

Rataplan, a rogue elephant; and other stories eBook

Rataplan, a rogue elephant; and other stories

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Rataplan, a rogue elephant; and other stories eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	9
Page 3.....	11
Page 4.....	13
Page 5.....	15
Page 6.....	17
Page 7.....	19
Page 8.....	21
Page 9.....	22
Page 10.....	24
Page 11.....	26
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	39
Page 19.....	40
Page 20.....	41
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	44



[Page 23.....46](#)

[Page 24.....48](#)

[Page 25.....50](#)

[Page 26.....52](#)

[Page 27.....54](#)

[Page 28.....56](#)

[Page 29.....58](#)

[Page 30.....60](#)

[Page 31.....62](#)

[Page 32.....64](#)

[Page 33.....65](#)

[Page 34.....67](#)

[Page 35.....68](#)

[Page 36.....70](#)

[Page 37.....72](#)

[Page 38.....73](#)

[Page 39.....74](#)

[Page 40.....75](#)

[Page 41.....77](#)

[Page 42.....78](#)

[Page 43.....79](#)

[Page 44.....80](#)

[Page 45.....82](#)

[Page 46.....84](#)

[Page 47.....86](#)

[Page 48.....88](#)



[Page 49..... 90](#)

[Page 50..... 92](#)

[Page 51..... 94](#)

[Page 52..... 95](#)

[Page 53..... 97](#)

[Page 54..... 99](#)

[Page 55..... 101](#)

[Page 56..... 103](#)

[Page 57..... 105](#)

[Page 58..... 107](#)

[Page 59..... 108](#)

[Page 60..... 109](#)

[Page 61..... 110](#)

[Page 62..... 111](#)

[Page 63..... 113](#)

[Page 64..... 115](#)

[Page 65..... 117](#)

[Page 66..... 119](#)

[Page 67..... 121](#)

[Page 68..... 123](#)

[Page 69..... 125](#)

[Page 70..... 127](#)

[Page 71..... 128](#)

[Page 72..... 130](#)

[Page 73..... 132](#)

[Page 74..... 134](#)



[Page 75..... 136](#)

[Page 76..... 138](#)

[Page 77..... 140](#)

[Page 78..... 142](#)

[Page 79..... 144](#)

[Page 80..... 146](#)

[Page 81..... 148](#)

[Page 82..... 150](#)

[Page 83..... 152](#)

[Page 84..... 154](#)

[Page 85..... 156](#)

[Page 86..... 158](#)

[Page 87..... 159](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
ILLUSTRATIONS		1
RATAPLAN, ROGUE		1
GEAN, THE GIRAFFE		7
KEESA, THE KANGAROO		12
CARA, THE CAMEL		16
SICCATEE, THE SQUIRREL		21
LEO, THE LION		27
CHAFFER, THE CHAMOIS		31
JINKS, THE JACKAL		36
PERO, THE PORCUPINE		46
TERA, THE TIGRESS		50
HIPPO, THE HIPPOPOTAMUS		57
OSRA, THE OSTRICH		62
SEELA, THE SEAL		66
BRUNIE, THE BEAR		71
MONA, THE MONKEY		77
BULON, THE BUFFALO		84



Page 1

ILLUSTRATIONS

From Drawings by Gustave Verbeek.

“But, oh, what havoc he made”

“Groar joined in with might and main”

“Even his mother looked at him with surprise”

“Sat on one of the boughs and scolded as hard as she could”

“He would take up some small animal and walk coolly off with it”

“Chaffer was the first to meet the hunters face to face”

“Jinks never was so happy as when he was leading his pack”

“Jock had never seen anything like it before”

“Tera sprang at the nearest calf, bringing him to the ground”

“Osra and his wives took up the chickens one by one, and swallowed them whole”

“Furious with rage, Brunie rose up and went to meet them”

“Mona did his best to attract the parrot’s attention”

RATAPLAN, ROGUE

In one of the thick, shady and tangled forests of Ceylon a fine, fully-grown elephant was one day standing moodily by himself. His huge form showed high above the tangled brushwood, but his wide, flat feet and large, pillar-like legs were hidden in the thick undergrowth.

He was not standing still, however—for no elephant has ever been known to do that yet—his massive, elongated head, with its wide, flat ears, its long, snake-like, flexible trunk, its magnificent pair of ivory tusks and its ridiculous, little eyes moved gravely to and fro—up and down—in a wearied but restless manner.

Every now and then he would lift one of his massive legs and put it down again, or sway his whole body from side to side, or throw his trunk up in the air and then wave it round his head and over his back in all directions.



But, in spite of his moody, wearied air, the elephant's tiny eyes looked particularly wicked. And wicked they were, and a true index to the mischief going on in his elephant mind.

He had no herd round him, no brother or sister elephant with whom he could wave trunks, nod heads, or carry on a conversation in elephant language; he was alone, and preferred to be alone, for his irritable nature and morose disposition made it impossible for him to live with others.

It was not entirely due to himself that he lived alone, for his character was so bad, alas! that no herd would admit him into its ranks, no drive would have anything to do with him; for he was Rataplan, the Rogue, and he was feared, avoided and hated as much as it is possible for the gentle-natured and good-tempered Indian elephant to fear and hate anything.

There had been a time—long, long ago—when he had been one of a herd; but his roguishness had developed early, and after much forbearance and long-suffering the herd had turned him out; and from that time he had been a solitary wanderer.

From the first Rataplan pretended that he did not care, and tossed his trunk disdainfully when driven from the herd. He had felt it, nevertheless, and it had made him more morose, more irritable, more mad than ever.



Page 2

He cared for nothing now: the only thing in which he took a delight was, destroying as much as possible in mere wantonness, and in working as much mischief as he could find time to plan and accomplish.

There had been times in the past when, in his better moments, he had longed to go back to the herd; had longed to be taken into some grand troop of elephants such as those he watched march through the forests. He longed to be one of them, and to feel that he was a respectable, well-conducted elephant.

But his overtures had always been received with disfavor and firm refusals, and the time had now come when nothing would have induced him to live with any elephants whatever; he preferred to be alone; and his evil nature and irritable temper thrived on his solitary life and mischief-making propensities, and to know that he was feared and dreaded was a very delight to him.

Out of pure mischief he would, at times, tear madly through the forest, trumpeting at the very top of his shrill voice, merely to give the elephants, or any other animals that might be about, a thorough fright.

Many and many a time had some horrid, insignificant little creatures who walked about on two legs, and carried things of fire in their hands, tried their very best to inveigle and entrap him, but in vain. Once, indeed, he had very nearly fallen into a horrible pit in which, at the very bottom, in the centre, was a dreadful, long, sharp stake, which, had he fallen, would have been driven through his thick body by its own weight, and he would have perished miserably and in agony.

But he had found it out in time—only just in time—for one of his hind legs had shot out suddenly behind him, and it was only by a mighty effort of his huge strength that he scrambled up and away from the source of danger.

But oh, what havoc he made! How he tore up anything and everything within his reach! Iron fences which those silly, little fire-carriers had stuck into the ground to protect their crops; silly, little, brick walls which he knocked over with one push of his huge body; young, healthy trees which had been planted so carefully a few years back, and which he pulled up with his long trunk as though they were little radishes; not to speak of the miles of rice and sugar-cane which he had trodden down in wanton waste and as a means of venting his temper.

Another time they had tried to drive him into a horrid place called a *Keddah*, which had been built with stout logs, and had huge buttresses which even he would have found it difficult to move.

He had been really startled one dark night on seeing huge bunches of fire coming towards him, and in spite of his daring he began to run in the opposite direction.



But it takes a rogue to catch a Rogue, and Rataplan was pretty wary. He had sense enough to know that those silly, little things on two legs would not take the trouble to run after him with bunches of fire unless they wanted him to run away somewhere, to some particular place. And so, after the first few, heavy, swinging steps, the reflection of the fire behind him showed him the outline of a *keddah* just in front, and with a shrill roar of rage Rataplan turned suddenly and fiercely round, dashed headlong through the line of fire, and, with a mighty trumpeting, disappeared into the forest.



Page 3

So sudden and unexpected had been his onslaught that he had put out quite half a dozen of the bunches of fire: he had also put out the lives of the six, silly, little things who carried them. For a few swift pressures of his mighty feet had squeezed out their breath and destroyed their power to invent mischief with which to entrap the Rogue elephant.

For some time after this Rataplan had been more mad and wicked than ever. He knew perfectly well that he had killed a few of the fire-carriers, and he fully intended to kill a few more before he had done with them. But they were very cunning, these fire-carriers, and, although he had nearly caught a few of them, once or twice, they had generally escaped him when quite close by suddenly disappearing, and this caused Rataplan many serious cogitations and musings.

Wicked and clever as he was, he had only the instincts of his kind. All his senses were alert, and his eyes looked for enemies in all directions but one, and that one direction was above. He never looked up, and it never occurred to his stupid, old head, sharp as he thought himself, that the little fire-carriers might have climbed up into the trees above him. When they disappeared from his range of vision he gave up the chase, although, more often than not, the wicked, little things were sitting just above his head, where, had he only turned his trunk upwards, he could have picked them off as though they were little birds.

But he always did the same thing: he floundered blunderingly on through the forest, trumpeting, roaring, pulling up and tearing down everything within his reach, but never having sense enough to look above him. And so it was that he found it very difficult to get hold of the fire carriers, and he became madder and more full of rage than ever.

Even the herds of elephants were now getting afraid of him, although could they only have made up their gentle, docile minds to attack him he would have come to his end in no time.

But Indian elephants dislike warfare or disagreements, and often, even when severely wounded, will turn about and go away, not seeming to realize that a momentary pressure of one of their huge feet, or one straight blow with their tusks, would be more than sufficient to finish their enemies. More often than not the most an Indian elephant will do to his foe is to kick him from one huge foot to another until he is either dead or dying.

But from Rataplan, the Rogue, the other elephants preferred to keep aloof. Only once had a herd attempted to chase him, and this was when he had actually presumed to pay a little attention to the wife of its leader.

Then the leader, followed by the remainder of the herd, turned upon him, and for just once in his life Rataplan was frightened, and simply turned tail and ran—ran crashing

and stumbling through the forest at a terrific speed, making the air resound with his trumpeting.



Page 4

Had it not been that the dense forest was suddenly broken by a river, it would indeed have gone hard with him.

For an instant Rataplan thought he would stop—for, although elephants are beautiful swimmers, they are not particularly fond of the sport— but only for a moment; for the herd was close behind him and pressing him, and the leader could almost reach him with his trunk. Into the water dashed Rataplan, throwing up a mountain of spray which sprinkled the whole herd, and for a few moments he was lost to sight.

After the spray cleared away his huge form, with his trunk held high in the air, could be seen swimming easily and steadily towards the other side, and after a little conference with the herd the leader decided to let him go. But, as Rataplan knew only too well, woe betide him if ever he met that herd again.

And so it was that Rataplan, the Rogue, congratulated himself that so far he had never been caught, neither had any other elephant been able to hurt him.

But on this particular day he was very miserable and very lonely, and he had a restless, uneasy, wild feeling which inclined him to something daring. He was sick and tired of trying to catch the silly things that carried fire; he was tired of the forest; he was tired of himself. He felt more irritable, restless and evil-natured than ever, and as he stood there, swaying heavily from side to side and waving his trunk about him, he was a very miserable elephant indeed.

If he had only known it, one of the silly, little things who carried the fire had been watching him for some time.

Rataplan had been keeping very still for an elephant, but there is a certain sound which he and all his brethren make, unknown to themselves, and over which they have no control. This is a curious, little, bubbling noise which is caused by the water which is stored up in their insides in case of emergency; and this little bubbling noise had been heard by the fire-carrier.

He watched the huge beast with interest, and knew by his restless manner and the wicked look in his small eyes that he was in about as dangerous a state as it is possible for an elephant to be, and he made his plans accordingly.

He was very busy for a few minutes with some long, thick ropes, which had a heavy noose at each end. The ends of these ropes he fastened carefully to some heavy trees, and then he went quietly away. The little fire-carrier was a *Mahout*, hunter or rider, who was trained in the capture of elephants, and he felt sure that if Rataplan would only stay where he was a short time longer he would be able to catch him.

So he went away and looked carefully at his *Koomkies*. [Footnote: Female elephants which are trained for the purpose of catching wild elephants.—Author.] He had some particularly good ones just then, and they one and all turned their large, gentle heads towards him and awaited his pleasure. For they loved the chase, and entered into it with as much interest as he did himself.



Page 5

As a rule he sent several *koomkies* out together, but on this occasion he decided to send only one.

This was Kinka, a gentle and tractable, little Indian elephant, who was well versed in the chase, and who was about as pretty and graceful as it is possible for a *koomkie* to be.

The *mahout* talked to her and patted her, and Kinka seemed to quite understand, nodding her head wisely, and touching his face and shoulders gently with the tip of her trunk.

When he had finished and began to lead her out she made a quiet, little trumpeting noise, which signified how delighted she was to go.

The *mahout* did not trouble himself about Kinka, once he had let her go. She knew her business and was about as deep and crafty as any *mahout* could wish. He selected his strongest little horse and followed her.

Kinka went quietly and steadily through the forest, making straight for the place where Rataplan was still standing, moodily moving his head to and fro.

Once within sight of him she put on a careless, coquettish air, and began to move carelessly towards him, plucking leaves and grass as though perfectly oblivious of his presence.

Rataplan suddenly stopped moving his huge head, and his wicked little eyes were bent on her with scrutiny and interest. He was not, however, going to be caught so easily. He did not care for society in any shape or form, not even the society of a *koomkie*, so he took no notice of her, but, after a few minutes' quiet contemplation, turned his head the other way.

Kinka, however, was not to be daunted. Still plucking little twigs and delicate buds and knocking them carefully and fastidiously against her forelegs in order to shake off any little fragment of dust that might have stuck there, she made her way steadily towards him, and as Rataplan, even then, took not the slightest notice she became bolder, and, trotting quietly up to him, began caressing him with her trunk and making several other endearing signs which were enough to melt the heart of any elephant under the sun.

Rataplan's heart was not exactly melted, but he was evidently interested and touched by the delicate attentions, and he became a little less morose and a little less moody; he even moved out of the tangled mass of undergrowth in which he had been standing, and deigned to talk to her a little bit; and Kinka made herself just as interesting as she possibly could.



Soon Rataplan began to forget his hatred of company, his dislike of his fellow-creatures; he began even to forget his evil thoughts and his mad rage, and he was just beginning to think what a nice, little elephant Kinka was when he felt, sharp pulls at his feet.

The next instant there was such a sudden pull on all his legs that, with a huge thud Rataplan found himself lying on the ground. With one furious cry of rage he did his best to turn, displaying a flexibility of body and limb which was quite astonishing in so clumsy an animal.

Page 6

Rolling on the ground and uttering more cries of rage, it suddenly occurred to him to ask the nice, little elephant to help him. But alas! the nice, little elephant, Kinka, was nowhere to be seen.

Having done her duty and treacherously inveigled him in to the snare, with a little, triumphant wave of her trunk and a funny, little, trumpeting noise she had marched with a sort of “conquering hero” air back to her stable, there to tell the other *koomkies* of her prowess and successful capture.

In vain Rataplan butted the tree nearest to him with all his huge strength; it never moved, scarcely even shook, and he rolled again on the ground in despair. He wound his trunk round and round one of the ropes, doing his best to break and split it, but the rope was good and strong and only squeaked dismally.

He shrieked and roared, writhed and turned, until the forest re-echoed with his cries, and the cruel ropes cut into his ankles, making deep, red wounds which stained the ground all round his feet.

After a time his shrill cries of rage developed into hoarse moans of humiliation and despair.

All that night and the next Rataplan was left there. The ropes cut deeper and deeper into his poor, swollen ankles, his body getting fainter and fainter for want of food. But he was not a Rogue elephant for nothing, and would not give in.

In vain a whole lot of *koomkies* were brought out to try and induce him to follow them into the *keddah*; he was not to be tempted, and tore and strained at his ropes to such a degree that the *mahout* feared he would make wounds that could never be healed; so he took away the *koomkies* and waited yet another night.

The third night the *koomkies* were brought out again, this time with Kinka at their head. But the sight of Kinka nearly drove Rataplan mad; he strained and tore at the ropes, trumpeting and roaring, until even the *koomkies* were frightened. Could he only have got at Kinka, he would have torn her limb from limb. But although he stretched to his utmost, and his hind legs went out behind him in the struggle, he could not get near her.

The *mahout* was getting troubled, for Rataplan’s ankles were now in such a state as to make him almost valueless, and he knew, even did the elephant give in now, it would be months before they were healed, if indeed they ever healed at all.

Yet another long, weary day and night did poor Rataplan lay there, getting weaker and weaker and suffering untold agonies caused by those cruel ropes.



He had by this time torn his ankles so fearfully that they were all ulcerated, and stiff from lying on the ground. To add to his misery, he had caught violent inflammation in his eyes.

The *mahout* realized that unless he got him into the *keddah* soon he would be of no use at all, and once more did his best with *koomkies* and dainty bits of food to tempt him to follow into the *keddah*.



Page 7

But still Rataplan would not give in: his body was weak and getting visibly thinner, but his spirit was as strong, as wild and as unbreakable as ever.

There was a consultation among the *mahouts*, and it was decided, as he was still so savage, there was nothing to be done but to leave him yet one more day.

But the next day Rataplan presented a piteous sight. His poor ankles were swollen enormously; his eyes were so inflamed that he was quite blind, and, to make matters worse, the *mahouts* saw that he was suffering now from the Ceylon Murrain.

There was nothing to be done then but kill him.

It had been a wet night which had made his poor, ulcerated ankles as bad as they could be, and the pain in his eyes was maddening. Suffering from the murrain, too, it was far too dangerous to take him among other elephants, and so the end of Rataplan, the Rogue, was that, in spite of his grand physique, his unbreakable spirit, and his indomitable patience, he was actually shot by the very things he had despised all his life—those silly little things that carried guns.

And Kinka, when she knew that he was dead, was not even sorry. She only gave a triumphant little trumpeting as she thought of the triumph of her capture.

And so no one grieved for Rataplan, no one cared or thought about him. But then we must not forget that he was and always had been Rataplan, the Rogue.

GEAN, THE GIRAFFE

A tall, stately, gentle creature, standing about eighteen feet high.

A pretty, graceful head; large, tender, dark eyes; a beautiful, tawny coat, covered with rich, dark spots; a long neck; a rather short body, measuring about seven feet in length; slender, shapely legs, terminating in feet with divided hoofs; and a long tail, ending in a wisp of dark-colored hair, which was a splendid thing with which to whisk off the flies.

This was Gean, the Giraffe, and she belonged to a tribe which boasted of the fact that they were the tallest of all animals. But they were not aggressive about it at all, for giraffes are the most modest and gentle creatures to be found anywhere. They are quiet and inoffensive in all their ways and movements, shy and timid to a degree, and so cautious and wary that it is extremely difficult to get near them in their wild state.

