the bank and shouted like Indians, and all the boats on the lake rowed like mad fer the man with the hook. The whaler led the pack, standin' up in the bow of his boat with the harpoon ready. Just then the fisherman's boat slacked up, and he stood up with a piece of cord in his hand. The clothesline had broken. I almost fainted, I was so scared, but I hurried over to the hotel and found Walker. He was most crazy. We went up to the southwest room and had a hurried conference. It seemed that Si, seein' that fisherman rather too close to where the serpent was, had tried to shift the critter, and must have caught the hook by doing it. The snake begun to work badly just before the clothesline broke, and I tell you it didn't break a minute too soon.

"'Boys,' says Walker, decidedly, 'It's gettin' too hot; the snake has served its purpose; we've made enough money to pull me out of trouble and do the handsome thing all around. Now we'll end the whole thing.'

"Si and I agreed. We were ready enough to; bein' a little scared. By good luck that night was stormy. After midnight we three went out on the lake, found the pulley connection on the other shore, and hauled up the serpent. Sure enough there was that Rochester feller's hook and chicken wedged round the hose near the critter's head. The hook had picked a hole in the leather and so the serpent was damaged anyway. We towed it out to the place where they have never touched bottom, and let the Great Sea Serpent sink for the last time.

"The next day I heard that my father was sick, so I left in a hurry for home. I found father in bed.

"'Hennery,' says he, when I got to his room, 'I have something to say to you alone, my son.' So the others left, and says he, 'Are you home for good, Hennery?'

"'I reckon so,' says I.

"'Through with your serpent now?'

"'What do you mean, pa?' I said, feeling queer.

"'Well, I saw the head you was making up in the toolhouse, my son, and I thought mebbe this was only a visit.' And sure enough, that old feller had knowed the whole thing, and never opened his mouth to a soul.

"'Hennery,' he said after a minute, 'I've been thinkin' about you, my son. You didn't pay any attention to me; you left the farm when I needed you, and with me sick here this summer, your sister Maria has been the only dependence of the family. I can't live long, Hennery, and I've made a will givin' you the cottage and lot up on the road, and leavin' the house and farm to your sister, my son.' Well, he died a couple of months after that. Maria has the farm yet, and somehow I've"—

The old man stopped his story abruptly. A look of intense annoyance overspread his face. "Well, I swow," he ejaculated. "Sure as you live that fish has bit off bait, hook and all, and I never knowed it." Then after a moment's pause, he added, half resignedly, "Well, that's just like me; ever since '55 I've jest been agoin' to ketch a fish; never do."

To The Pliocene Skull
(A Geological Address)

Bret Harte

“Speak, O man, less recent! Fragmentary fossil!
Primal pioneer of pliocene formation,
Hid in lowest drifts below the earliest stratum
Of volcanic tufa!

“Older than the beasts, the oldest Palaeotherium;
Older than the trees, the oldest Cryptogami;
Older than the hills, those infantile eruptions
Of earth’s epidermis!

“Eo—Mio—Plio—whatsoe’er the ‘cene’ was
That those vacant sockets filled with awe and wonder,
Whether shores Devonian or Silurian beaches,—
Tell us thy strange story!

“Or has the professor slightly antedated
By some thousand years thy advent on this planet,
Giving thee an air that’s somewhat better fitted
For cold-blooded creatures?

“Wert thou true spectator of that mighty forest
When above thy head the stately Sigillaria
Reared its columned trunks in that remote and distant
Carboniferous epoch?

“Tell us of that scene,—the dim and watery woodland,
Songless, silent, hushed, with never bird or insect,
Veiled with spreading fronds and screened with tall club-mosses,
Lycopodiacea,—

“When beside thee walked the solemn Plesiosaurus,
And around thee crept the festive Ichthyosaurus,
While from time to time above thee flew and circled
Cheerful Pterodactyls.

“Tell us of thy food,—those half-marine refections,
Crinoids on the shell and Brachipods *au naturel*,—
Cuttlefish to which the *pieuvre* of Victor Hugo
Seems a periwinkle.

“Speak, thou awful vestige of the earth’s creation,
Solitary fragment of remains organic!
Tell the wondrous secret of thy past existence,—
Speak! thou oldest primate!”

Even as I gazed, a thrill of the maxilla,
And a lateral movement of the condyloid process,
With post-pliocene sounds of healthy mastication,
Ground the teeth together.

And from that imperfect dental exhibition,
Stained with express juices of the weed nicotian,
Came these hollow accents, blent with softer murmurs
Of expectoration:

“Which my name is Bowers, and my crust was busted
Falling down a shaft in Calaveras County;
But I ‘d take it kindly if you ‘d send the pieces
Home to old Missouri!”