Gean was just as timid and wary as the rest of her tribe; indeed, she was peculiarly so, for she had been unfortunate enough to lose her mother when quite young, and, deprived of that mother's care and protection, she had experienced some very narrow escapes from many kinds of dangers and difficulties, and these had made her

suspicious of every fresh object she came across. There were times when she was really too cautious, and would not accept friendly overtures from strangers of her own kind.

Page 8

There was another young giraffe about the same age as herself, who had come to see her several times lately, and, although he was a fine, handsome animal and stood nearly two feet taller than Gean herself, she would have nothing to do with him. Not even when he took the trouble to reach up his long neck[Footnote: although a giraffe's neck is so long, it has exactly the same number of vertebrae as all other mammals—seven—but each vertebra is exceptionally long.—*Author.*] and, stretching his tongue out to its full length—about eighteen or twenty inches—break off a tender, young branch of the “camel-thorn,” which is a sort of acacia tree and considered a great dainty by giraffes, and offer it to her. Gean was very independent, as well as shy, and much preferred to pick leaves and blades of grass for herself.

Groar took it all very well; he was disappointed, of course, but he preferred a young giraffe that was shy, and knew he should value her all the more if he had a little trouble and difficulty in winning her. So he waited patiently, hoping that some day he would have an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and the day arrived much sooner than he expected.

Gean was pacing slowly up and down the open plain one day, but keeping pretty close to the low woods—for she avoided the high forest, not being able to keep as good a lookout there for her two greatest enemies, men and lions—when she suddenly scented danger. It was a long way off, it is true, but Gean had a very keen sense of smell. Not being with any herd at present, Gean was accustomed to look after herself, and generally managed to keep clear of enemies, although, as I told you just now, she knew what it was to have very narrow escapes.

She was cautious enough not to stop walking, but kept slowly on, putting each foot down in a careful, dainty manner, and so softly that only the very faintest rustle could be heard, this being caused by the whisking to and fro of her tail, which made a curious little swish-swish as she moved. She took care, however, to look round in all directions, and, as her beautiful, round eyes projected in a peculiar manner, she was able to do this without moving her head at all. The only direction in which she could not look without turning her head was directly behind her, but this little difficulty was overcome by walking in a semi-circle for a few minutes.

Suddenly Gean saw the enemy. It was a full-grown lion, and he was creeping cautiously out of the underbrush in the wood close by. It was not often that lions came out by day, but Gean had passed close to this lion's lair, and the odor of such a dainty morsel as a giraffe was too much for the lion, who decided to make the most of his opportunity.



Page 9

The moment Gean saw him, without moving her graceful, pretty head, she started off at full speed, and, although such a beautiful, graceful animal when still, or walking slowly, she certainly was awkward and ungainly when running. Her gait was clumsy and shambling, and, with her tail whisking to and fro all the time, she made an odd and undignified appearance. Her speed, however, made up for her ungainly movements, and for some time she outdistanced the lion by a long way. The lion was lazy, as usual, and, thinking he could easily overtake a giraffe, did not put forth his best speed. Consequently, he made the fatal mistake of allowing the giraffe a good start, and to his great surprise found he was losing ground.

But, lazy and indolent as the lion is, he can be energetic enough when he chooses, and so the King of Beasts gathered himself together, put forth his great strength and best speed, and very soon it was Gean who was losing ground, while the lion was gaining steadily.

Quivering with terror, and with her strength failing her, poor Gean began to feel hopeless. She could see the lion getting closer and closer, but not a sound did she make, for the giraffe is absolutely dumb, and makes no noise even when dying. On and on she went, trusting to her strong limbs, making curious, frog-like leaps and awkward, jumpy movements, her long neck rocking swiftly up and down as though pulled by some mechanical contrivance, and her tail swishing faster than ever.

She knew now she could not keep up much longer, and at last, realizing she must give up the race, turned suddenly round and faced her enemy, sending forth such a shower of strong, vigorous kicks that the lion was not only surprised, but completely bewildered. He hesitated but a moment, however, and then prepared to spring. Crouching down, with his huge head close to the ground, he watched his opportunity, for he had no relish for springing straight at those flourishing heels, and Gean took very good care to keep her head carefully out of his way, although she was quite prepared to give him a good blow with a sidelong swing of her-muscular neck. But she knew perfectly well that she could not keep this up more than another minute or two, and her beautiful, brown eyes were distended with fear, and her breath came thick and fast.

It would indeed have gone hard with her, but at that very moment Groar appeared on the scene, and, taking in what was happening at a single glance, he promptly went to the rescue. A shambling and clumsy object he looked, moving the fore and hind legs of the same side simultaneously, but in Gean's eyes at that moment he was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. She kept up her kicking until Groar came up to her, and then he joined in with might and main, nourishing his four feet in the very face of the lion and daring him to do his worst.

But the lion thought better of it. It was all very well tackling one giraffe, but to face four such pairs of heels was more than he cared about, and when Groar took him unawares in the midst of all the kicking by suddenly striking him a heavy blow with his neck, the

King of Beasts concluded it was not a good time to prove his sovereignty, and, with a sulky growl, slunk off to his lair.

Page 10

As soon as the lion turned his back, poor Gean sank down utterly exhausted, her small head waving wearily to and fro, her long, black tongue hanging out of her mouth, and her breath coming in short, painful gasps. Groar comforted her as well as he could, caressing her tenderly, and every now and then drawing himself up to his full height on the lookout for danger. He never left her until she was able to move slowly back to the low woods, and then only to gather for her some tender shoots of camel-thorn and mimosa, and any young, tender leaves he could find.

Gean took them all very gently, and seemed humbled and grateful, and when, a little later on, he suggested that she should let him always take care of her, she thought it over and finally concluded it would be a very nice arrangement. And so Groar took her home to his herd and introduced her to the leader—an old giraffe with a dark chestnut hide and a longer neck than any of the others—as his wife.

And Gean was very happy, for Groar was a good and kind husband, and very devoted to her, and she no longer had to be always looking out for danger, for Groar was always watching, and guarded her with the greatest care. He took her for long walks through the woods, where they found nice, fresh food, and saw that she had her share of it, but they picked and ate only a few leaves or blades of grass at a time, for it is a provision of Nature that giraffes shall feed in this way, as their digestion is extremely delicate.

In times of danger they would get close to a tree, lean their bodies against it, and then, putting their heads and necks under the branches, would be so completely hidden that sometimes the natives would mistake the giraffes for trees, and the trees for giraffes. Gean and Groar were more easily hidden than some of their cousins who lived in Northern Africa, for, being South Africans themselves, they were of a much darker color, and therefore not so noticeable.

[Illustration: "GROAR JOINED IN WITH MIGHT AND MAIN."]

It was in this way that they saved themselves one day, when, followed by hunters. These hunters were mounted on good, fleet horses, and had traced the pair of giraffes by their *spoor*, or footmarks. These footmarks were ten or eleven inches in length, pointed at the toe, and rounded at the heel, so that it was quite easy to find which way the giraffes had gone.

Accordingly, the hunters followed the spoor, which went across miles of rough, uneven ground—for giraffes know perfectly well that they always have the advantage on rough ground, being able to leap over obstacles without diminishing their speed—and finally led them to a wood.

Here the hunters paused, and, finding it impossible to ride through the thick growth, tethered their horses and left them in charge of some natives, while they, creeping

cautiously forward, with guns in hand, tried to find out in which direction the animals had gone.



Page 11

But this was a very difficult matter, for there were no footmarks now, owing to the thick undergrowth, and, moreover, the giraffes were on guard. For this was their great object in living in low woods; it was quite easy to see an enemy approaching.

Groar's long neck and small head had appeared at the top of some of the bushes just before the hunters entered the wood, and he knew perfectly well what it all meant. With a swift movement he withdrew his head, and, telling Gean to follow him, he led her to a nice, tall tree, and when she had settled herself comfortably, with her head under the branches, betook himself to another tree near by, and hid his own head in the same manner.

So wonderfully did the giraffes blend with the bark and foliage of the trees, that, although the hunters passed close by, they were unable to find them. Little did they think while moving cautiously along that the very animals they were looking for were silently watching them, with gentle eyes, from between the branches of trees quite close to them.

Not a muscle did either Groar or Gean move until they made quite sure the hunters had gone, and then, Groar declaring it to be quite safe, they withdrew their heads and necks from the branches, relaxed their stiffened limbs, and, moving their sloping[Footnote: The slope in a giraffe's back is caused by its elongated shoulder-blades. The fore and hind legs are exactly the same length.—*Author.*] backs from the trees, walked softly and quietly in another direction.

They were both so stiff from standing in the same position for so long a time that they were obliged to go slowly at first, and it was a very good thing they did so; for suddenly they came to a deep pit, so cunningly and cleverly hidden, that it was a great wonder Gean had not walked straight into it. The pit was nearly ten feet deep, and a hard bank of earth had been built from one side to the other, about six or seven feet high. Had Gean fallen into it, her forelegs would have been on one side of the wall and her hind legs on the other, and she would have been balanced in such a manner that, in spite of any amount of kicking and struggling, it would have been quite impossible for her to obtain a foothold, and she would have been obliged to stay there until the natives came and killed her.

As it was, she stopped just in time; but two such frights, in one day, were enough to make any giraffe nervous, and so they both rejoined the herd, and let the old leader keep guard while they had their evening meal in peace.

Gean wandered off a little way by herself that night, and, as she seemed to wish to be alone, Groar did not bother her, but kept a strict lookout all the time. And in the morning she called him to look at something, and this something was a soft, helpless, little, baby giraffe, with delicate limbs and small body, a funny, scraggy, long neck and small head, with the very same sort of gentle, pathetic eyes that Gean herself had.



Page 12

And Groar thought it was the very finest baby he had ever seen, and was fonder and prouder of Gean than ever. As for Gean, she was sublimely happy, and was never tired of fondling and caressing her little one and attending to its many wants.

For it was a delicate baby, and for some time after its birth it seemed very doubtful whether it would live or not. But Gean tended and nourished it, kept it nice and warm, and in due course of time it grew strong and healthy.

And here we must leave Gean. She had a good home, plenty to eat, a kind husband and pretty little baby, and what more could any giraffe want?

KEESA, THE KANGAROO

The first thing that Keesa remembered was waking up in a dark, warm place, and feeling very hungry and a bit chilly.

With a little shiver he feebly gathered himself together and crept closer to the warm side of his small prison.

There was a curious something inside this warm part of his prison, which kept up a continuous, methodical beating, sometimes faster and sometimes slower, but never stopping.

Keesa did not think much about it then. His tiny, flexible, little mouth was seeking instinctively for something to satisfy his hunger, and, having found it, he troubled himself no further about the little, throbbing sound that never stopped. He was too young then to know that it was the beating of his mother's heart; but as he grew older he learned to regard it as a very barometer for danger signals. He knew that whenever it began to beat quicker than usual his mother was scenting danger; and that when it throbbed very, very quickly the danger had come, and was causing his mother great anxiety on his account.

All this he learned as he grew larger, but at this time he was only a few days' old; a tiny, soft, helpless thing, only about an inch and a half in length; and all he could do was just stay quietly in his mother's pouch—where she had carefully put him as soon as he was born—rest against her heart, and drink as much as he could.

He stayed in this nice, warm place for several months, and his weight increased so gradually that his mother did not notice it.

After a time, however, he began to find pouch-life rather monotonous, and so, one day, he poked his funny, little head out of the pouch and had his first peep at the world.



It seemed to be a very pleasant world, but he had no idea before that his mother was so big, or that she could hop such tremendous distances.

When he looked up at her he saw two little paws above him hanging down in just the position that a dog puts his paws when begging. Above these little paws he saw a small, graceful head, long and somewhat oval, with outstanding ears, soft, gentle eyes, and a flexible mouth, with cleft lips which opened every now and then and showed white but savage teeth which looked as though they could bite very sharply when their owner liked.



Page 13

Having scrutinized his mother from below, Keesa turned his attention downwards, and then noticed what extremely long hind legs she had, and that she was sitting on them and her tail in a very comfortable manner.

Glancing instinctively round, Keesa saw that it was a very pleasant country, and that there were a good many others like his mother, sitting or moving softly about with long leaps, one and all keeping a sharp lookout for danger while munching the tender leaves and grass.

Once having had this peep at the world, Keesa became very interested in it, and every day poked his little head out of the pouch and watched his mother's proceedings.

One day, when she let herself drop on her forepaws to nibble the nice, green grass, Keesa, on peeping out, found his own mouth close to the ground. Out of mere curiosity he tasted a little bit of the herbage, sniffing it very carefully, first of all, with his funny little nose, and behaving, unknown to himself, in the way that all kangaroos behave when they first begin to eat green food.

Having tasted the grass, Keesa found it extremely good, and the very next day, when his mother dropped on her forefeet to feed, his head came out of the pouch and down went his little mouth too.

But this time out went one of his little, short, front paws and rested on the earth. One quick movement, and, to his astonishment, he found himself really in the world. Just for a moment he felt so terribly frightened that he leaped straight back into the pouch again, and his little heart beat as fast as ever his mother's did in time of danger.

But the next moment curiosity got the better of him, and he was so proud of himself in being able to move about so nimbly that he was out of the pouch again, and this time, not feeling half so frightened, hopped and skipped about until even his mother looked at him with surprise.

From that time Keesa always jumped out of his mother's pouch and ran about while she was feeding. He felt perfectly safe now, because at the least sign of danger all he had to do was to hop back again, pull down his small head and hide it, and everything was all right.

But as time went on Keesa began to realize that although Australia is such a beautiful country the life of a kangaroo is full of danger.

Some peculiar beings called men had found out, it seemed, that the flesh of the kangaroo was very good eating; and once having realized this, they had no pity, but, whenever they wanted kangaroo flesh, hunted the animals and killed as many as they possibly could.



Once Keesa's mother, and a number of other kangaroos, were having a comfortable feed on the plain, when suddenly numbers of men called hunters came from all parts and attacked the poor kangaroos with spears, clubs and horrible fire things.

The poor animals looked wildly around with their pathetic eyes, and then swiftly and silently—for, like the giraffe, the kangaroo never makes a sound—tore backwards and forwards, wild and bewildered with fear, assailed on all sides by sharp arrows and spears, and by heavy things which struck terrible blows.

Page 14

[Illustration: "EVEN HIS MOTHER LOOKED AT HIM WITH SURPRISE"]

Only two kangaroos escaped at this dreadful time; they were Keesa's mother and another kangaroo mother, both of whom had fought fiercely and desperately for the sake of their little ones.

Away went the two kangaroos at breakneck speed, leaping from twelve to fifteen feet at a time. But the hunters were prepared for this, and in a few minutes the kangaroo dogs were after them.

This was a terrible time. The terror and agony of Keesa's mother communicated itself in some way to him, and he shivered inside his pouch half dead with fear.

On and on went the kangaroos, and close behind came the dogs. But the mother kangaroos, when too exhausted to run further, turned, only too ready to die, if need be, for their young ones.

Keesa's mother was fortunate enough to find a fairly large tree, and against this she put her back, her little nose and mouth working wildly and agonizingly, her sharp, little teeth showing fiercely, and her usually gentle eyes looking fierce and desperate.

Only two dogs had been sent after them: one faced Keesa's mother somewhat uneasily; the other followed the second kangaroo to the water's edge, only to be taken in her front paws and held under the water until he was drowned.[Footnote: A fact, and a common thing among kangaroos.—Author.]

Keesa's mother, meanwhile, faced her enemy bravely, and for a few moments the dog could not make up his mind to attack her or not. But as he wavered the hunters' voices were heard urging him on, and, with a fierce yelp and a quick leap, he flew at the kangaroo.

But Keesa's mother was prepared, and with a well directed blow from one of her hind feet her sharp, knife-like claws ripped him up, and the next moment he was lying on the ground panting his life away. The mother kangaroo waited no longer. She had done for her enemy, she must now look out for herself. A few long, swift strides and she caught up with the other kangaroo, and, having been told that the other dog was drowned, the two mothers went swiftly on, and on, and on, getting more and more weary with the weight of their little ones, for they were now growing very heavy, but never stopping until they reached a place where they knew they would be safe.

This was only one of the many adventures that Keesa, as a baby, went through, and he no longer wondered that his mother was always looking about with frightened eyes, as though dreading some new danger.



Keesa spent very little time in the pouch now, for he was nearly eight months old. After a while he did not care to stay in it at all, but he often went to it for a little drink. He was very much surprised one day, when he went to get that drink, to find another little head in the pouch, and another tiny, soft body nestled in the very place where he had so often nestled himself.

Keesa was a handsome kangaroo, somewhat lighter in color than his mother, swift and agile, healthy and strong, with long, well marked hind legs, a straight, strong tail, that acted as a sort of stool whenever he wanted to sit down, and nimble little forepaws on which he rested occasionally when he wanted to feed; at other times they hung down as his mother's had done the first time he had made her acquaintance.



Page 15

There was one sad day when Keesa and his mother, with some kangaroo friends with whom they had become acquainted, were chased by men on horses. But the horses were not particularly good ones, and with their long, swift leaps the kangaroos got safely away.

All, alas! but Keesa's mother. She, like all of her tribe, was addicted to a habit of looking backward, still, she would have got safely away now, if, while running at her swiftest speed, she had not looked behind her to see how close the hunters were. As it was she leaped violently against a tree stump and killed herself.

Keesa had been very fond of his mother, and her death was a great grief to him, but he dared not stay, and so leaped on and on. Remembering her experience, he never once looked back or stopped until he had reached a place of safety.

After this Keesa had to shift for himself, but he was now a hardy animal and got on remarkably well.

His beautiful, light, tawny coat changed, as the cold weather came on, to a thick and woolly fur, which was very comfortable during the damp, cold weather. But, when the summer came again, the thick, woolly fur began to drop off and he resumed his summer coat once more.

By this time Keesa was a fully grown kangaroo, and very handsome. His coat was a beautiful, tawny brown mingled with grey; the tawny part predominating on the upper portions of his body, and the grey on the under part; his clean, well shaped, little forefeet were quite black, as also was the tip of his tail; and his small, well shaped head, with its bright eyes and quick, sensitive ears, not to speak of the mobile little mouth showing its occasional glimpses of white teeth, and his newly sprouted little whiskers, made him a typical specimen of a well-grown, well-built, male kangaroo.

He was a regular *Boomer*[Footnote: A *Boomer* is the only kangaroo which provides really good sport, and is much sought after and hunted for this reason. He is a dangerous foe to man and dog, and generally proves more than a match for them both. A *boomer* at bay is one of the most dangerous of animals, for he will not only attack the dogs, but the very hunter himself; oftentimes nearly cutting him to pieces with the terrible claws in his hind feet.—Author.] now, and prided himself on it. He had no fear of man or beast, and, although he had already afforded good sport in one or two hunts, he always had the best of it.

At one time he ran for fourteen miles at one stretch, and, although he hated swimming, on coming to a little stretch of sea, and being pressed by the hunters, in went Keesa, and, notwithstanding a fresh breeze, he got safely over, shook himself, and then fell into his long leaps again as though nothing had happened.

Altogether he covered nearly twenty miles that day, and, as he still seemed as fresh as ever and the land began to slope down, the hunters gave up the chase.



Page 16

Had they been going up hill they might have caught him, for in going up hill dogs always gain on a kangaroo, and no one knew this better than Keesa; therefore it was only to be expected that he should deliberately lead the way to where the land was in his favor.

His leaps down hill were terrific, and the dogs, however much they tried, could not overtake him; and so Keesa always gained the day, and although he had many exciting hunts he was never caught.

Strong and healthy and hardy, he lived on, and lived up to his name of *Boomer*, and is still living in New South Wales to this day, with a gentle, brown-eyed wife and a little baby kangaroo, who peeps out of his mother's pouch just as Keesa himself used to do when he was a baby.

CARA, THE CAMEL

The hot, red sun was sinking behind the hard, straight outline of one of the sandy deserts of Arabia. The Arabs had pitched their tents, unloaded and fed their camels, and were now making their evening meal from dried meat and a preparation of camel's milk, which had been mixed with meal and then allowed to become sour.

Many of the camels were lying down—not that they were tired, for they had been taking their journey by easy stages, and among them were several with baby camels.

Cara was one of the babies, and an extremely ugly baby he was, for a thin body, long, spidery limbs, homely head and funny little tail gave him a curious, unfinished look.

Another baby was Camer. But she was as yet only an hour old, while Cara was a week and a day old, and stood three feet high on his thin legs. He was a sturdy little fellow in spite of his thinness, and had already given proof that he inherited the irritable, morose and grumbling nature of his race to a very marked degree; for from the first hour of his birth Cara had grumbled. Grumbled when his mother rested—as her kind master allowed her to do, for a few days after Cara's birth; grumbled when the Arabs and camels moved on; grumbled when any one touched him with a pat or caress, and grumbled when let alone. In fact, the only time when Cara did not grumble was when he took his meals, and this was simply because his mouth and tongue were occupied with getting his food.

At the present moment he was feeling very discontented indeed. He had rather enjoyed following the caravan, trotting by his mother's side, and, except that he had been getting hungry, would have kept on trotting for some time longer, but they had all stopped quite suddenly, and Cara's mother, instead of giving her baby his evening meal, had sunk down instantly on the sand, and with a series of grunts and groans settled herself comfortably for a good rest.



The Arabs had been very busy with their camels, and it was not until they had pitched their tents and settled to their supper that Cara had noticed with great astonishment that there was another baby camel a little way off. He began to wonder how it was they had not met before, and in his funny, camel-baby talk tried to speak to the newcomer; but Camer did not seem inclined for conversation. Her mother was lying down, and Camer was nestling as closely as possible to her with her odd-shaped little head almost hidden in the shaggy masses of woolly hair which grew on her mother's forelegs.

Page 17

This annoyed Cara, and he pranced awkwardly about, making queer, discontented noises, until his mother, noting his restlessness, rose up, felt and caressed him with her long, cleft, upper lip, and allowed him to have the meal he longed for.

After the meal he found that Camer had risen up and was moving with feeble steps towards him. Cara at once went forward, and, after examining her with a superior air, gave a curious little grunt, which meant that he wished to be friends. Camer said she should like it, too, but here her mother, who was feeling irritable and nervous, thinking Cara was going to hurt her beloved one, came forward and gave him a good bite, to which Cara responded in true camel fashion by groaning and grumbling and making as much fuss as he possibly could.

But Camer comforted him in baby fashion by caressing him, and then went to her mother, who had lain down again. And this is how the friendship between Cara and Camer began.

The next day the Arabs once more packed up their tents, loaded their camels and continued their journey; very slowly and carefully, though, for the Arabs are invariably kind, thoughtful and fond of their camels; not like the Indian camel-owners, who, because they know they will receive payment for every camel that dies, sometimes purposely overload and ill-treat them.

Away they went over the desert, the camels swinging slowly, clumsily, and yet easily along, although many of them carried from five to eight hundred pounds on their backs, and had already been traveling for three days without water. But their backs were made for burdens, and their feet specially adapted to walking on the loose sand; for each of the broad toes had a soft, wide cushion, and this cushion enabled them to have a grasp on the sand, and at the same time kept them from sinking into it.

In his clumsy way, Cara trotted beside his mother, continually bumping against her as she walked slowly and heavily along, and having almost miraculous escapes from being kicked by the other camels. But he was getting stronger each day, and looked in amazement, not unmixed with contempt, at the new calf who had appeared the night before, and who was straggling feebly along, doing its best to keep up with the others. But the journey that day was a short one, for, as the sun grew hotter and hotter, Camer, the new calf, grew more and more feeble, and once more the Arabs dismounted and rested in the desert.

But as the days went on Camer gained strength, and in a week's time was as lively as Cara himself. They were great friends by this time, and played together in a most awkward and ungainly manner, but one which their mothers greatly admired. Their friendship and gambols continued for many happy months, and then the Arabs prepared for a long journey across the desert in another direction.



It took some time to prepare the camels. In the first place, their masters fed them until the humps on the camels' backs grew large, plump and fat. Then each camel was made to store as much water as its stomachs would hold, for a camel, like all ruminants, has four stomachs. Most of them could store as much as five or six quarts of water, which would last several days.



Page 18

After this the camels were loaded, and this was what Cara and Camer enjoyed most of all. It was such fun to watch some camel, who was particularly ill-natured, kneel down with a series of groans and grumbles in deep, bubbling tones, open his mouth savagely whenever his master came near him, and do his best with his big teeth and flexible, cleft lips to catch hold of some part of his master's body. But grumbling was of no use. The loads were strapped on in spite of it, and when all the camels were carefully loaded the caravan started on its long, wearisome journey across the desert.

Cara and Camer rather enjoyed it at first. They had no loads to carry; had their usual good, warm food, and, what was better than all besides, youth and strength. But, on the second day, the heat grew appalling; not for the camels, for they love the broad glare of the sun, but for the Arabs, who, in spite of their hardihood, grew faint and weak as the sun, like a ball of fire, poured its scorching rays on the white, glistening sand.

Then came a curious silence: a silence in the midst of silence; so deep and intense that it could almost be felt, while the air grew red like blood, and in a moment, with one accord, masters, servants and animals threw themselves on the sand. The Arabs lay with their faces downwards and their cloaks thrown over their heads; the camels, not even stopping to grumble, stretched their necks straight out along the sand, closed their curious, oblique nostrils and lay absolutely motionless.

Cara's mother had often told him about this, and taught him how to close his nostrils when caught in a *simoom*. At first Cara wondered what had happened, and even when he saw his mother lay down and stretch her neck along the sand did not realize what it meant; but in another instant his mother had warned him, and as he lay down and closed his little nostrils he noticed a huge, curious cloud sweeping across the desert.

And that was all he did notice, for the next instant he felt scorched and suffocated, while a heavy weight was on his limbs and body and head. How long he lay there quivering all over with fright and gasping for breath he never knew, but he was aroused by the groans and grumbles of the camels and the cries of the Arabs. He struggled up at last, and for a moment thought he too had been loaded for a journey, for the *simoom* had covered him with a small mountain of sand.

After a few snorts and groans, Cara shook himself and looked round. Most of the camels were on their feet by this time, and their masters were preparing to go forward again. At last they started, but before they had gone many yards the caravan stopped to wait for a camel who had lingered behind and was making cries of distress.

It was Camer's mother. On the sand, lying in a limp, unnatural position, was Camer. No longer the bright, little baby-camel that Cara had known, but a quiet, inanimate thing, which neither answered nor moved in response to its mother's pitiful entreaties.

Page 19

One of the Arabs, seeing that Camer was dead, tried to lead the mother away with gentle pats and caresses, but the mother-camel would not leave the little one. It was true that she had been thinking for the last few weeks of relaxing some of her motherly duties, and insisting on her baby getting its own food with the other camels, for Camer was then ten months old, and no mother-camel cares to keep her babies trotting after her for a much longer time than that.

But the sight of the little, dead body aroused all her motherly feelings, and she yearned after her baby as though it had just been born. In vain she fondled and caressed it; in vain she felt its head, its limbs, and the small body which was fast growing cold, but no response came to her motherly cries and no notice was taken of her tempting offers of food. The little camel lay limp and still, and when the Arab, finding that coaxing and caressing were of no use, tried harsh words, Camer's mother turned savagely on him and bit him through the arm.

The Arab knew camels too well to attempt further persuasion, and, with angry words, for his arm burned and smarted, walked off and left mother and baby in the desert. There was every probability that the mother-camel would starve to death, for, although able to eat the hard, sharp thorns which are found in the desert, and even pieces of dry wood or other hard substances which are found occasionally, the camel cannot live long on this sort of food. But there was nothing to do but leave the camel behind, and this the Arab did with much regret, not only for the loss, but because he loved the animal more than any other that he owned.

Cara grieved and fretted over the loss of his little companion, but his mother told him, in camel language, that had Camer's mother taught her to close her nostrils in a proper manner during a *simoom*, she would not have died. As it was, the hot, acrid sand had suffocated the poor little thing.

Cara listened to all this, but made the most of the opportunity for grumbling, and fretted, fumed and fidgeted until his mother gave him a sharp bite as a reproof. This was the first time Cara had ever been punished, but his mother was beginning to tire of him now, and, instead of liking him always near her, seemed much more satisfied when he wandered off with the other camels.

Then came an eventful day in Cara's life. This was when they reached the end of their long journey, and very thankful Cara was to get to it; for all the camels, in spite of their endurance, were weak and haggard for want of food and water. Five long, weary days had the poor animals carried their loads, going sometimes twenty-five to thirty miles a day, and all that time not one drop of water had they been able to get. Moreover, they scarcely looked like camels, for their nice, plump humps had almost entirely disappeared, and this was something that the Arabs noted with anxiety.



Page 20

But, oh, how they grumbled and groaned! And how savagely their mouths opened at the least provocation! But their poor mouths and tongues were dry and cracked with the heat, and they extended and retracted their flexible lips in the vain effort to get a little moisture.

But the journey was over at last. Arrived at their destination, the camels sank wearily down, and once relieved of their burdens lay at full length, while the Arabs were bringing them food and drink.

Cara looked round in surprise; there were strange men and women about, and strange animals that he had not seen before. There was a great deal of noise, too, which he did not approve of, and he, himself, appeared to attract a good deal of attention. He was made to turn round and show himself so many times that at last he lost his temper completely, and snapped and snarled in the most savage manner. But finally a rope was thrown over his head, and he was led away, much against his will, by a strange man. Cara would not have gone at all, only that the cord around his neck hurt so much when the man pulled it, that he found that it was much better to follow him.

From that day Cara never saw his mother again. But as he had plenty of food in the shape of green vegetables and roots, and had a nice, comfortable place in which to lie down, Cara—I grieve to say—soon forgot all about his mother, and made himself perfectly at home in his new surroundings. He was quite happy—although he never forgot to grumble—as there were many young camels with him, and fine times they had together. But he often thought of Camer and her nice little ways.

So things went on until Cara was four years old, and then his troubles began, for he was no longer to be an idle animal, spending all his time in gamboling about, but was taught to wear first, a halter, then a bridle, and finally a thing was put on his back, which nearly frightened him to death. Not that it was so very heavy, but because he had never had anything on his back before, and he did not like the feeling of it. He made as much trouble as he possibly could, and grumbled to his heart's content, but it was of no use. The horrible thing turned out to be a saddle, which was strapped on in spite of kicks and groans and snappings of his strong, white teeth, and finally, finding that it was of no use, Cara gave in and carried his burden patiently, as all other camels do.

But all this training took some time, and it was not for another year or two that Cara was really of much use. But he was a particularly strong, well-grown young animal, and, in spite of his grumbling, was a valuable animal.

He reached his full growth when he was sixteen years old, and was then a fine specimen of an Arabian camel. He had good, broad feet, with well-developed cushions; sinewy limbs; a strong body, and a very fine hump, of which he was extremely proud.



Page 21

He changed masters again at this time, and, to his astonishment, found that he was the chief camel, and was to carry the master of the tribe, preceding the others, attended by horses and servants. Cara now had a fine time of it. He had very little to do except to carry his master and a very handsome saddle. His journeys were short, and altogether he had about as easy a time of it as it is possible for a camel to have. His master was fond and proud of him, for he was wonderfully handsome for a camel and of abnormal size.

At one time he rendered his master a great service, for there had been a long drought, and no water could be found anywhere. Cara, however, had the acute sense of smell which all camels have, and one day when very thirsty broke out of his stable, and, smelling water about a mile off, set forth to get some. He was followed by some of the servants, who guessed what had happened, and, to their great joy, Cara led them to a spring of fresh water.

No doubt he would have lived to a good old age—say forty or fifty years—but that one day, breaking out of his stable again—a thing Cara was rather fond of doing—he wandered about, and, coming across a nice-looking, green plant, he promptly proceeded to eat it. But, alas! the nice-looking plant was a deadly poison called by the Arabs “camel poison,” and, soon after eating it, Cara became very ill, and was scarcely able to get back with slow and weary steps to his comfortable stable, where, after a few short groans, he lay down and died.

And this was the end of Cara.

It was very sad, and his master shed bitter tears over his handsome camel. But, you see, it was Cara’s own stupidity, for, like the rest of his tribe, he would always eat anything that was green, no matter where it grew or what it looked like.

SICCATEE, THE SQUIRREL

Poor Siccatee was in great trouble.

She had been very busy for some time past laying up food for the winter, and it had taken many weeks’ hard work. She had selected the very best nuts, acorns, corn, berries and seeds, and all through the beautiful autumn days had scarcely rested for a moment, so eager had she been to lay in a good stock.

Not a single unsound, worm-eaten or empty nut had she allowed to go into her stores. She had taken each one in her little fore paws, looked it carefully over, turning and twisting it about and examining it from every point of view with her keen little eyes; and then, when she had made quite sure that it was a good one and perfectly sound, she had trotted off with it in her quick way, which was something between a hop and a



gallop, and hidden it in a nice place at the root of some old tree, or in some cleverly hidden crevice.

Her husband had helped her as much as he could, and had contributed many dainties.

Their beautiful home was in a wood by the side of the sea, and the people in the big house at the bottom of the wood sometimes threw out dainties in the shape of fruit, scraps of meat and bread, and many kinds of berries.



Page 22

But Siccatee herself was too frightened to go down on the beach, for she was a very nervous little thing. Sentre, her husband, was quite daring, and not easily frightened. They had worked very hard together, and their children, who were now getting quite strong and big, had done their best to help them. Only that morning Siccatee woke up feeling quite bright and cheerful, for she had accumulated nearly enough winter food for herself and her little ones; but then, that very afternoon, just as she was taking two big beechnuts to one of her secret hiding-places, she saw two Horrible Humans standing close to it.

Siccatee suddenly stopped, hugging the two nuts tightly to her breast with her funny little paws, and whisking her tail nervously up and down, making waves in the pretty, gray fur, while her nervous little mouth worked convulsively. For, oh, what should she do if they found her treasures?

Quick as a flash she bounded behind a tree, for, with her wonderfully quick eyesight and senses always on the alert, she scented danger in a moment.

Once behind a tree, nothing could be seen of Siccatee but her bright eyes and just the tip of her bushy tail. And even these were not noticed by the Humans.

After all, the Horrible Humans were only a little boy and a little girl. But, oh, what mischief they did in the next few moments! They seemed to be picking ferns and flowers, and for a few moments Siccatee hoped that they would pass her hoarding-place unnoticed. But, alas! just as they were turning away, the little boy caught sight of the hollow in the tree, and, having a boy's natural curiosity, he straightway went to investigate.

Siccatee's little heart beat and throbbed and thumped until she felt nearly suffocated. Her bright little eyes almost started out of her head with fear, and her tail waved, and waved, and waved—a true index of the agitation of its owner.

She remembered that she had hidden her treasures in the tree as far back as she could go, and had carefully covered them with some powdery earth. Perhaps they would think there was only earth in the hollow and not disturb it.

But in another moment the boy gave a scream of delight. For a moment Siccatee could not see what he was doing, as his body was bent over the hole. Then he suddenly stood up and called to his sister, and there, dragged out on the ground and strewn all about, was one of Siccatee's beautiful winter hoards!

She did not know herself, until she saw it thrown out, what a quantity of food she and her family had collected.



The Humans did not seem to want the things after all, for the boy kicked them about, which made Siccatee very angry. And the little girl, after picking them up, threw them down again.

It was so dreadful to see her precious treasures strewn about in this fashion, and kicked and bruised, that Siccatee, in spite of her self-control, gave a little, sobbing cry.



Page 23

The children heard it, and suddenly caught sight of her, and then, oh, what a chase began! The boy began to throw stones and pieces of wood, and actually dared to throw some of her own nuts at Siccatee.

By this time she was at the top of the tree, and now her grief changed to anger—real anger—and she sat on one of the boughs and scolded as hard as she could. Her funny little “prit, prit, p-r-i-t,” amused the children, and the more she scolded the more they laughed.

At last Siccatee grew disgusted and left that tree to go to another, and then another, and still another; springing such distances and at such a height that the children thought she would be dashed to pieces every moment. But not a bit of it. Siccatee, like all squirrels, was very sure-footed, and rarely made a false step. If, by any chance, she should lose her foothold, she would spread out her legs and funny, bushy tail, drop lightly to the ground and bound away as though nothing had happened. But she took care not to lose her foothold now, with those Horrible Humans so near. All she thought about was to get away from them as quickly as possible, and to lead them away from her other hiding-places.

Luckily they had found but one. She had several others near the big tree—for this was her home tree, and there she and her husband had lived for two or three years, and reared several families.

[Illustration: “SAT ON ONE OF THE BOUGHS AND SCOLDED AS HARD AS SHE COULD.”]

But while all this was going on, Siccatee called to her husband, and in a very few minutes he joined her. He was much bigger than Siccatee and not so nervous, and on hearing what had happened flew into a great rage, and dared and defied his enemies in the same way that his wife had done—that is, by sitting on a bough and scolding them.

The children pelted the two squirrels with everything they could find, but they dodged so quickly and so cleverly that not a single thing touched them.

But after a time the children grew tired of throwing stones and sticks, and as it made their necks ache to look up so high, they gave up the chase and went home, and that was the last that Sentre and Siccatee saw of them for a long time.

But this unpleasant incident had upset them both very much, and when their children joined them a few minutes later, they gave them many warnings and cautions about always keeping a sharp lookout for danger.



At last all ventured down, and, while keeping a sharp lookout with their bright little eyes, gazed on the ruin the children had wrought. Fortunately, it was not the most valuable of their hoards, for it contained no eggs or insects.

After much consultation and discussion, the squirrels decided not to use this hiding-place again—at any rate, not that winter—for it would never do to run the risk of having it disturbed a second time.

So they set to work, found a nice crevice in a big rock, and worked hard all day long collecting another store.

Page 24

Siccatee would not allow her family to eat too many nuts just then. She knew that the time was coming when young birds, mice and insects would be very scarce. So she impressed it upon them to make the very most of their time, and eat as much of that kind of food as they could get. They might have a nut or two, occasionally, she said, and meanwhile she would teach them the proper way in which to eat a nut or an egg.