Babette's Loup-Garou
A Tale of French Prairie du Chien

Frank Welles Calkins

At the upper end of the marsh, ten minutes' walk from the village of St. Friole, Babette Carbonneau and the small Jacques had their playground. They had little else than play to occupy them in the late summer. They had worn a path through the tall grass to a carpeted mound of four corners, which Basil Giard had said was the ruins of a fort built a hundred years before by a famous 'Sieur du Lhut.

Upon this mound, slight as its elevation was above the high grass of the prairie des chiens, they could overlook the gray cabins of St. Friole and the houses, stores and fort at L'Isle de Village.

On the angular top of the mound Babette played at housekeeping with Jacques and a carved doll of Menominee manufacture for her family. Small pieces of broken pottery served as household utensils, and feathery cat-tails, purple and yellow autumn flowers for decoration.

As to her house, a grande dame could scarce have wished a finer mansion, partitioned as it was into many rooms by the simple process of laying cat-tails.

"Jacques, mind now—you and Felicie!" Babette would often say. "You must not go in that room. See? Well, then, it is *tres belle—pomponnaie pour des hotes.*"

Babette had her traditions of grand furnishings, mostly from *tante* Felicie Dechon—her own aunt—whose parents had been considerable folk at Louisbourg.

And so Jacques would double his spider legs under his tiny body and stare with wide eyes at the wonder. He was not much bigger than Felicie, who had neither legs nor arms, and who was supposed to roll her goggle eyes at the sight of so great magnificence.

An arm of the Marais St. Friole, which almost washed a base of the mound and teemed with life, gave Babette a vast sense of opulence—of domestic comfort and a bountiful larder. The countless duck and grebe which swam and puddled, unconscious of intrusion, were hers, and her land fowl were often heard cackling amid the rushes and tall grasses near at hand.

It mattered not that these last were ugly black rails, or that their croaking was scarcely less harsh and discordant than the cries of crows flapping between the bluffs.

The broad river, shining beyond the marsh, was her sea, and the steep, rock-serried hills on either hand were mountains, beyond which lay the unknown world.

It was on their mound, in the center, the very heart of their small kingdom, that an appalling adventure came to Babette and Jacques. Here the terrible Loup-Garou came prowling after them—an unheard of thing in broad daylight.

Babette had that day for visitors grand bourgeois company, of a personnel compounded of family traditions. She was waiting on these people, filled with pride and bustle, when Jacques, forgetting the proprieties, flung himself upon her and buried his face, screaming, in her skirts.

Much annoyed, the young hostess looked about, supposing that Jacques had seen a snake, which happening always set him off screaming. What the startled girl saw, just beyond an edge of the mound, was the head and upper parts of a huge gray wolf staring solemnly at her. The animal stood directly between her and homeward path. Its furry coat was partly wet as if from swimming in the marsh.

Forgetting Felicie and her company, Babette caught Jacques in her arms. The wolf should not have him if she could prevent.

“Go away, you bad beast!” she shouted. She had heard that one must not run from a wolf, but face it boldly.

“Do not fear,” she said to Jacques; “it is only a wolf after the chickens. He will go away presently.” She was trembling, but held her ground bravely, and tried to shoo the wolf away. She dared not descend from the mound, which had become her stronghold and seemed in a degree to place her out of danger.

The wolf now moved slowly about, sniffing in the grass, until it had circled half-way around the mound. Then the creature suddenly stood erect upon its hind legs, opened its jaws and showed frightful rows of teeth. Then slowly the forearms were lifted in a beckoning way, and with eyes starting from her head Babette saw a pair of black, skinny human hands stretched toward her.

"Le loogerou!" she screamed, "Le loogerou!" and she dashed down upon the path, bearing Jacques in her arms. She knew well that small boys were especial dainties of the "loogerous," and she ran like a scared deer.

In her crazed excitement she bounded quite past the nearer cabins of St. Friole and across a pole foot-bridge of the marais.

"A son pah-pah! A son pah-pah!" she shrieked, while startled villagers came to their doors to stare in wonder after her flying figure.

Babette only stopped running when she had crossed L'Isle de Village to the bake-house of Michael Brisbois, where her papa, Antoine Carbonneau, was at work.

"Le loogerou! le loogerou!" she cried, and as the aproned and heated baker came to his door, she flung the small Jacques into his arms and fell exhausted and panting at his feet.

However astonishing it may seem, this incident and subsequent ones undoubtedly happened exactly as I am relating them.

Babette in fact suffered such spasms of excitement that hours had passed before she could tell a coherent story.

There were some grave faces among the folk who gathered at the house of Antoine Carbonneau that evening. Babette was known to be a good, clever and truthful young girl, and her story, when her nervousness had passed off, told over and over with great particularity of detail, had its effect.