Siccatee had found an egg in some hay in a little wooden hut, next to the house at the foot of the wood, and this she had carried very carefully to one of her stores. She considered that this would be a good time to teach her children—there were two of them, fine young specimens of American squirrels—their first important lesson.

So she stood up, holding the egg firmly with her fore paws, then, with a crisp snap of her sharp little teeth, she broke the shell, and cleverly sucked out the inside of it; not all, because she wanted her little ones to taste and see how good an egg really was. And very good they thought it—so good that in a few moments the egg was empty and the two young squirrels were quarreling over the shell. But Siccatee soon settled that by a scolding and several sharp pats.

But she had not finished her lesson yet, and next showed them how to eat a nut. She held the nut very much in the same way that she had held the egg. First of all, she bit off one end of the nut with her teeth, then broke away the rest of the shell, carefully pulling off the little brown husk on the kernel, then munched it in her funny little way as though it was the greatest dainty she had ever tasted.

The young squirrels grew quite excited over this, and kept breaking and peeling nuts until their mother told them they had had enough, and sent them off to bed for the night.

Soon after this winter suddenly appeared, covering the earth and trees and bushes with a thick, white mantle—so thick and white that all the paths in the woods were hidden and all the trees and bushes looked alike, but Sentre and Siccatee and their children knew their home, and, having wonderful memories, never made a mistake about finding either their home or their stores of food.

Some of their storehouses were quite a distance off, and in various directions, but never by any chance did either Sentre or Siccatee forget where they were. And, although the soft, white mantle had covered all the little hiding-places, neither were in the least uneasy, but, when one or the other wanted something for dinner, they trotted off lightly and nimbly, making straight for one of the hoards; scratching away the snow, and having taken out a few nuts, or berries, or dried scraps of meat, or bread, scrambled off to eat it at his or her leisure.

It was a very hard winter, and had it not been that these little American squirrels were such good housekeepers they would have fared very badly, and their young ones would



probably have died from cold and want. But they had plenty of food and a nice, warm nest—the very same nest in which they had lived for several seasons.



Page 25

This nest was made of leaves, moss, grass, little twigs, hair, feathers, little scraps of wool which the sheep had thoughtfully left on the brambles—anything, in fact, that was soft, and comfortable, and warm. It was woven so carefully that neither rain nor snow could get into it, and was so firmly wedged in its place that no wind could blow it away. Therefore, when they had all taken a little exercise, had a good meal, and trotted home again, they nestled down in their warm, cozy home, and were just as happy as they could be.

But when Christmas was over and January had come and gone, the young squirrels got restless and tiresome, and began to behave very badly— so badly that sometimes they did not come home for a couple of nights and days, and at last they went away altogether.

But the parent squirrels did not seem to mind it, and it was rather a relief to be quiet and peaceable, and not have so much noise and quarreling, and as Mother Earth was beginning to look green again, Sentre and Siccatee felt very happy and were scarcely ever apart.

They began to find mice, young birds and insects again, and very glad they were, for they were tired of dried roots and odd scraps.

All that spring they were very busy, as usual, for squirrels always seem to be busy, no matter what time of the year it may be. They are busy in the spring getting ready for the little baby squirrels; busy all the summer attending to them and feeding them; busy all the autumn collecting their winter stores, and busy all the winter finding their food and teaching their children the manners and customs of squirrelhood.

As the spring went on the two squirrels grew more busy, if possible, than ever, and by the beginning of summer, in the old nest which they had done up and renovated, were four, tiny baby squirrels, and both Sentre and Siccatee were fully convinced that they were finer babies than they had ever had before. They both took the greatest care of them all through that summer, and when autumn came round once more began the same thing over again—collecting food for the winter and teaching their little ones how to eat eggs and nuts; how to climb trees, and leap from bough to bough, and how to drop in time of danger on their outspread little feet and bushy tails, and so save themselves from injury.

And, curiously enough, one day Siccatee came across the same Horrible Humans that had caused her so much trouble the year before. They were both a little taller and broader, but that they were the same there could be no doubt. Siccatee found out that they came to the house at the foot of the hill every year, and very sorry she was, for it was only last year that they had spoiled one of her best storehouses.



This year something far more terrible happened. Of all her four children, Siccatée loved best of all little Graycoat, who was certainly a very beautiful baby squirrel. He was so soft and fluffy; had such a beautiful, silvery gray tail; such pretty, delicate feet and limbs, and neat, small head, with bright little eyes that were never still for a single moment.



Page 26

Now, Graycoat was fond of wandering off by himself—being a bit of a dreamer—and one beautiful day he happened in some extraordinary way to jump right into the lap of one of the Humans, who were sitting there in the woods.

It was the lap of the little girl, and in an instant she had thrown her apron over Graycoat and he was a prisoner.

In vain he cried and shrieked for his mother, and in vain she answered from the bough above, chattering and scolding and calling him beseechingly in most piteous tones. But the little girl kept tight hold and carried poor Graycoat to the house at the foot of the hill, and here, after being petted and stroked, and looked at until he was nearly dead with fright, Graycoat was put into a horrible prison with iron bars; and although he climbed and climbed and worked hard all day, he never seemed to get any further up and could see no chance of getting out. The children, wishing to be kind, but not realizing how dreadfully cruel it was to keep him in the cage at all, put his little prison out on the veranda, and it was with an aching heart and tears of agony that Siccatee saw her beloved little one shut up in that cruel cage.

She crept close and talked to Graycoat in a soft, guttural tone, and when night drew on, and all was still and silent outside the house, Siccatee would go to the prison and bite and gnaw with her little teeth, and scratch with her little paws, straining every nerve in her poor little body to set her darling free.

Graycoat's poor little heart would beat with hope every time his mother came, and, when she hopped swiftly and softly away in the early morning, Graycoat's little heart would sink again, and he would send forth a pitiful little cry after his mother—a cry that went to her very heart.

From the time that Graycoat was taken prisoner Siccatee scarcely ate or slept. Carefully hidden behind the nearest tree, her bright little eyes would peep out, and her soft tail wave up and down while she watched every action and incident in the new life of her little one.

As night crept on, she would once more steal forth to the cage, and try again and again at the same useless, hopeless task of breaking those cruel bars.

She had not forgotten her other children, but she knew they could now look out for themselves, had plenty to eat, and a good, comfortable home in the old tree. So she paid little attention to them, and devoted all her thoughts and energies to her unfortunate, little Graycoat.

Then came one cold, frosty night—so cold that the poor little baby squirrel shivered and shook as though with an ague. Siccatee sat as close to the bars of the prison as she could sit, and did her best to warm Graycoat with the heat from her own little body. But

Graycoat missed the nice, warm nest in the tree, and although the side that was nestling against his mother was fairly warm, his other side felt cold and stiff.



Page 27

In fact, he felt stiff all over, for the unnatural life, the different food, the cruel prison bars, and last, but not least, the cold, frosty night were too much for him, and quite suddenly he left off leaning against his little mother, and lay on the floor of his prison cold and stiff.

Poor Siccatee was in great distress. She ran round and round the cage, calling him, scolding him and beseeching him to speak to her. Her bright eyes were full of tears, and her poor little body shook with cold and distress.

In vain she put first one tiny paw through the cage and tried to arouse him, and then the other. It was no use. Graycoat neither moved nor answered, and at last with a pitiful little cry Siccatee lay down by the cage, put one little paw through the bars as though in a last appeal to her darling, and, shivering with cold and anguish, drew one long sobbing breath, and lay just as still as Graycoat.

And when the children came in the morning, they were greatly surprised and deeply distressed to find two dead squirrels—one baby squirrel inside the cage, and one mother squirrel outside.

But even then they did not seem to realize how dreadfully cruel they had been in suddenly taking away a wild, free creature from the fresh, open air, beautiful woods and trees, and, best of all, joyous freedom, and putting him in a tiny, narrow cage, where there was only just room enough for him to turn round.

They could not realize that nothing they could do or give him could ever make up to the active, little creature the loss of his beautiful, woodland home and his free life.

LEO, THE LION

Leo was a full-grown, African lion, and one of the finest specimens of his race. Not only was he the king of beasts, but he was the king of all other lions for miles and miles around the country in which he lived.

From a little, tawny cub, when he had played and frolicked with his brother and sister, he had given proofs of his extraordinary strength. His mother had at last decided he was too rough to play with the others, so bruised and knocked about were they on more than one occasion after romping with him.

The muscles of his thick paws and sturdy limbs stood out like knotted cords even as a cub; his claws cut like little sickles, and his hard, rope-like tail could give a blow that would knock his brother or sister head over heels.

As he grew up he gave promise of the magnificent animal he eventually became. Added to his wonderful strength he had marvelous daring, even for a young lion, being absolutely fearless.



Long before his mane had fully grown the other lions stood in awe of him; for, although at times he was indolent and lazy, like the rest of his kind, and would not exert himself unless obliged to do so, there were other times when he allowed nothing to stand in his way.



Page 28

His favorite food happened to be buffalo and giraffe, and although they were both extremely troublesome things to get hold of, Leo cared not. He liked buffalo and giraffe, and he intended to have them. The other lions would never go out of their way if they could get an antelope or a jaguar, because they were easy to strike down and were very good eating; but to obtain a buffalo or a giraffe meant running long distances, and this is what a lion does not care to do.

With his great strength he can give tremendous springs, but, owing to his indolent nature, he dislikes a long-continued race, which is apt, before it is finished, to be somewhat tiring, even to a lion.

Buffaloes and giraffes are made for running and think nothing of it, but the lion is built in a different manner, and, moreover, he knows that these animals are so wonderfully quick of hearing that they generally obtain a good start to begin with.

But Leo cared nothing for this: if he wanted a buffalo he had it, even if he raced half the night through for it. As a matter of fact, the longer the race the more he enjoyed the feast. What could be nicer than, after racing for miles after a nice, fat buffalo, to pull it down with his strong paws, to tear open its throat, and drink the warm blood?

Sometimes he ate a part of the flesh, but not always; he was somewhat fastidious, and so that he had the warm blood, he more often than not left the carcass for the wolves and hyenas, or any other animal who cared to have it.

There was perhaps even more delight in obtaining a giraffe than a buffalo. For a giraffe can skim over the ground at an amazing pace—so swiftly, so silently, that not a sound can be heard except the soft, gentle swish of its funny little tail.

The stately carriage of the giraffe does not appeal to the lion, and the graceful neck, with its pretty head and round, gentle eyes, has no effect on him; all he thinks of is the tender flesh and delicate flavor which belong peculiarly to a giraffe.

There is no struggle as with the buffalo when the lion springs upon the giraffe. There is no roar or noise of any kind, for the giraffe is absolutely dumb, and makes no sound even when dying.

But Leo was fastidious even about the giraffe: he only ate the parts he liked best, and left the rest for the lower animals.

At other times, when the indolence of his nature overcame him, Leo would content himself with a young antelope or any other animal which was easy to capture. When food was scarce he would use the lion's tactics to get it.

In the first place, he would be very careful to go against the wind, so that the peculiar odor, which all animals that belong to the cat tribe have, should be blown behind him,



and so not convey any warning to the animals he was approaching. If he failed to find anything, he would resort to tactic number two. He would put his huge mouth close to the ground and roar, moving his head in a half-circle all the time; by doing this it was impossible for the animals to tell from which direction the sound came, and, wild with terror, the foolish creatures would rush out in all directions, very often into Leo's very mouth.



Page 29

After this he would creep indolently back to his comfortable lair and have a good, long sleep. For sleep is one of a lion's greatest enjoyments. He sleeps after a night hunt; sleeps during the heat of the day; in fact, when there is nothing else to do, and whenever he has an opportunity. Belonging to the cat tribe, he has the cat's love of sleep and ease very strongly developed, and is about as indolent an animal on occasion as can be imagined.

When Leo was fully grown he was a magnificent animal, and even the other male lions stood in awe of him. He looked what he was—a very king of lions, when, after a long sleep, he rose up in all his majesty of strength, shook his magnificent mane and lashed his tail, with its curious little black tuft, to and fro as though eager for a fight.

He was acknowledged by all his brethren, almost before he had reached his maturity, to be the king of them all; and Leo took the honor as a matter of course, and kept up his reputation to the very letter.

He was the terror of the villagers by night, for he had already become known, and the animal creation lived in deadly fear of him.

He would stalk into the villages in the coolest and most daring manner, passing under the very noses of the guns, take up some lamb or sheep or other small animal, and walk coolly off with it, growling in his most impudent manner the while. In vain did the guns blaze forth fire and smoke; in vain were traps set in all directions. Leo was not to be caught: he eluded them all, and went his way, and became more and more a living terror and a dread.

When he took unto himself a wife he grew fiercer still, and his rage and passion at the slightest sign of any intruder kept all other members of the tribe at a safe distance.

In due course of time he had a small family, and once in possession of these precious cubs his strength and fierceness increased, and his daring knew no bounds. His roars struck terror into all hearts, and his craftiness and extraordinary cunning inspired a superstitious fear among the natives, which made them speak of him with hushed breath.

But pride must have a fall, and Leo's fall came in a somewhat curious manner.

It happened that food was very scarce, and that the young cubs were growing more and more hungry as the days went on.

Leo was a proud father, and the fine, sturdy cubs which belonged to him were the admiration of all the other lions who had ever had the privilege of seeing them. He would go through almost anything for himself, but for his wife and cubs he cared not what he faced or what he dared, so that he obtained what he wanted.



They had eaten up most of the young things which had been thriving on the various farms, and there seemed to be nothing left but either a sheep or a bullock. Being lazy, Leo did not care to carry either a sheep or a bullock to his lair; he preferred something lighter.



Page 30

And so it happened one evening that, as he made his way towards the village—making up his mind that if there was nothing else he must have a sheep—he suddenly came across the dead body of a little Kaffir boy lying by the wayside.

The Kaffirs very seldom bury their dead, and so the mother had laid her beloved one under a shady bank, and left him with a few leaves strewn over him.

At first Leo hesitated. He had never tasted Kaffir, and he also knew that it was a bad thing to eat. But he was very hungry himself, and his wife and family were hungry, too; and the little Kaffir boy would be light to carry.

After smelling and turning over the body, he decided first to taste it and see whether it would be good for his family to eat.

Alas! once having tasted it, Leo was done for. It was the most delicious food he had ever tasted, and he was unable to stop eating until he had made a full, heavy meal. Then he looked at the poor little carcass; there would still be enough for the cubs, and yet he hesitated.

He knew it would be bad for them; he knew that, once having given it to them, they would be spoilt for all other food; but he had eaten so heartily himself, and was already getting so lazy and sleepy from the effects of his meal, that he had no energy nor inclination to hunt for any other food that night. So, taking the remains of the little Kaffir boy in his strong mouth, he trotted swiftly off to his lair, and put it down temptingly in front of the cubs.

There were two of them, and they were ravenously hungry; without more ado they set to work, and tore and crunched with their sharp teeth and strong little jaws, until there was not a vestige of the little Kaffir boy left.

The lioness, seeing there was only sufficient food for the cubs, did not attempt to take any, but, hungry as she was, looked placidly on while the young ones satisfied their hunger.

[Illustration: "HE WOULD TAKE UP SOME SMALL ANIMAL AND WALK COOLLY OFF WITH IT."]

Leo looked at her guiltily, and expected reproaches. But, as it happened, his wife had not noticed what kind of food he had brought; it had been too much torn to be recognizable, and she concluded it was the remains of some small animal he had killed.

At any other time he would have gone out again to fetch some food for his wife, but he was so heavy and sleepy that, with one big yawn, he sank down, stretched out his huge paws in front of him, and, nestling his handsome head comfortably between them, sank into a deep sleep.



From that day Leo was no longer the same. He was restless and irritable, snappy and fierce even to his wife and children. He raced no more after buffaloes or giraffes, or even for antelopes or jaguars; all he wanted was human flesh.

Once having tasted it, he cared for and could eat no other. And as time went on his magnificent coat began to come off in great, unsightly patches, his eyes and mouth got sore and red, and his limbs grew weak and rickety. His roar was no longer the fierce, grand, triumphant roar that it had been; it resembled a hoarse cry of pain now, and his little ones—instead of being sturdy little cubs as they had been—had grown thin, miserable, and mangy.



Page 31

Altogether Leo was in a miserable state; and, to add to his misery, his wife turned against him. The sight of his mangy coat and bloodshot eyes, not to speak of the sore, drooping mouth, filled her with disgust, and she growled fiercely whenever he came near her.

In vain he brought her food to eat; but the food was always dead Kaffir, and she would not touch it.

She appeared, too, to turn against the cubs, and, instead of fondling and caressing them as formerly, kept them aloof and chastised them severely with her heavy paws whenever they came too near.

Soon after this one of the cubs died, and Leo's grief was painful to witness. He licked it all over, put his huge paw on it, and turned it from one side to the other, uttering queer little sounds all the time, and, when he found it would neither move nor respond to his caresses, gave a prolonged howl of misery which struck terror into his wife's heart.

She had had enough of it by this time; she disliked a mangy husband and scrofulous children, and so the next evening quietly took her departure to some other place where the surroundings were more congenial.

Leo tottered back to his lair that night with staggering, uneven steps to find his wife had gone and that his last remaining cub had just died.

With a cry of pain, something between a roar and a deep growl, Leo stretched himself over the two little, dead bodies of his children and pined and fretted away.

He no longer went for food, not even for Kaffirs, and the villagers and animals in the neighborhood wondered what had become of him, and whether his absence meant some fresh daring on his part.

But there was no more daring for Leo. From the time he laid his long, warm body over the cold forms of his children he never rose again.

For three days he lay there, doing his best to bring them back to life; but on the third day his great head, with what remained of its magnificent beauty, sank for the last time on his heavy paws, and Leo, the king of lions, was dead.

And so this grand, strong, noble animal lost his life through eating human flesh, which he knew quite well he ought not to touch.



CHAFFER, THE CHAMOIS

On one of the craggy heights of the Alpine mountains, in Switzerland, Chaffer stood, one fine, clear day in October, looking out over the landscape, and wondering what he should do and where he should go.

For, sad to relate, he had just been turned out of the herd by an old chamois, who considered that he and those of his own age had a better right there than some of the young males. So, with a few others, Chaffer had been driven off, but not until he had made a good fight for it. He was fairly strong, and did not at all relish getting the worst of anything, but he was young yet and knew his time was coming— the time when he would drive that old chamois out of the herd far quicker than he had been driven, and get the best of him in more ways than one.



Page 32

He was a fine young animal, and as he stood there at that dizzy height, his four feet planted firmly on the peak, he showed to very best advantage. Chaffer stood about two feet high at the shoulders, and was about three feet in length, not counting his short, black tail; his yellowish-brown body was streaked down the back with a black line, which defined the spine, while his beautiful head—the face and throat a peculiar yellowish-white, with a brownish-black mark which went from his mouth to his eyes—was surmounted by a splendid pair of horns nearly come to perfection.

These horns were from six to eight inches long, black and shiny, slender and round, rising from the forehead perpendicularly, and curving sharply at the extremities into hooks. Very proud Chaffer was of them, for they meant; so much to him. They meant, for one thing, that he was now almost full grown, and that he would soon be of an age to take his place in the antelope world as a champion and fighter. He could hold his own now with some of the males, and, although he had just been driven out of the herd, several others had been forced out with him, so he did not trouble himself much about it.

The only thing he was puzzled about was what he should do next, but this little matter was decided for him in a manner he never dreamed of. He was some way from the herd now, but at that moment he heard the well-known whistle of the sentinel chamois. [Footnote: Each herd has a chamois who acts as a sentinel. At the slightest sign of danger this sentinel gives a peculiar whistle, not particularly shrill or piercing, but which has a curious, penetrating power and carries a great distance. Not only does this sentinel give warning of danger, but he indicates from which direction it is coming.—*Author.*] In an instant Chaffer was off, leaping over wide chasms, climbing over crags and dizzy heights, sliding down dangerous, slippery places, but always going in the opposite direction to the approaching enemy.

For Chaffer knew now what the danger was—it was a man; and he could, with his wonderful power of scent, smell him, although he was still a great distance away. Once having realized that it was a man, Chaffer lost no time, but made his way at once up the steepest crag he could find. It was much easier for him to go up than down, for his legs were adapted for this purpose, The hind ones being much longer than the front ones.

His small, neat feet were formed for climbing; his forefeet had very sharp hoofs, which, when descending, Chaffer would dig into the ground to gain a foothold, and his hind feet had curious, false hoofs. That is to say, the outer hoofs were higher than the soles, and this enabled him to have a grip on the slightest notch or projection on the face of the rocks, so that it was almost impossible for him to slip. In descending the rocks, he would place his forefeet close together and push them in front of him; he could then slide down the face of an almost perpendicular cliff with the greatest ease and safety, and alight at the bottom without so much as a scratch.



Page 33

In going up a very steep hill, he would stand up on his hind legs, put his forefeet on some narrow shelf or ledge of rock, and then, with a sharp little bound, draw his body up, and stand with all four feet on a space scarcely big enough for a full-grown man.

Chaffer tried this plan now, and with good effect for a time, but he could smell the man coming nearer and nearer, and began to be terribly frightened. Timid and nervous to a wonderful degree, and of a cautious, suspicious nature, Chaffer's excitement grew intense, and his small, pointed ears quivered painfully. On he went, never stopping to glance round for a single instant, for it was not necessary; he knew only too well what was behind him, and his one object was to get away.

At this moment, however, there was another whistle from the sentinel of the herd, much fainter this time because farther off, but containing the information that there was danger at the top of the mountains as well as at the base. Chaffer hesitated a moment, but he decided to go on now, whatever came; he was far more at home on these sharp crags and dangerous heights than he was on smooth, even ground, and he could go where it was quite impossible for a man to follow.

So he gave a few more leaps, a few more bounds, although the scent of the man now was so strong as to bewilder him, and then landed on a tiny ledge face to face with a hunter!

It would have been hard to say which was the most surprised—the hunter or Chaffer. As a matter of fact, the hunter had been carefully watching another chamois a little lower down—a young male who had been turned out of the herd with Chaffer—and had no idea a second chamois was so close to him until Chaffer alighted on the ledge of rock at his very feet. The two looked at one another for an instant in deathlike silence, their eyes wide open with surprise and fright; for, had the chamois only known it, he could, with one touch of his horns, have sent the hunter whirling through space and onto the rocks beneath, where he would have been dashed to pieces.

Then, with a wild leap, Chaffer sprang—sprang down the precipitous chasm which yawned beneath them, a distance of nearly thirty feet. As he went down, with his graceful body hanging in the air, and his handsome head, with its curved horns, thrown back, he turned himself diagonally, striking his feet sharply every now and then against the face of the rock in his descent, and alighted at the foot in perfect safety.

Meanwhile, the hunter, although he was a hardy Swiss mountaineer, was so frightened at his narrow escape that he gave up the chase for that day and went home, followed by the other hunters. They had been out on this expedition four days already, and had faced great dangers without getting a single chamois. They were brave and patient men, and as they earned their living by chamois hunting—one of the most dangerous and precarious ways of earning a living—had been ready and prepared for a certain amount of risk. But four days in the mountains, with nothing but dried meat for food,

added to the intense cold and exposure, not to speak of risking their lives several times a day, was about as much as any man could stand, so, when Chaffer and his companions got away, the hunters decided to go home and hunt them another time.



Page 34

But the chamois were also frightened, and more nervous and timid than usual for some time after this, and kept a sharp lookout themselves, not trusting so much to the sentinel, for they considered he had not given them warning enough the last time.

Chaffer had been so thoroughly scared that he kept himself hidden in chasms and crevices for days, only coming out every now and then to feed and to give a hurried glance round. Food was getting scarce now, too, and he would very soon have to go without the fresh grass and herbage which grew on the mountains, and make the buds of the pine, fir and juniper trees do instead. But he could treat himself to an occasional bit of salt from the sandstone rocks which are to be found in the Alps, and of this he was extremely fond; it also helped to keep him in good health.

It was a hard winter that year, and when the snow lay thick and white not only on the mountains, but in the valleys, Chaffer had as much as he could do to find enough to eat. Occasionally he would be able to scrape away the snow, and get tiny bits of grass and other green stuff, but it was not enough to keep him alive, and he was obliged to content himself with the buds of trees and any little bit of vegetation he could find.

He did not mind the cold in the least, for he often stayed on the snow-clad heights in summer from preference; but when this winter had really set in, with its exceptional severity, Chaffer betook himself to the wooded land which lay just below the glaciers, and roamed about there until spring once more appeared. But he did not care for wooded districts; he preferred peaks and ravines which had a northern aspect. So, as soon as he possibly could, he left the low lands and once more climbed his beloved mountains.

The cold was still intense, but underneath his ordinary covering of hair Chaffer had another coat of short, thick, greyish wool, and this protected him, and kept him nice and warm. His outer coat had changed during the winter from a golden brown to a dark chestnut, and, as the spring advanced, it changed again to a pretty, light color, which was almost grey.

Chaffer never forgot the first spring day after that awful winter, when the snow, having melted from some of the mountain ranges, disclosed fresh young grass and tender herbage. How delicious it was, and how Chaffer enjoyed it! He had grown quite thin and gaunt, his finely formed muscular neck was lean and scraggy, and his limbs felt weak.

But a week or two of good feeding, with an occasional bit of salt, soon put him right, and by the time summer arrived Chaffer had not only regained the strength he had lost in the winter, but had developed more power and growth in many ways. He had rejoined the herd, for the old chamois had left it by this time, and Chaffer and some other young males had determined that, come what might, they would allow no old chamois to turn them out again.



Page 35

It was a beautiful summer, and the herd, which numbered about twenty, had a fine time. They sported and leaped from crag to crag—climbed up to the highest and most inaccessible peaks, where they would stand sniffing the clear air, and look out with their beautiful eyes over the picturesque landscape which lay like a vast panorama before them— glide down the chasms and precipices, and take leaps and bounds which would have made almost any animal but a chamois giddy.

And, during that summer, Chaffer grew fat and sleek and handsomer than ever, and by the time October came again was the largest animal in the herd. Only the year before he had been wretched and miserable and very lonely; now he was settled and contented and very happy, for, not only had he refused to allow the old chamois to enter the herd again, but he had chosen a pretty and graceful little wife, and was just as proud of her as he could be.

She was a beautiful creature, and her dark, liquid eyes looked timidly and pathetically out from beneath her nicely developed horns—for both male and female chamois have these appendages—while every movement of her delicately formed body was full of grace. It was no wonder Chaffer was proud of her, and when she presented him later on with a fine little kid, he was prouder than ever.

The baby chamois was a pretty little creature, and quick and active to a remarkable degree. But she had also inherited her parents' sensitiveness and timidity, and never left her mother's side; where the mother chamois went, there the little one followed closely, and when a chasm or ravine was too wide to cross with a leap of her small body, the mother made a bridge of her own body by throwing herself across, with feet planted firmly on either side of the chasm, and on it the little one sprang lightly and gracefully over in safety.

Chaffer was not always with them; he had a good many other things to attend to, but he kept careful and watchful guard over them, and his keen senses of sight and hearing were always on the alert for danger.

One fine day in the following spring, when the kid was growing big and strong, the herd had collected on a favorite feeding-ground, and was browsing in calm enjoyment. Suddenly the sentinel lifted his head, and, stamping his fore feet on the ground, gave the whistle of warning.

The chamois were on the alert in an instant, and, scenting danger to windward, flew wildly in the opposite direction. As a rule, they were able to escape, but this time they had been trapped, for the same hunters, who had tried in vain so many times to catch them, had formed a circle round them now, and had narrowed it until they were close to their prey.



Chaffer leaped and bounded, followed by his wife and little one, and was one of the very first to leave the feeding-ground behind; but he was also the first to meet the hunters face to face—not at such close quarters as at that memorable time when he had sprang on the same ledge with the hunter, but just close enough for those hunters to take a good, steady aim at him.



Page 36

There was a loud report—another—and another, and Chaffer, stunned and bewildered, found himself lying at full length on the ground, while a horrible pain in his body made him feel sick and faint. In vain he lifted his head, and tried to raise himself; his head sank slowly down again on the soft grass, and his body would not move. He kept his eyes fixed on the hunters, who crowded round eagerly, but a misty veil floated in front of them, and everything looked blurred and dim. He made one more brave effort, and, with a spasmodic jerk, half lifted his body; but the exertion made the stream of blood, which was oozing out of his side, spurt out in quick, sharp rushes, and with a pathetic sigh and a convulsive movement of the beautiful form, which had been so full of life and activity only a few short minutes before, Chaffer let his handsome head fall back for the last time, and died.

The hunters, seeing he was dead, directed their attention to the mother chamois and her little one. The little chamois was on the ground, quite dead, and the mother was standing over her beloved one, her feet on either side of the poor little carcass, dyed a deep red with the blood of her offspring. During Chaffer's life, his wife had left it to him to defend her, but, deprived of his help, and bereft of her little one, she stood at bay—no longer the gentle, timid chamois, but an indignant, furious animal, ready to defend her kid with her life.

Not being sure whether the baby chamois was dead or not, the hunters tried to make the mother leave the small body, but in vain. Not only did she stamp her feet in defiance, but butted at them with her horns in a savage manner that surprised them. At last there was nothing to do but to shoot her, for they could not waste time, and the skin of a very young chamois was exceedingly valuable.

[Illustration: "CHAFFER WAS THE FIRST TO MEET THE HUNTERS FACE TO FACE."]

So, as she stood there, reckless and daring, and absolutely fearless through her motherhood, there was a quick flash, another report, and the mother chamois, the pretty wife of Chaffer, of whom he had been so proud, dropped over the body of her baby and mingled her blood with his. She died quicker than Chaffer, and she did not look at her murderers as he had done, but kept her eyes fixed on her little one, and her last movement was made towards it.

So Chaffer, his wife and little one all died on the same day, and in the same manner, and even the hunters, rough and hardy mountaineers as they were, had an uncomfortable feeling whenever they thought of the brave death of the mother, and her pathetic defense of her little one.

But they were hunters, and it was their living, and so in due course of time Chaffer's fine pair of horns were sold, the skin of his wife was turned into soft, yellow leather, and the skin of his little one was made into gloves.

JINKS, THE JACKAL



Page 37

Jinks lay at his master's feet, his forepaws stretched out in front of him, and his sharp-pointed, black nose nestling comfortably on them. To all appearance he was asleep; but every now and then his sharp, bright eyes would open, and glance swiftly round in all directions, so swiftly that it was hard to realize he had opened them at all.

It was an exceptionally hot morning, even for India, and Jinks' master stopped reading, to sigh with the heat and wipe his streaming face. Jinks was only too glad of an interruption; he had been still quite long enough, and, in his restless, fidgety way, wanted to be doing something. So, as his master yawned, sighed and fluttered his silk handkerchief, Jinks rose up, stretched himself luxuriously, and, following his master's example, yawned too.

He was a fine-looking animal as he stood up and wagged his bushy, fox-like tail, and his master was struck, for the first time, with his handsome appearance and size. For he had known Jinks from a tiny baby, having carried him home in his arms after he had found him with his dead mother, and fed him warm bread and milk, getting in return many a nasty bite from the vixenish little animal, who had all the viciousness of his race.

But, in due course of time, what with repeated kindnesses and tender care, Jinks had grown not only tame, but quite gentle, and was now extremely fond of his master, and never happy unless with him. His master returned his affection warmly, and the two were close companions; went out for long walks together, when it was not too hot; had their meals together, and would have shared the same room in the bungalow, had it not been that Jinks had a most unpleasant smell at times, which civilization could not dispel, and which made it quite impossible for him to be kept indoors at night. Indeed, there were times when this unpleasant odor was so manifest in the daytime, that Jinks was sent to his kennel in disgrace.

He always felt the disgrace keenly, and, although he invariably went at once when he was told, he did so under protest, with his bushy tail and dog-like head held down in a shamefaced manner, and a peculiar gleam in his eyes which spoke not only of shame, but of anger, only kept under through force of discipline. For his master, understanding his nature, had never allowed Jinks for one moment to get the better of him or disobey him in the smallest thing, and Jinks knew too well how a certain small dog-whip felt to wish for any more of it. He had been a pup up to this time, and just as full of wickedness and mischief as he could be.



Page 38

The occupants of the bungalow had gone through the same experiences— somewhat worse, perhaps—as most people have who bring up a puppy by hand, and had not only found all kinds of small garments strewed about indiscriminately, dragged out and pulled to pieces, but had at times lost articles altogether. Occasionally, a few particles would be found in Jinks' kennel, but Jinks never appeared to know anything about them, and, in answer to their accusations and scoldings, only put on a quizzical, enquiring air, as though he really had not the least idea what they were talking about. Even when caught in the very act, he would pretend not to know what was meant; but when the dog-whip came across his back he would give such an appalling howl that his chastisers would stop for very terror, lest he should wake up the rest of his kind in the neighborhood.

Jinks did not know there were any of his own kind in the neighborhood. As a matter of fact, he had never thought about himself at all, but, having all he wanted in the shape of food and sport, had made himself quite content and even happy. As he grew from babyhood he got more mischievous still, and gave no end of trouble by eating and destroying nearly all the grapes on the vines, and fruit on the trees and bushes.

Then, one night he had a beautiful time. His master had tied him to his kennel, as usual, and left him for the night, and Jinks was just settling down to sleep, when he suddenly heard a rustling overhead in the tall bushes. The rustling was caused by a silly chicken, who, in some way or other, had lost its way, and was now so extremely unwise as to go to roost over the head of a young jackal.

Jinks had never tasted chicken, great care having been taken about this for many reasons; but, somehow, as soon as he found out what was roosting just above him, he had an irresistible desire to get that chicken and see how he tasted. Unfortunately, he was tied up, and his master never allowed him a long rope; but Jinks, having once made up his mind, was not going to allow a rope to stop him.

He therefore set to work in the most determined manner to break it, stretching himself away from his kennel with all his might, but so noiselessly—for he had all the cunning of his kind—that even the chicken, who was uneasy and restless, heard not a sound. But, strain and tug as he would, Jinks could not break the rope, for it was a strong one, and, although he possessed good muscles and sinews, and pressed every nerve into service, there was only a funny little squeak caused by the strands of the rope rubbing together, and there it ended.

Jinks sat down for a few moments on his haunches to think it over. He had no intention of giving up, and, although he had not the slightest idea of the flavor of chicken, he felt that the time had come when he must have it, come what might. So he set his clever brain to work, while his keen, crafty eyes glanced in all directions, but never lost sight of the chicken for a single instant.



Page 39

He had lost his domesticated look for the time being; and as he sat there, with his bright eyes gleaming, his rough tongue hanging out of his open mouth, and an expectant look on his furry, oval face, he looked just what he was—a strong and healthy young jackal.

Suddenly he thought of something, and without an instant's hesitation lay down to carry out his idea. Taking the rope in his strong white teeth, he gradually, in a silent, stealthy manner, began to gnaw the strands one by one. Now and then he would stop just for a moment to moisten his lips and to make sure that the chicken was still there; then he would continue the gnawing as before. When he got to the last strand, what his strong, powerful teeth had nearly accomplished, his rough, coarse tongue finished, for it was covered with thorn-like protuberances capable of scraping the flesh off an ox.

There was a little snap, and Jinks was free. He had never wished to be free before, but the chicken had given him his wish for freedom, and he meant to have the chicken. With one swift spring he caught the bird, and in another moment his teeth were buried in its breast and back, and the unfortunate straggler from the home roost was giving his last cry, choked in its infancy by another grip from Jinks' mouth.

Jinks took the dainty morsel inside his kennel; for, now he had caught the chicken, he had a guilty feeling, and, moreover, he wanted to enjoy it in peace and privacy. And, oh, how he did enjoy it! Never in all his life had he tasted anything so delicious—it was so young, and juicy, and tender, and the flavor of it! He was obliged to stop every now and then to lick his lips and relish it to the utmost, for he would not have missed an atom of the pleasure for the world.

He ate the whole thing—flesh and bones and even the entrails: he also ate a few feathers, which he did not particularly care about; but it was impossible to get the delicious food without, and so he did not care much. By the time he had finished, the only remains of the chicken were the feathers, which floated about as though seeking for their lost home.

By morning Jinks had removed every trace of his night's doings but the broken rope and the feathers. He had licked every tiny spot of blood off his mouth and coat, but he could not tie himself up again, and he could not get rid of the feathers, although he had made several clever attempts. He had tried to catch them with his mouth and paws, but they had evaded him in the most wonderful manner, and had maddened him at times by floating round him, and even alighting on his very nose, as if to taunt him. In vain he slapped his nose sharply with his paw each time he felt that nasty, irritating, tickling sensation. He always gave his nose a hard knock, while the feathers went floating gaily off as before. He gave it up at last, and lay down in his kennel with a meek expression on his face, but a guilty look in his eyes.

Page 40

It was the custom for one of the servants to untie Jinks in the morning, so that he could go at once to his master. Occasionally his master would come and set him loose himself, and take him for a morning walk before it got too hot, so that whoever found Jinks had been untied naturally concluded the other had done it.

So it was on this particular morning. Jinks, after lying in his kennel for some time with his meek expression, suddenly remembered this, and so resolved to go into the house as though he had just been untied. He had cunning enough, however, to wait until he heard the servants moving about, and then he got up slowly, and, with his usual bright, wide-awake air, made his way into the house and to his master.

And this was the very morning when Jinks had been lying at his master's feet, and, as he rose up, that his master noticed what a handsome animal he had grown, and how big he was getting. There was no doubt he was a fine animal. He was nearly full-grown now, and stood about fifteen inches high at the shoulders, and measured nearly two feet from the tip of his nose to the beginning of his bushy tail. He had a handsome head, good, muscular limbs, and a beautiful coat of greyish-yellow color, rather dark on the back and head, but much lighter and softer underneath the body and on the insides of the legs. His bright, full eyes changed color repeatedly, but, to a close observer, one dominant expression was always in them—an expression of the deepest craft and cunning.