She had stood upon her mound for several minutes looking at the creature, and she would not have been frightened off but for the strange things which had happened.

None of the inhabitants had ever known of a wolf standing erect upon its hind legs, and certainly no real wolf had fore-paws resembling a man's hands—and the creature had been swimming! There were but few of the folk at St.

Friole, or across the marais, who were untinged with strong belief in the existence of Loups-garous, Indian devils, and in the naguales of the Menominee.

And now as the Carbonneau oil-lamp sputtered and supper coals glowed in the stone fire-box the folks, seated upon beds, stools and upon mats and rough floorboards, brought forth a fund of reminiscent evidence.

Pierre Antaya told of the awful screams under a rock ledge in Giard's Coulde which had driven him away from the pole-cutting he was doing for Augustine Freychette. Eustace Pelaye had heard similar frightful cries in the wood below the bayou of the Pig's Eye, and once he had seen a pair of green eyes staring at him from the bushes on the island of Quatre Bancs des Sables.

Tante Mary Ann Gagnier, the colored midwife and herb doctress, who had been raised on the lower river, made no doubt of Babette's story. Had not her own Registre Gagnier—she had survived several husbands and had a numerous brood—had he not been chased in from the bluffs by a black beast which ran upon two legs? Truly, there was somebody who needed looking after. She regaled her listeners with a dozen weird tales of Negro, Creole and Indian superstition. That was, indeed, a restless night for the young folk and for some of the older ones.

It is true that Michael Brisbois, the trader at L'Isle de Village, laughed at Babette's tale when he was told it, in the morning, and that Antoine Carbonneau still believed she had simply been frightened by a big and uncommonly saucy wolf.

Babette, however, would not again stir in the direction of her mound, and she finally persuaded Jean Pelaye to take his gun and fetch Felicie, who had been left at the mercy of the loogerou.

As pleasant days succeeded, her desire to keep house in a grand way, after the rnanner of Madame Brisbois and the wives of traders drove her to take up a new residence. She chose an Indian knoll lying between Brisbois' fort and the bake-house. This mound was not so large nor so free from disturbance by loafing Indians and les enfants as the one at the marsh. But there were two deep trenches, which separated houses of the island, running straight from the river to the marais, and between these grass-grown ditches and the footpaths she set up her small realm.

Here she again played contentedly when the idle Sacs and Winnebagoes did not come to lie about and watch her.

On warm afternoons she and Jacques would play until they could walk home with papa Carbonneau at sunset. The baker's wife was quite content with this arrangement. When corn and vegetables were out of the way, there was little enough to occupy her own attention.

Occasionally the baker was late with his work, and at dusk would shout at Babette and Jacques to go on home.

One evening a fog spread early upon the river, marsh and island, and as darkness was coming on, Babette led Jacques homeward. They followed a worn footpath which ran along one of the grass-covered trenches to the foot-bridge which crossed a shallow neck of the marsh.

They had nearly reached the bridge when the terrible Loup-garou again confronted them. This time there was scarce a breath for fright. The creature leaped out of the trench into the path and snatched Jacques in its forearms.

With a cry Babette seized the screaming lad by one leg and struggled in a frenzy with the beast. She fought wildly for a moment without fear for herself; then her hold was broken, and she was caught by the skirt and whirled dizzily into the ditch.

Jacques' screams suddenly ceased, and Babette, dazed and horrified, crawling out of the trench, could see nothing of beast or boy. They had vanished noiselessly into the fog.

Babette ran as before, filling the air with cries, until she met Carbonneau coming out of the bake-house. Her breathless tale froze the baker for an instant in his tracks. Then he caught Babette by the hand and ran with her to the spot where Jacques had been taken.

Together they rushed through the tall grass of the marsh side shouting, "Jacques! Jacques! O mon pauvre enfant!"

They ran hither and thither, the father quite as distracted as the young girl. Villagers on both sides the marsh heard their distressed and frantic cries. Men and women came running, some with weapons and some without.

Some dozens of people heard the story one by one, and such as had guns hurried through the grass in all directions. Some few lost courage and ran in superstitious affright to their homes.

Presently the hue and cry reached Michael Brisbois at his house. A villager came to tell the tale. Brisbois showed a face of grave concern at its conclusion.

“Let them keep on hunting for the lad,“ he said, “and tell them to spread widely along the river and marshes. ‘Twill be no use, I fear, but I, myself, will see what I can do to aid.”

M. Brisbois had a number of ponies running loose upon the island. He sent a man at once to fetch and saddle one. When the animal was at hand he mounted, rode across the marais ford and ran his horse at full speed toward a Winnebago village on the Wisconsin River, some four or five miles distant.