As he stood there, looking at his master with a subdued, enquiring kind of manner, the latter realized that he was almost a full-grown jackal, and began to wonder whether, after all his domestic training and surroundings, he would ever show the characteristic traits of his kind. Up to now he had been gentleness itself, and was as meek and obedient as any domesticated dog, but he had wild and savage blood in him, and there was a peculiar gleam in his eyes at that moment that his master could not quite understand.

The truth was, Jinks was growing uneasy and uncomfortable under his master's close scrutiny, and began to wonder, after all, whether he did not know all about that chicken. He had never looked at him in this way before, and it both annoyed and irritated him to a frightful degree, and he grew restless, and finally turned his head so that he could not see the steady, embarrassing eyes of his master.

But, as he turned his head, his master caught sight of one tiny spot of blood on his neck which Jinks had evidently overlooked. He said nothing for a moment, and then called Jinks to him in a kindly, caressing manner.

Jinks hesitated. He had grown suspicious, and he did not like his master's manner; in addition to which, he could not forget that he was guilty about the chicken; so, when his master reached forward to pat him, Jinks, thinking he was going to slap him, suddenly turned round and bit him sharply through the hand. It was the very same hand that had

fed him from a baby, and cared for and tended him all through his babyhood and young days, and up to this time had protected him from all harm and danger.



Page 41

But that was nothing to Jinks now. He scented danger, and the treacherous meanness of his nature came suddenly to the fore. He forgot the care and kindness of his master; forgot everything but the fact that those eyes were still looking at him, and that they made him feel restless, irritable and wild. He had had this wild feeling for some time now, but he had been keeping it in restraint, fearing that dog-whip and dreading the anger of his master; but now, for some reason or other, he did not care what his master thought of him, and, as he snapped fiercely at his master's hand, he growled and snarled as savagely as any wild jackal.

Without a moment's hesitation, his master, with his free hand, caught Jinks by the throat and called for help. Luckily, two servants were close by, and came immediately, and Jinks' master gave orders to fetch a gun and shoot him at once.

But Jinks was not born to be shot in that manner. As he felt that grip on his throat, he suddenly realized his strength, and with one great wrench he tore himself free, snapping and snarling in true savage fashion, and showing his fang-like teeth in an appalling manner. He would have sprung straight at the throat of his master, but that at that moment there was a flash of fire, a terrific bang, and Jinks, scared out of his wits, fled, howling in the most miserable way.

This was the last Jinks saw of his master, or his master saw of him, for some time, for after that he returned no more to the home which had sheltered him so long, but roamed the country at will, and made night hideous by his screams and howls. He wandered about for some time, seeking for a companion of some sort, but the only animals at all like himself were one or two domestic dogs which lived in the neighborhood, and of these, for some reason or other Jinks was afraid, and so kept at a safe distance.

Now, in his old life, Jinks had always slept at night and moved about in the daytime, but now he got into the habit of hiding himself by day in woody jungles and such places, and at night going out and wandering about in search of food. He wondered once or twice what had made him feel so differently. He did not know that it was partly due to the fact that he had tasted fresh blood. True, it was only chicken's blood, but it was blood all the same, and it had awakened the latent thirst for it in him, and this, combined with the fact that he had just reached the age of an adult jackal, accounted for his suddenly getting so wild and savage.

All this, however, Jinks could not understand. He only knew that he felt lonely and miserable, and that his restlessness would not let him keep still more than a few minutes at a time. At last he began to get very hungry, for he was not accustomed to getting his own food, and did not know the way in which to set about it. He began to wish he could find another chicken, and his mouth watered at the very thought.



Page 42

Then one evening he came across some sheep feeding in a field, and, being hungry and desperate, he killed one, and then gorged himself to such a degree that he could scarcely walk away.

He had a good, long sleep after this in one of the shady jungles, and when he woke up was too lazy, for a time, to trouble himself about anything. His loneliness, however, increased daily, and as the days went on he grew so miserable that he gave vent every now and then to dismal, blood-curdling howls, which echoed and re-echoed through the woods, scaring all the wild creatures and striking terror into their hearts.

Then, one night, when he was very hungry again, and could not find anything to eat, he suddenly remembered that he had left some of the flesh on the sheep he had killed a few nights ago. He would go and find it, and if the vultures had not finished it he would have a good feed. He had almost forgotten the way, but when he had gone a short distance he could smell it, for it had become rotten by that time, and was nothing but putrid flesh. Jinks had never tasted putrid flesh, but he did not seem to feel any dislike to it, for as he smelt it he licked his lips in pleasurable anticipation, and hurried on in his quick, silent way.

He was not happy, however, and when he was nearly there gave one of his piercing cries—something between a wild scream and a dismal howl—a cry which, to his bewilderment and surprise, called forth a perfect chorus of screams, shrieks and howls which startled him almost to death. He stood absolutely motionless for a few moments, with one paw uplifted, and his eyes and ears strained to the utmost. Horrible as the shrieks were, there was something familiar and comforting about them, and he felt joyous and frightened at the same time.

When the howls began to die away, he felt impelled to send forth another shrieking scream, and this was again answered in the same way as before. This time Jinks did not stop to listen; he went hurriedly forward to find out what it was.

And what a sight met his eyes! There, just in front of him, was a whole pack of animals exactly like himself crowded round the carcass of the sheep he had killed a few nights ago. Nearly all the animals, at the moment he came upon them, were standing with uplifted heads, their sharp noses pointing at the peaceful moon, howling and screaming at the top of their voices. In a few moments some of them stopped, and continued their occupation of tearing off the rotten flesh of the dead sheep, and swallowing it greedily. Dozens of vultures hovered overhead, and, watching their opportunity, dived down every now and again and tore a piece of flesh from the carcass with their powerful beaks, and then hurried off, making unearthly noises which, joined to the howls of the jackals, made the most awful discord imaginable.



Page 43

When the jackals had all stopped howling, Jinks moved slowly forward, with a deprecating air, for he was not sure of his reception. And, indeed, had he known what sort of a reception he would get, it is doubtful whether he would ever have ventured forward at all. For the moment the jackals caught sight of him, with one accord they left the carcass of the sheep, and with a few swift bounds surrounded him. They very soon let him know he was a stranger, and an unwelcome one, and before he had time to realize the state of affairs he had received several sharp bites.

His smell was against him, to begin with, for a tame jackal loses much of the strongness of the odor peculiar to him, and a pack of jackals rather prides itself on the strongness of its smell, for this smell keeps away many things that are unpleasant to them in the shape of enemies.

But Jinks was not going to stand still and be bitten to death, so he promptly turned upon his assailants, and bit and tore some of them so savagely that the others paused. One old jackal, being keenly jealous of new arrivals in the shape of strange jackals, took upon himself to catch Jinks by his foreleg, a mistake he had reason to regret, for Jinks—who was abnormally strong, and possessed the peculiar little excrescence shaped like a cone on his head, and which generally denotes a leader of a pack—suddenly seized his opponent by his throat, and refused to let go until he was dead. Then, shaking him as though he had been a little terrier, he laid him down with a growl, and looked round as much as to say:

“Now, then, who comes next?”

None of the jackals seemed to be particularly anxious, for now that Jinks was standing among so many of his fellows, he found he was just a little taller than any of them, and this little gave him an immense advantage. He snapped and bit one or two more just to show them he was still ready to go on; but, although they all howled and screamed again, they were not anxious to fight. The newcomer had killed their leader, and they were afraid of him.

Jinks wasted no time. He had not stayed long enough in captivity to become really tame or timid, and this one fight had made a jackal of him, and he took care to let them know it. He was wildly excited, and daring enough at that moment for anything, and his daring and recklessness inspired the jackals with respect, and, in spite of a few dissenting voices, Jinks promptly took the leadership of the pack without more ado. It all came as natural to him as though he had been a wild, free thing all his life, and dependent on his own resources for food and shelter.

In that moment he forgot all his past life, and only realized that he was a strong, full-grown animal; that he was the leader of the pack, and that the others, for some unaccountable reason, were afraid of him, and ready to acknowledge that he was their master.



Page 44

And so Jinks, having chosen his position, kept it. And this was not the only thing he chose and kept. He chose several wives from the pack, and took care to have the best and youngest, no matter how much he had to fight for them, or how much the others resented it. He was quite willing to prove his right to them by as many fights as might be needed; but if he fancied a wife he never rested until he had won her, and then woe betide anyone who so much as looked at her.

But it was not long before the pack knew better than to dispute Jinks' will; he was a splendid leader, daring, brave and as full of pluck and cunning as any jackal could wish.

So he reigned supreme for many years, and fine doings there were sometimes among the pack.

[Illustration: "JINKS WAS NEVER SO HAPPY AS WHEN HE WAS LEADING HIS PACK."]

Jinks' pack was the largest for miles round, and numbered over two hundred animals, not to speak of young pups. He had quite a large family of his own by this time, for a jackal mother generally has four or five pups at a time, and Jinks had a good many wives. He was proud of them all, in his way, but he cared more for the chase and hunting expeditions than anything else, and was never so happy as when he was leading his pack either after sheep and antelopes, or taking it to visit some of the farmhouses, towns or villages in search of food.

The pack grew to be famous, after a time, for its ravages and daring, and the distant sound of its awful howling would make the unfortunate inhabitants of the various places shrink and shiver with terror. It came to such a pass, after awhile, that a price was set upon each jackal's head, and a few of them were killed off, but only a few. There was so much danger attendant on attacking such a large number, that only one or two men were daring enough to attempt it.

One of these daring men was Jinks' old master, and so terrible had been the mischief done by the jackals, not only to his sheep and cattle, but to his fruits and crops, that he determined, come what might, to destroy as many of the vicious creatures as he could. The villagers and farmers had been obliged to keep their livestock locked up, and even then, in a few cases, the daring brutes had broken in, taken what they wanted, killed a few animals besides, just to show they had been there, and then made off.

The consequence was, that the jackals had to depend on antelopes and smaller animals, and, these being very scarce, they were almost famished. Jinks was obliged to lead his pack to one of the towns where there was plenty of offal and refuse of all kinds, and here the jackals did good service, for, having cleared the streets of putrid and pestilential matter, the town, which had been down with fever, recovered its health and regained its strength.



Having cleared the towns and villages of all the refuse, the jackals grew more daring still. The live stock was still locked up, and in such a way now that, do what they would, they could not get in the sheds and houses; so they betook themselves to the bungalows, and actually entered the larders and helped themselves.

Page 45

It happened one night that Jinks led his pack to his old home—the place where he had been so carefully reared. Whether he remembered the place it is impossible to say, but his master was waiting for them with a number of other men, and, as they were all armed with guns, the pack had a warm reception.

As a rule, no matter how much the inhabitants of the bungalows were prepared, the moment that horrible, howling scream began they lost their nerve, and became so frightened and bewildered that they were only too thankful if the jackals took what they wanted in the shape of food and they escaped with their lives.

But Jinks' old master and the men who were with him were made of different stuff, and when, with their usual howl, the animals sprang upon the house, they were met with a volume of fire and smoke that frightened and subdued them for a moment. When they recovered themselves, they were met with more fire and smoke, and, as the latter cleared away, numbers of them could be seen stretched out on the ground, limp and senseless.

Among these was Jinks—brave, plucky, crafty, treacherous Jinks—who had led his pack to the home which had nourished and fed him, and to the master who had tended and cared for him.

As soon as the pack found that their leader had fallen with so many others of their kin, and as the horrible smoke and fire kept on, the remaining members of it turned and fled, howling, moaning and screaming at the top of their voices.

When all had gone but the dead or dying, Jinks' master came forward to where Jinks' handsome body was lying motionless.

"I really believe this is Jinks," his old master said, in surprise. And Jinks he proved to be, for he remembered that peculiar, little, bony projection on Jinks' head, and, although it could not be seen, being covered by a funny little tuft of hair, he felt for it and found it, and this, with the size and markings of the animal, were conclusive.

"Poor old Jinks!" his master said, regretfully, stroking the still handsome head and body. "He was a beautiful animal, but just as treacherous as the rest of his kind."

Now, as a matter of fact, Jinks was not dead yet, and at the sound of the old, familiar voice he opened his eyes, now dim and misty with suffering, and looked at his old master in the way he had been used to do when he was only a pup and dependent on him for everything. And, at the sight of this, his master, who had grown very, very fond of his pet after having him all those years, broke down completely and cried like a child. His friends persuaded him to go away, and, feeling that he could not bear to see his old pet actually die, he consented and went into the house, where he did his best to forget the sad episode.



And what about Jinks? Well, as soon as his master had disappeared, Jinks, although wounded, took himself off in a stealthy manner and rejoined his pack. He had intended to feign death[Footnote: It is a well-known fact that jackals will sometimes feign death as a means of escape.—Author.] until attention was taken from him, but the sound of his master's voice had been too much for him, and he had opened his eyes in spite of himself. He had, however, been crafty enough to close them again and keep perfectly still until they all drew off, and then he slunk away, as I have just told you.



Page 46

He was sick and feeble for some time after this, and his pack despised him for it, but after awhile he recovered and was himself again. But whether he had had a shock, or whether he still had a tiny bit of affection for his old master in that treacherous heart of his, will never be known.

As soon as he was strong again he led his pack to a new neighborhood, and, as he was never seen or heard of again, he probably shared the fate of most wild animals and died a tragic death.

PERO, THE PORCUPINE

Not far away was a funny, bristly-looking ball, which moved and rustled and squirmed about, and yet for the life of him the little dog, Jock, could not make out what it was.

There seemed to be no head nor tail, nor beginning nor end. But it was not still for a single moment, and the long, sharp things that rustled so much, and made such a curious sound, were from ten to fifteen inches long.

These things, which looked like quills, were thick in the middle, tapering to each end, and had little black and white rings all the way round them.

Jock could not imagine what it could be, but at this moment the round, prickly ball began to move towards him, and Jock backed away, sniffing and snarling, and keeping at a safe distance from those sharp-pointed things which looked like big, thick needles.

When the prickly ball was quite close to him, it moved round, and then, to his surprise, Jock saw a peculiar head with small ears, tiny eyes—very like a pig's—and a thick, heavy nose or muzzle.

It was evidently an animal, but Jock had never seen anything like it before. The front part of its body was covered with hair, and upon the head and neck there were some very long, stiff hairs, which formed a curious sort of crest, and this crest the animal moved up and down in the fiercest manner imaginable. All the rest of its body was covered with long, sharp quills or spines, which looked like hundreds of small, prickly spears sticking out all over it. Its legs were short, and on its feet were sharp and strong claws.

Suddenly Jock knew what it was. It was a porcupine.

Now Jock had not been out in West Africa very long, and, though he had been told by his dog friends of the porcupine, this was the first time he had really seen one, and he did not care for the experience at all.



However, he was not going to be afraid of a porcupine, and, as it did not look particularly fierce, but rather stupid, and moved in a very slow and clumsy manner—the curious rustling appearing to be the only noise it could make—Jock stuck up his tail, drew himself up and barked. Barked loudly and angrily, and tauntingly, and the porcupine, instead of going away or running at him, or doing any of those things Jock expected it would do, simply turned its back and rustled its quills more fiercely than before.

This made Jock angrier than ever, and he barked and growled and snapped, his teeth, and, had it not been for the prickly spines, would have given the porcupine a good bite. As it was, he felt nothing but contempt for it, but his contempt was short-lived.



Page 47

Before he realized what was going to happen, Pero, the porcupine, came at him backwards, and suddenly Jock was pierced in over a dozen places by those sharp, cruel quills.

In an instant his barking and snarls were changed to dismal howls of pain. In vain he tried to turn and run away. He was fastened to the porcupine as though with so many nails, and his agony was almost unbearable.

Pero suddenly walked away from him, and, without once looking back, shambled in her clumsy, plantigrade[Footnote: A plantigrade is an animal which walks on the soles of its feet.-Author.] fashion back to the mound of earth, where she had been carefully burrowing a hole for her winter home. It would have been finished by this time if Jock had not disturbed her, and she was naturally angry.

[Illustration: "JOCK HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE"]

She cared nothing whatever for the dog's howls or moans of pain. She had done with him now and had left him several of her quills as mementoes of the occasion.

In vain Jock tried to get rid of them, but Pero had driven them well in, and was wise enough to know that where she once drove her quills there they stayed, until, perhaps, they worked themselves out in the opposite direction.

For the quills of a porcupine are so peculiarly made that when once they are driven into the flesh, instead of working their way out, they go deeper and deeper, often boring right into the vital parts of an animal, and so killing it.

In days gone by some people believed that the porcupine was a most dangerous animal, and that whenever it saw an enemy approaching it just threw some of its little, pointed spears at him and so killed him. But this belief came from an old fable, for the porcupine cannot throw its quills, but he can push them in, in the same way that Pero pushed her's into the terrier, and then leave them to work their mischief.

Had Jock been a wiser dog, he would have known better than to have had anything to do with the porcupine. But he was only an ordinary English terrier, and, as I told you, had not been long in West Africa.

A horse would have known better, for all horses are afraid of porcupines, and will never face an irritated one if they can possibly get away. As a rule, the very rustle of a porcupine's quills will make a horse take to his highest speed in terror.

Neither leopards or tigers care to face this animal, for they seem to know instinctively how dangerous its quills are.



Once having inserted her quills, Pero paid no further attention to Jock, but went on burrowing and burrowing with her curious, snout-like nose, and never rested until she had made a nice little cave in the earth, where she could be warm and comfortable all through the winter.

She was in a great hurry, for it would soon be time to go to sleep, and before going to sleep she had some important duties to perform and would be very busy.



Page 48

Meanwhile, poor little Jock limped off painfully. He had eight or nine quills sticking into his shoulders and one had gone into his sensitive nostrils.

In vain he tried to get rid of them. The longer they were in his flesh the deeper they went. If he had gone home his human friends might have taken them out for him, and so saved his life; but he was frightened and bewildered, and, like all animals when in pain or trouble, his first thought was to go away to some quiet place and hide himself in his misery. Having found such a place, there he stayed, poor little dog, in terrible pain, until one of the quills, which was nearly twelve inches long, went so deep as to touch his heart.

So Jock stayed in the hiding-place he had chosen for himself, and no one ever found out what had become of him.

Pero went on placidly with her work in her clumsy manner, and never stopped until she had finished her winter home. Then she knew she must go out and collect some food.

Her food consisted of plants, the bark of trees, and fruits of different kinds; and then there were succulent roots and plants to be found and dug out of the ground, and these provided both food and drink, for the moisture was quite enough to quench the porcupine's thirst.

After this Pero rested a little, for she was very, very tired.

It was September now, and by the end of the month or the beginning of October she would be busy again.

So she made the most of her time, eating and taking things easy. Having finished her work, she felt entitled to do this, and one morning, when the bright, clear daylight penetrated the mouth of her winter home, it fell on two funny little objects, and these funny little objects were baby porcupines.