His quick-witted intelligence and his knowledge of Indian nature had led him to jump at a shrewd conclusion. Some of these Winnebagoes—among them the most worthless of Indians—had been lounging about the fort and villages nearly every day that summer. These fellows were inveterate beggars and on the watch also to pilfer.

They had hung about the bake-house to pick up refuse scraps and had bothered Carbonneau not a little. The baker had frequently ordered them off, sometimes with much emphasis, and some sneaking juggler of them had taken his revenge.

The scoundrel had gone about it in a coward’s way, playing upon a well-known belief in the loup-garou. He had done this to avoid suspicion taking the right direction, and to carry out his scheme at leisure. If he had not been a coward, he would have killed Babette or even Carbonneau. In a very brief space of time M. Brisbois reined in a sweating horse among the Winnebago lodges.

“Where is your chief?” he asked of wondering Indians who came out of their huts. “Where is Hassaugee?”

Hassaugee came shuffling forward to answer the call. Brisbois waited for no inquiry.

“A child has been taken from our villages,” he said, in a high, stern voice.

"One of your people has it. You will bring the child and the offender to my fort to-morrow. If you move from here without doing so, I will gather my men and put the Sioux on your trail. I have said enough." And he wheeled his horse about and rode back to his home.

All night men hunted about the swamps and the river and islands. Torches glared in the fog for miles around the villages.

The women gathered at Carbonneau's, where the mother and Babette wept. There was no hope among them. A loup-garou had taken little Jacques. Who would be the next victim?

Many of these women of the far wilderness who would have fought valiantly to save a child from the cougar or bear, or even from human savages, cowered at the thought of encounter with the half-human thing which, it seemed, had prowled at their very doorsteps.

Morning came and brought no light upon the tragedy. Hunters straggled wearily in at their cabins. 'Twas no use, they said, to follow a beast which left no tracks—bullets even would not avail against it. And then they ate the food prepared for their coming in silence.

Gloom spread over the villagers as the hours passed. All the stragglers were in at last, and there was no longer hope of finding the child. People went about their work saying nothing; such matters were best not talked about too much.

M. Brisbois kept his counsel. He had but small hope the child was living. He held grimly, however, to his purpose of following the Winnebagoes with punishment should they take to flight. He had great influence at Wabasha's Sioux villages above. The rascally Winnebagoes knew this, and therein lay his only hope.

He waited until mid-afternoon, and was about to send a man to look after Hassaugee's band, when a dusty procession was seen coming across the prairie from the Wisconsin.

Then M. Brisbois went to the Carbonneaus and told them what he had done.

"Do not hope too much," he said, "but come, you and others, to the fort. I think there will be punishment to be meted."

By the time the Winnebagoes, to the number of nearly half a hundred, had reached the lower marsh, most of the villagers, in a great state of excitement, had gathered in front of Brisbois' fort.

The trader's visit and his ultimatum to the Indians had been told. The coming of the Winnebagoes, in that ceremonial march, quickly converted them to the trader's theory. Still this solemn approach of so large a party did not argue for the safety of little Jacques. The Indians were quite in the habit of surrendering murderers to the relatives or friends of the deceased, and such an act of justice was always done in a solemn and impressive manner.

Therefore the folk became silent, save for the suppressed sobbing of women, and the suspense was well-nigh heart-breaking as the long file of Winnebagoes moved down to the marsh ford and disappeared behind tall grasses and a rise of ground.

But as the foremost came out upon the island, a tall figure was seen to be in advance, bearing a living child upon his shoulder—a child which sat bolt upright and waved a puny arm at them!

The shouting, rejoicings and embracings of this home-loving and affectionate folk might have been thought extravagant in a more reserved community. There was no difference in degree of joyful demonstration. It was as if each father, mother, brother and sister of them all were welcoming son or brother returned as from the dead.

As for Michael Brisbois, the poor man was literally smothered by kisses and embracings.

It was Hassaugee who bore the child. The chief had forced confession from the offender, who had hidden the boy in a secret place, intending to work revenge as might most safely suit his cruel purpose.

The kidnaper, a well-known beggar and thief, was brought forward, fast bound, by the Winnebagoes, and chanting his death song after the stoical Indian fashion.

Hassangee made a set speech, which his armed and painted followers applauded, lined up to witness execution of the white man's sentence. Hassaugee said the man deserved death, and the Winnebagoes willingly surrendered him

M. Brisbois was chosen by Carbonneau to pronounce sentence, and promptly declared for public whipping as the most poignant and instructive lesson. Even a coward among Indians preferred death.

A great circle was formed, therefore, and two stout woodsmen laid stripes upon the howling, frothing savage, until justice was done, and he was returned in disgrace to his fellows.

The loup-garou, to the great joy of mothers and young ones, had vanished into the more or less misty realm of tradition and conjecture.