[Illustration: "BUT OH! WHAT HAVOC HE MADE!"]

They were not prickly like their mother, but just soft, helpless mites with curiously-shaped bodies, and funny little heads and snouts, which made them look very much like pigs.

An animal covered with hundreds of sharp quills, from ten to twelve inches in length, each of which can pierce like a little stiletto, does not sound like a particularly comfortable thing to have for a mother. But the baby porcupines were quite happy, and their mother, clumsy as she was, was clever enough never to let any of the quills touch her little ones. She was warm and soft enough underneath, and her babies were just as comfortable as any other animals' babies are.



Although Pero had laid in her stock for the winter, she went out every night to get food. By doing this she achieved two things: she kept her winter stock, and she got fresh food for the time being.

Everything went on very well, and Pero and her babies were perfectly happy in their little home, when one night Pero had a startling adventure.

She was going along doing her best to walk quietly, although this was next to impossible, for the quills in her tail would rustle, no matter how carefully she walked, when she suddenly became conscious of a tall, dark form coming towards her. She knew well enough what that was. It was a man, and anything in the shape of a man had to be most carefully guarded against.



Page 49

Without an instant's hesitation, Pero suddenly doubled her nose between her forelegs, and rolled herself into a tight ball, leaving all her long, prickly spikes outside. This was a very convenient way of avoiding danger, but the only drawback to it was that, while she was coiled up, she could see nothing and hear very little.

However, she knew that the wisest thing was to keep perfectly still. And when she did this she was seldom touched. This time, however, something turned her over, and over, and over, till she felt sick and faint and dizzy; so dizzy at last that she suddenly unrolled herself a little bit in order to see where she was. To her great joy, she saw that she was near her burrow, and, with a wonderfully quick movement for so clumsy a creature, and with a peculiar rustling of all her quills, Pero crept quickly into her hole, leaving the man perfectly astonished.

For some time she lay there with her babies, quivering and shaking with fright—for the man was trying to get in. The light was getting broader and brighter, and at last, in sheer terror, Pero began to burrow further into the mound.

She went at it with nose and head and paws, as hard as she could go, scraping quickly with her sharp-clawed little feet, throwing the earth behind till she nearly smothered her babies, and pushing her snout-like nose into the earth as hard and fast as she could.

How long she would have gone on with this can never be known, but one of the babies, nearly suffocated with the earth, set up a little, whimpering cry, and Pero's motherly heart responded at once.

She knew it was a cry of pain—of distress—and so she suddenly gave up the burrowing and turned back to her little one.

It was a good thing she did so, for she had to do some more burrowing work in order to get the babies out of the earth which she had thrown over them. But by the time she had done this she realized that the man had stopped trying to get in, and so she was able to lie down.

Her tired little body was quivering with excitement; her nostrils opening and shutting convulsively, and her little heart beating like a trip-hammer. She gathered her babies to her and gave them their evening meal, but all the time she was listening for the enemy.

He was indeed an enemy, and was deeply disappointed at not being able to get Pero, for there were so many burrows about there, and the porcupines had done so much mischief to his various crops—potatoes, carrots, rice and roots of many kinds—that he was determined to destroy them.



So determined was he to kill them, that he was already having dogs trained to take up the scent of the porcupine—dogs who would not be quite so stupid as Jock, although in many cases they would probably get a few quills.

There were two reasons for killing the porcupines. One was to get rid of them and their destructive propensities; the other was that they provided an article of food, their flesh being very white and palatable, resembling pork or veal.



Page 50

But the man had failed this time, and Pero was determined that she would not risk that danger again. So, the next day, she made a little tunnel from her present home into another hole that she had carefully burrowed out.

Then for some days and weeks she was again busy collecting food. And this was hard work, as roots and plants were getting scarce. Meanwhile, the babies were growing strong and sturdy, and their tiny quills were just beginning to peep out.

Pero finished her work at last, and her second winter home was as carefully and well stocked as her first one.

She decided that she would only go out once more in order to get just two roots which she wanted, and then she would settle down for the winter. But this once more was just once too often, for, unfortunately, the man was on the watch, and, just as Pero was coming slowly out of her burrow, she received a stinging blow on the nose, which completely stunned her.

This is why the porcupine always takes special care to protect its head by rolling itself into a ball. Any blow or wound on the nose is capable of completely stunning it, and for the time being it can be handled and carried away.

Pero was a fine specimen of a porcupine. She was about three feet and a half in length, and stood about a foot and a half high. Therefore she was well worth having, and, owing to her size, she was kept alive.

When she recovered her senses, she found herself in an iron cage, with a cold, stone floor, and she realized, after many futile efforts to get out, that she was a prisoner.

Here she stayed, for the man kept her as a curiosity, and, although she fretted and grieved for a time at the loss of her babies, as the winter grew on she began to get very, very sleepy, and by the time she woke up had forgotten all about her burrow—all about her winter home, and all about her little ones.

But, as she had comfortable quarters, good food and an easy life, she grew, in time, accustomed to her prison. She made the best of it, and soon became not only quite tame, but even fond of the man who had made her a prisoner.

TERA, THE TIGRESS

The day had been exceptionally hot, but a light breeze sprang up towards dusk and softly rustled the dry, dusky, jungle grass, making it bend and shimmer in graceful, undulating waves. The rustling resembled the swaying of corn, and as the breeze increased it became more and more pronounced. One part of the long grass rustled

more than the other; it did not stop even when the breeze had passed over it on its way to other grasses.



Page 51

The rustling grew louder, and, instead of the gentle, swaying motion caused by the breeze, the grass suddenly parted and bent in opposite directions, and from the middle there softly stepped out a full grown tiger. For a few seconds he stood perfectly still. His four, velvet paws were planted firmly on the ground; his pliable tail was waving slowly to and fro, and his bright yellow eyes glanced quickly and sharply in all directions. He was a splendid fellow and quite young. His light, tawny-yellow body was exquisitely marked with dark, velvety stripes—some double, some single—but each stripe even and regular. His legs, down to his soft velvety-looking paws, were marked in the same way, and his long tail had rings of the same dark color all the way down. The under parts of his body, his throat and chest, and the long hair which grew in little tufts on either side of his face were of soft, creamy-white. His large, round head, with its small, upstanding ears, was marked much in the same way; while his fine whiskers gave him the appearance of a huge cat, and so in a way he was, for he belonged to the cat tribe and had all the instincts of the race.

It was beginning to grow dusk, but Tranta was early to-night. This was the reason that his eyes had a somewhat peculiar look just then, for he did not care very much for light. It made the pupils of his eyes contract from their usual vertical slits into small, round spots, and when this was the case he could not see very well.

As Tranta stood there, every sense on the alert, there was another rustle close by, but of this he took no notice. The grass waved as before, and no human eye would have been able to discover anything but grass, but in another moment a second striped, tawny body came forth, somewhat smaller than Tranta, but marked in the same way, and moving with the same lithe, noiseless steps. This was Tera—Tranta's wife— and she was one of the fiercest tigresses for miles round.

Not far off, hidden cunningly in the jungle grass, were four fine cubs, who looked like big, playful kittens. This was the first time Tera had left them, and she was unusually cautious and careful.

Tranta stopped listening as soon as his wife appeared, and began to move softly and stealthily off; his furry body scarcely showing against the jungle grass and making no sound whatever. The truth was Tranta had an idea that the beaters were out, and he was looking for a couple of nice *korinda* [Footnote: The *korinda* is a bushy shrub with large, drooping branches, covered with thick leaves. Tigers so habitually use this bush that hunters invariably look out for it when tiger hunting.—*Author*] bushes, where he and his wife could hide for the time being; but on account of the cubs he did not want them to be too far away from or too close to his lair, and Tera followed him at a little distance in an undecided mood, for she was troubled. Her first thought was for her little ones, and with the cunning of the tiger she wished to lead the beaters away from her cubs. So it was that, with stealthy, but hesitating steps, she followed Tranta, who had come out earlier than usual, in order to provide against to-morrow's danger. But on the way to find the *korinda* bush, something happened that turned Tranta's attention.



Page 52

It was not entirely on the beater's account that Tranta wanted a *korinda* bush; a *korinda* is an ideal place in which to lie in wait for a young bullock, and, when the bullock comes, it is easy to spring out, strike him down, and drink his warm blood. And Tranta was getting hungry. He was also very thirsty, and, as he began to smell water, he decided to go and have a good drink before hunting further.

Pushing his way through the thick undergrowth, he suddenly came to a little stream, and there, just by the water, bending their beautiful heads to drink, with their small, graceful feet planted firmly on the bank, stood two beautiful, spotted deer.

Now, two of the special dainties that a tiger loves are spotted deer and peacocks; but he prefers the spotted deer. It is dainty and delicious food, and difficult to get on account of the deer's timidity. Tranta's yellow eyes gleamed, and, as lie was not in a very good position to spring just then, he decided to wait until the deer should move a little closer. So he drew in his breath and flattened his fur to make himself as small as possible, and the jungle grass behind him, by blending so wonderfully with his coat, helped to hide his presence.

But the deer seemed suspicious, and lifted their graceful heads in a quick, nervous manner, glancing timidly around with their large, gentle eyes, and sniffing doubtfully. At that moment a third deer appeared close to Tranta, and the temptation was too great. With one swift spring Tranta landed on the deer's back, his teeth in its throat. It was a merciful death, for Tranta never let go until the deer ceased to struggle, and then he promptly proceeded to make a good meal.

He looked round for Tera, but Tera had made the most of her opportunities and had killed one of the other deer, and so had a meal of her own. As soon as she had eaten as much as she wanted, she tore off great pieces of venison, and, taking them up in her mouth, trotted back to her lair. She had forgotten all about the *korinda* bush by this time, and thought only of her cubs. She was just beginning to train them, and to consider that they needed a little stronger food now than she could give them, and a nice bit of venison was the very thing to begin on. She took no notice of her husband at all, but, in her silent, stealthy way, crept back to her lair and put the dainty temptingly in front of her little ones.

The young cubs, up to this time, had been very kitten-like in their behavior, purring and frolicking about, and only emitting occasional little growls when thrown about or disturbed by one another. But, at the sight of the fresh meat, the wild blood showed itself, and, with simultaneous springs, four little tawny bodies alighted on the venison, tearing it and growling in true tiger fashion.

Tera looked on proudly. She was delighted to see this display, for it showed that they inherited the family spirit, and she encouraged them in it. She caught hold of a piece of

the meat herself and growled and snarled, lifting her upper lip and displaying her strong, yellow fangs, in order to show them the way in which to behave.



Page 53

The little ones learned their lesson quickly. By the time they had finished the pieces of venison they were about as savage specimens of the cat tribe as could be found anywhere. Not only did they gnaw and tear, and growl, but they used their small claws, which were just beginning to grow. Contracting their feet, until the claws, which were like little sickles, curved slowly inward, they slashed the venison until it looked as though it had been cut with so many knives.

Tera was more pleased than ever to see them use their feet in this fashion—for a tiger's chief weapons are in its feet, and it can tear a man, horse or bullock to pieces in a very short time with these powerful weapons.

After they had finished their meal the cubs lay down, licking the spots of fresh blood which were left on their noses and paws, and giving funny little growls at the reminiscences of the feast.

But Tera was uneasy about the beaters, and, having had her evening meal, she did not go out again that night. She was restless and unsettled, and kept a sharp lookout until the early morning. Then she fell into a sound sleep, lying with her forepaws tucked comfortably under her and her head resting on them. But in the midst of this restful sleep Tera suddenly sprang up, her tail waving threateningly, her whiskers twitching, and her keen eyes fierce and defiant.

Just outside the lair Tera could see a group of natives banging, screaming, yelling and beating pans, accompanied by a horrible drumming sound which nearly deafened her. The cubs, frightened and bewildered, crouched round their mother and nestled closely to her.

Had it not been for her cubs, Tera would have gone out in spite of all, for the noise was terrifying and bewildering, and she scarcely knew where she was or what she was doing. But she had her little ones to think of, and, at that moment, would rather have died than have left them.

Her fur bristled up with rage, and she prepared to fight to the death. She knew exactly what was happening; knew perfectly well that the cruel hunters were behind the beaters, and that they were only waiting for her to come out so that they could use those horrible things full of fire.

And so, fortunately for her, she stayed where she was, and thus not only saved her own life, but probably the lives of her little ones.

The beaters, concluding there were no tigers about, moved off, and, as soon as their voices died away in the distance, Tera—after caressing her cubs—lay down and gave them their morning meal, keeping a sharp lookout, meanwhile, with uplifted head, nervous ears, and eyes that gleamed like amber.



Meanwhile, Tranta, who had found a particularly nice *korinda* bush, and crept into it, considered himself safe. He knew the beaters were coming; he had heard them when they were doing their best to lure Tera forth, so he crouched still closer in his hiding-place.



Page 54

As the noise stopped he knew, with his tiger instinct, that they would soon find him out, and they appeared sooner than he expected. Then the howls, screams and banging made the worst and most terrifying noise he had ever heard in a tiger hunt. He was pretty sure of himself. He had had some narrow escapes before this, but so far had always managed to get out safely. So, in spite of the noise, he kept perfectly still.

But these beaters were very daring. They not only came close to the *korinda* bush, but they actually parted the branches, and the noise became so terrible and deafening that at last Tranta grew bewildered, and sprang out, scarcely knowing what he was doing, and not caring much, either.

He wished now that he had stayed in the jungle. Certainly the hunters could have seen him, but he might have crept off in some way. But now he had no time to think, for, as he sprang out, there was a sharp “Bang,” followed by a “Ping! ping! ping!” and Tranta suddenly felt a sharp pain in his leg.

The pain was so great that he was obliged to go on three legs and hold up the fourth, which hung in a limp manner and hurt him dreadfully. The fright and shock maddened him, and he turned and faced the hunters defiantly, snarling in his fiercest way and showing his huge mouth and cruel teeth. But, as he turned, there was another “Ping! ping!”—a flash of fire almost in his eyes, and Tranta reeled.

The next instant he recovered himself, and, not liking the fire, turned round and made swiftly for the river. The beaters and hunters followed, and did their best to turn him from the water, but they were not quick enough. In spite of having only three legs to use, Tranta, with a few swift springs, got to the water first, and there he had the best of it.

He was a beautiful swimmer, and, even with a wounded leg, could swim well enough to get away from his enemies.

A short distance from the shore a small ship was lying at anchor, and Tranta cunningly made straight for it. The two natives who were in charge of it promptly went over one side as Tranta climbed up the other, and, although a few shots were fired after him as he clambered on board, they went wide of the mark, and Tranta lay down on the small deck and licked his wounded leg.[Footnote: A fact.—*Author.*] He stayed there all that day, and neither the beaters nor the hunters dare go near him. But at night he crept over the side of the ship and swam to shore, and, as he scrambled out of the water, a well-directed shot killed him. He was a fine specimen of a tiger, and, as his leg had only been broken, his skin was unharmed, and later occupied a place of honor in a palace.

Tera wondered what had become of Tranta, but, as she was very sleepy and tired, the day passed on, and his absence caused her no uneasiness. She was a little surprised that he did not appear in the evening, but finally wandered out by herself, and was



fortunate enough to come across a fine bullock. She did not take any of it to her little ones this time. She knew perfectly well that too much meat would not be good for them, so gave them their usual evening meal of nice warm milk.

Page 55

Tera was a little uneasy all through that night, as Tranta did not return, but she took it very calmly. She had been growing indifferent to him lately, and the cares of her growing family were taking up all her attention.

As the days went on and Tranta did not appear, Tera forgot all about her husband, and devoted all her time and attention to her cubs.

She waited another week or two, and then, after studying their size and strength, she concluded that it was quite time to teach them how to hunt and kill for themselves. So, to the cubs' great joy, they were allowed that same evening to accompany their mother on a hunting expedition.

Tera was a good mother, and took great pains in teaching them how to walk, where to walk, and when to walk; how to draw in their fur in times of danger; how to hide themselves in the long, jungle grass until it was difficult to tell which was grass and which was tiger; taught them, in fact, all the accomplishments necessary to make them good Bengal tigers. Their own instincts told them the rest, and they proved very apt pupils.

Softly and silently Terra's supple body wended through the tangled undergrowth of the jungle, followed by the four cubs, who growled, whimpered and gamboled about like so many kittens.

At last the cubs began to get tired. It was just when they were thinking of refusing to go any farther that Tera told them—in tiger language—that here was the end of their journey. Crouching softly with her head on her paws, her fierce, yellow eyes fixed on some moving objects in front of her, and her lips and whiskers moving excitedly, Tera told them to look.

They had come to the end of the jungle now, and facing them was an open field. In the field were seven or eight young calves—the very things on which to teach young tigers how to kill. Telling her little ones to watch her, Tera, with one mighty bound, sprang at the nearest calf, bringing him to the ground with the force of the blow. She alighted full on the back of the calf, and her long teeth fastened themselves in its poor, quivering throat.

It was soon over, and, almost before the calf was dead, the four cubs, fired by the sight of blood and their mother's example, sprang, with cruel ferocity on the carcass, and tore and dragged it to pieces.

[Illustration: "TERA SPRANG AT THE NEAREST CALF, BRINGING HIM TO THE GROUND."]



But Tera had not brought them there simply to eat. Her part was to teach them to kill, so, administering a sharp pat to each, she made them leave the body of the calf and attempt a little killing for themselves.

At first the cubs grumbled and growled, and even scolded their mother in their anger, but, in a very short time, they grew just as excited over the killing process as they had been over the eating, and, although one calf would have been enough to last them for days, they never rested until every one of the little animals was dead, for the killing had aroused all their savage instincts.



Page 56

Tera looked on proudly, but at last insisted on their returning home. With her strong teeth and sickle-like claws she tore off pieces of meat, and each little cub, seizing a piece savagely in his mouth, trotted after its mother, who led the way straight back to their lair.

After this, however, Tera had rather an anxious time, for, once having taught the cubs to wander forth, she could not keep them at home, and, as she had thoughtfully made her lair near a farm, the cubs amused themselves night after night by killing as many animals as they could find.

Wantonly destructive, the cubs gave way to their ferocious and bloodthirsty nature, and, as they grew stronger, they would sometimes kill three or four cows at a time—calves, pigs, anything, in fact, that came in their way.

Whether it was the meat diet or the freedom, Tera could never make out, but, certain it was, that very soon, instead of consulting their mother and depending on her for everything, the cubs grew fierce and savage, and snarled whenever she came near them.

Being able now to supply themselves with food, they no longer cared for the food their mother provided, and one night, when Tera had put up with it for some time, she quietly slipped off and left them to look out for themselves.

She forgot her children as easily as she had forgotten her husband, and in a very short time was comfortable and happy by herself.

Having no ties or cares, she wandered farther afield, and finally made her home in another jungle. It was, she concluded, a much better jungle than the other; but the very first day she took up her quarters in it there was a great disturbance.

From her hiding-place Tera peeped forth, and saw three or four huge elephants moving slowly towards her. The elephants were carrying curious things on their backs—something like boxes, and in these boxes were men with guns.

Now, Tera would always attack an elephant if it was alone. But she certainly did not like the idea of attacking three or four of them. So intent was she on watching the elephants slowly moving towards her, with their huge forms swaying heavily along, that it was with a sudden shock that she realized that something was behind her.

Turning her head with a swift movement—that only a tiger can make— she saw two other elephants, and at the same instant there was a blaze and a cloud of smoke. With a wild roar, Tera sprang full at the nearest elephant; her four paws, with their cruel claws, sank deeply into his skin, while her great, yellow head almost faced the head of a man.



There was a moment's pause, and another blaze of fire, and then Tera, in spite of convulsive efforts, felt her grasp on the elephant loosening. Dazzled and bewildered, she suddenly found herself at the elephant's feet. In a hazy manner she was conscious that something was touching her. Beyond this she knew nothing, for her muscular body was losing its strength, her yellow eyes were growing dim and misty, and her life blood was staining the jungle grass a deep crimson. For a few moments she lay perfectly still, and then, with a long-drawn, shuddering gasp, threw back her handsome head and died.



Page 57

It was a cruel death, perhaps, yet it was merciful, for it was far better to die like that than to grow old, or sick, and be torn to death by one of her own kind, or left to starve in the jungle.

And, curiously enough, her skin eventually went to the very same palace where Tranta's had been sent some time before.

HIPPO, THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

Hippo came to the conclusion, in his heavy, phlegmatic way, that perhaps, as it was getting dark and he was very hungry, it would be as well to go and get something to eat. So, moving his huge body, and his short, stumpy legs, he prepared to look around and find his supper.

He was not handsome, by any means. He had an enormous body, a wide head and nose, big mouth and teeth, and, although he only stood about four feet high, his tiny eyes, ears and tail made him look ridiculous, for they were out of all proportion to the rest of his body. As he crawled out of the damp, marshy ground in which he loved to pass his time, he seemed one of the ugliest and most awkward of animals, and so indeed he was.

He had not even a hairy or furry coat to hide some of his ugliness, but an unpleasant, oily skin of the color of dark chocolate, so thick that no ordinary bullet could possibly penetrate it. On all parts of his body the skin was three-quarters of an inch thick, while on his back it was more than twice that thickness.

Therefore, Hippo was pretty safe from the attacks of enemies, a fact of which he was well aware, and, not being sensitive in any way, or nervous, he was not given to trouble or worry.

He made his way slowly towards a nice corn-field, which he had found a few days ago, and the only thing he felt at all uneasy about was that some of the other hippopotami might also have found it. Hippo belonged to a herd consisting of from twenty to thirty hippopotami—mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, relations of all kinds, and several little baby calves. They agreed well together, on the whole.

The only time they grew quarrelsome was when they were selecting new wives, or when one of them had discovered a field of corn or rice, and found that the others wanted to explore it, too. Then some nasty things were said, and some terrible fights took place; for, although a hippopotamus is such a heavy and ungainly creature, he can move swiftly when he is angry.

However, this time Hippo wended his way to the field of corn without the others noticing him, and, arriving there, walked slowly through the ripe grain, his short legs and thick



body doing an enormous amount of damage. He never ate what he crushed down—only what he actually cut with his wonderful teeth. [Footnote: The teeth of a hippopotamus are very large and powerful, and those in the under jaw grow forward and outward, not straight up and down, as in most other animals. The large teeth weigh from five to eight pounds each, and, being excellent ivory, keep white under almost any conditions.—*Author.*]



Page 58

Opening his huge jaws, he put his mouth to the ground, and, pushing his lower jaw in front of him, cut down the corn as though with a sickle. He ate leisurely as he went along, and his supper took him some time, for, as he had an enormous appetite, and could carry from five to six bushels of food in his body at a time, it was a big meal.

On he straggled, cutting down as he went, and dragging his awkward, splay-footed body after him until the beautiful field of corn was utterly destroyed, for before he left it he had walked nearly all over it. If what he had eaten had been all that he destroyed, that would have been bad enough, but he trampled and ruined far more than he ate, and the owner of the field, when he saw it the next day, was nearly wild with rage and disappointment. He had spent so much time and trouble over his crops, and so much damage had been done lately by these tiresome animals, that it was getting very serious indeed. He resolved that something must be done, and done quickly. Guns and bullets were no use; he would get up a party and try harpoons.

But of all this Hippo knew nothing, and, having finished his evening meal, returned in the same leisurely way he had come, and, laying his huge body down in a nice soft spot, he went to sleep and slept all next day.

When he woke up, he had a good time in the water, swimming long distances, taking long dives, and amusing himself by sinking his enormous body to the bottom of the river, and coming up again every now and then to breathe. He made plenty of fuss over it, too, puffing and grunting in his own peculiar way.

Having had such a good feed the night before, Hippo was in no particular hurry for his evening meal, and, as several of the other hippopotami were also enjoying themselves, he stayed where he was. His wife was resting in a shallow part of the river close by, her whole body under water with the exception of a part of her back and head. Her baby calf was sitting on dry land, as it were, for his mother had taken him under water a good many times, but had to bring him up to the top so often for him to breathe that she had grown tired of it, and so had put him on her back, where he was not only dry but safe.

Hippo took very little notice of his wife and child. He was not at all demonstrative, and, as long as he knew they were safe, did not trouble himself farther about them. So that he had plenty to eat, could have nice swims and dives, and was not molested in any way, Hippo was a very peaceable animal; but once interfere with him in any way, and it was another matter altogether.

And this particular evening something did interfere with him, and it not only annoyed Hippo, but made him furious with rage and anger, and a furious hippopotamus is an extremely dangerous creature. It happened in this way.



Page 59

Hippo was just coming up after a good, long dive, when he noticed on the river a number of boats filled with men. Now, he did not mind men or boats, if they only went on their way and let him alone. The river was often dotted with boats filled with Kaffirs and white men, but, as a rule, they were sensible enough to keep a good distance from the herd of hippopotami. So, when Hippo became conscious that the boats were coming towards him, he was not only surprised but annoyed. He was in the middle of his aquatic performances for one thing, and he did not like to have boats and men so close to him for another. However, although he was irritated, he was not going to bother himself about either the boats or the men as long as they let him alone.

But this was just the very thing the men in the boats had no intention of doing, for they carried harpoons, and had come out for the express purpose of killing as many hippopotami as they possibly could. So, as Hippo rose to the surface, and before he had time to get over either his surprise or annoyance, one of the men in the nearest boat suddenly stood up, and, throwing a harpoon with terrific force, sent it right into Hippo's shoulder.

For a moment Hippo was too astounded to do anything; then, as he realized what had happened, he moved swiftly towards the boat. But another harpoon was thrown from a second boat, and Hippo's attention was taken off the first one only just in time. His thick skin broke out into tiny red spots, called the "blood sweat," for he was now pretty well excited. He had not thought much about his wife and little one before, but now he knew they were in danger, and must be protected. With one muscular movement of his big body—wonderfully agile for so clumsy a creature—he swam towards the boat, and, before the occupants realized what was going to happen, Hippo had seized the boat in his great mouth and crushed one end of it into splinters. Two of the men were killed instantly, and the others soon after, for Hippo used his terrible mouth and teeth with appalling effect.

In a very few minutes all that remained of the boats and men—with the exception of the first boat, which had promptly made off when Hippo turned—was floating down the river, and all the evidences of the fearful occurrence were the excited hippopotamus and the crimson stain in the water caused by the blood of the unfortunate hunters.

Hippo was still in a fearful rage, however, and could not forget the attack on him. The wounds in his back and shoulder helped to remind him of it, for each harpoon had a barb at the end, and, no matter how Hippo rubbed and strained, he was unable to get them out, and only made the wounds throb and burn more than ever. He snorted and raged, and in his anger blew such a blast of air from his nostrils that it swept his little son off his mother's back and into the water.[Footnote: When in a violent rage, the hippopotamus will sometimes blow the air from his nostrils with force enough to knock over a strong man. We are told by some authorities, that one has been known to upset a boat in this way when not quite near enough to crush it with its teeth.—*Author.*]



Page 60

Hippo's wife was frightened and indignant, but promptly brought her little one up again, for he was very young as yet, and not able to stay under water for any length of time, and set him on her back as before, keeping a sharp lookout with her tiny eyes for fresh danger.

A very disastrous hunt it had been for all concerned. Five men had lost their lives, but not one hippopotamus had been killed. So the hunters decided to wait for some other evening when the hippopotami were off guard again. The hunters had no idea of giving up, for the destructive propensities of the animals were not their only reason for wishing to destroy them: the hides, tusks and teeth of hippopotami are of considerable value and bring a good price.

So they waited a few days, and then set forth once more. By this time Hippo had succeeded in breaking off one of the harpoons, and bending the other, but the barbs, which hurt so dreadfully and caused him such intense suffering, he was unable to get out in spite of all his efforts. They were still there, and, if Hippo could only have known it, they were likely to stay there, for they had been made for that express purpose.

Hippo had now developed into a most dangerous animal, for the pain and inflammation of his wounds, added to his naturally savage disposition, had driven him half wild, and he roamed about in his slow, clumsy manner, not even caring to eat, and savagely attacking everything that came in his way. So fierce and bad-tempered had he become by this time, that even his wife carefully kept out of his way, and his little son had been terrified nearly to death ever since his father, in a sudden fit of passion, had turned on him and bitten him cruelly with his terrible teeth. His wife finally took the precaution of taking up her position farther down the river, but keeping fairly close to the herd.

Hippo missed her and the baby calf, and felt lonely and miserable, but he did not take the trouble to follow them, for his wounds were getting worse, and the torture was now so great that he could not think of much else. In vain he sank his huge body in the cool water, hoping to ease the burning and smarting—in vain he took long swims like the "river horse" he was—in vain he dived to the bottom of the river and stayed there until he was obliged to come to the surface to breathe—in vain he kept his whole body under water, with just the end of his broad nose peeping out—it was of no use. The pain got worse, and horrible twinges kept shooting through his shoulder and body, until at last he gave up trying to ease it, and bore it as well as he could.

And then, one evening when it was getting cool and peaceful, and the evening shadows were beginning to make everything look dim and misty, a boat came softly over the water, and once more a man stood up in it, and once more threw a harpoon at Hippo, who had been standing so still that the boat had been able to come quite close, and the hunter to take good, steady aim.



Page 61

The harpoon this time went straight into one of Hippo's eyes, and, although it was a cruel stroke, it was also a merciful one, for it touched the brain, and in a very few minutes Hippo, with a few spasmodic efforts, blew his last blast of rage, snorted and groaned for the last time, and, with a mighty stirring of the waters, rolled heavily over in the African river, by the side of which he had been born, and died.

And then the hunters threw up their caps and cheered for joy, for they had at least killed one of their enemies and one of the finest specimens in the whole herd. As, at the time of his death, he had been standing in a shallow part of the river, it was possible with great trouble to drag the huge carcass out, but it took the strength of ten horses and the ingenuity of as many men to do it.

The hunters measured him carefully, and found that he measured nearly twelve feet from one end of his body to the other, that he stood about four feet high, and that his tusks, hide and teeth were the best and finest that had been seen for many a day. It turned out to be a fortunate thing that Hippo had been in such a dangerous mood during the last few days, for the other hippopotami had followed the example of Hippo's wife and moved a little farther down the river; consequently, the hunters were able to complete their task without any molestation from them.

As for Hippo's wife, she grieved very little about him. He had made himself so intensely disagreeable lately that she had grown rather tired of him, and, moreover, animal like, she did not like a sick or wounded comrade near her, and a sick husband was a thing to be despised.

Besides, she had her baby calf to think of now, and he took up most of her time. What with feeding him, teaching him to swim, dive, sink himself in the water, and come up frequently to breathe, she was busy all day long. The calf was rather stupid and slow, and was not easy to teach, and altogether she had a good deal of trouble with him.

At one time she missed him for a while, and at last found him very nearly dead under the water, for, like most young things, he thought he could do just the same as his elders, and had tried to stay underneath as long as an old hippopotamus. The consequence was, he was nearly suffocated or drowned, for it is only the adult animals who can stay any time under water, and even they are obliged to come up often in order to obtain fresh air.

So Hippo's wife—or widow, as she was by this time—administered a severe punishment to her son by first giving him a bite, and then refusing to give him his supper. She began, after a time, to refuse him his supper so often, that the baby Hippo at last made up his mind to get other food, and in a very short time found out that rice, corn, grass, roots and such things were very good to eat, and, when his mother began, not only to treat him with indifference, but even with dislike, he took to vegetable food altogether, and grew slowly, but steadily, as stout and strong as his father, Hippo, had been.



Page 62

And when a whole year had gone by, Hippo's wife had another husband, and in due course of time another baby calf, and had just the same sort of trouble as she had gone through with Hippo's son. But she had forgotten all about Hippo's son by that time, and not only Hippo's son, but Hippo himself.

But Hippo was not forgotten by the hunters. Some of them had cause enough to remember him, for he had killed their relatives in his fierce attack on that memorable night when he had first felt their harpoons. They had, however, other things to remember him by which were better. One thing was the money which they had received for his hide and ivory teeth, and which had been spent in replacing the damaged crops; and the other was a pair of magnificent tusks which they had kept as a memento of him, and which hung in the hall of the pretty African house in which the hunters lived.

And when visitors came to the house and admired the tusks, the hunters would relate the story of the terrible beginning and triumphal end of the capture of Hippo, the hippopotamus.

OSRA, THE OSTRICH

There is an old Eastern legend to the effect that, once upon a time, ostriches, in addition to being the largest and strongest birds on the face of the earth, were also the proudest, the most contemptuous, and the most egregiously conceited birds in creation.

So inflated with pride were they at their superior size and strength, that they looked down upon all their feathered companions, taunted and twitted them, and were forever exhibiting their wonderful powers of flight and beauty of form.

On one occasion they intimated to the smaller birds that they were going to fly to the sun, and winged creatures from far and wide, of all sizes and species, and of all colors, came to witness this wonderful feat.

Phoebus, the sun god, furiously angry at such unheard of presumption, waited until they were a little way up, and then punished them by suddenly singeing off their wings.

Deprived of their power of flying, the ostriches fell so heavily to the earth, and struck the ground so violently, that it made a deep mark on their breasts. This has been reproduced in all succeeding generations from that time to this.

This is the reason that ostriches have such tiny wings, and that one and all have this peculiar mark on their breasts. Never, from that time to this, has any ostrich been able to fly. But even this has not entirely subdued their pride and arrogance, and their insufferable conceit.



Osra, who was an African ostrich, had his full share of pride and conceit. He certainly was a very fine, full-grown male bird, and the beautiful, white, flowing feathers of his tail and wings were exceedingly handsome.

He stood eight feet high, and measured over six feet from the tip of his beak to the end of his tail, while his weight must have been fully two hundred pounds.



Page 63

Handsome as he was, he looked a little out of proportion—like all of his kin. He seemed to be too large in some places and too small in others; while some parts of his body were thickly covered with beautiful, flaky feathers, and other parts had no feathers at all, only a few, little bristles: in some places the skin was quite bare.

His small, flat head and long neck were almost destitute of feathers or hair, and yet his quick, bright eyes were surrounded by long, thick eyelashes, that many a fashionable beauty might have envied.

His long legs, with only a few bristles on the thighs, had a curious effect under the rich feathers of his tiny wings, while the lower parts, covered with large, thick scales and ending in big feet, with only two toes each, were other details which added to his curious appearance.

Osra, at this time, was a very important bird indeed, for he possessed six wives, and, as all these wives had been laying eggs lately, he had had a very busy time.

For the wife of an ostrich considers if she lays the eggs that is all she can be expected to do. The males do all the hatching, even making the nest in preparation for the eggs.

Osra, strong as he was, had a very busy time hollowing out that nest in the sand, and scraping up a small wall all round it so that his wives could, if they liked, place the eggs on end, and so not take up so much space. For all his wives laid in the same nest, and as there were already over twenty eggs, and each egg was a large one, it needed a good big nest.

Not that Osra's wives were over particular about the eggs being actually in the nest, as long as they laid them near it. Ostriches don't believe in being too fastidious; any eggs that happened to be outside the nest would be there for the young ostriches to eat when they were hatched. For, as the wife of the ostrich considers she has done her duty when she has laid the eggs, so the father considers he has done his duty when he has hatched them with the help of the sun. Once they are hatched he is practically done with them, for no ostrich ever made a good parent yet, although in time of danger they will do their very best to guard their young.

There had been a time when Osra had some very exciting fights, but this had been when he was selecting his wives. He did not believe in allowing any other ostrich to get a wife that he wanted, and he had never yet been beaten. More than one fully grown, male ostrich had he killed while having an argument on this point, and he always found that the wives which cost him the most fights and the greatest amount of trouble were the ones he liked the best. This is something like the seal, who does not think any wife worth having unless he has to fight for her.



He had no time for fights now, and, moreover, having got as many wives as he wanted and the ones he wanted, there was no occasion for fighting. And so he led a quiet, domestic life at this time; walked about with his wives by day and helped to get them food, and then, when the sun was no longer strong enough to help in the hatching, Osrá went and sat on the eggs, where he stayed until the sun got up again. And so it went on until the young ostriches came out.



Page 64

Osra felt very proud of them, for they were fine, healthy young birds, and although they had rather a quaint air—being covered with a curious, bristly-looking growth, which made them look like young hedgehogs—from the very day they kicked off the thick, glossy, yellowish-white shell which had covered them, they could run about and even pick up their food from the ground.

They soon ate up the odd eggs that were lying about, cracked them easily with their strong little beaks, and scraped out the inside as though they had been practicing it for years. By the end of a fortnight they were about the size of barn-door fowls, and quite independent.

Neither Osra nor his wives had taken much notice of them during this eventful fortnight, except to glance at them occasionally and acknowledge to themselves that they were exceedingly fine young birds; but, when they were able to trot about in this manner, and were no longer troublesome, the parents occasionally took them for walks, and a very fine family they were, too.

They had many adventures during these walks, some of them very exciting ones.

Once, as they were striding across the plain, they saw a stranger approaching, and although Osra was somewhat suspicious, he yet had sufficient curiosity to let him come quite close, and even among them.

The stranger was a somewhat curious ostrich, and did not walk in quite so dignified or stately a manner as an ostrich usually does. His head and neck moved somewhat stiffly, in curious little jerks, and his legs, although they were very white, were rather a curious shape.

Still there could be no doubt that he was an ostrich, because his back was covered with ostrich feathers, and no one can imitate an ostrich's head and neck.

And so the stranger was allowed to come into their very midst, and just as Osra was thinking of inspecting him more minutely, for he did not approve of strangers, there was a fearful noise, a blaze of fire and smoke, and one of his wives and two or three of his children fell dead.

Osra waited no longer; with a peculiar sort of guttural chuckle he stretched out his long legs, and with tremendous strides—which covered from twenty to twenty-two feet at a time—flew like the wind, followed by his remaining wives and little ones.

Away they went, taking no thought or heed of the young ones so that they got away, and when they had been racing for some time at the rate of twenty miles an hour, Osra was surprised to find himself and his wives back at the very same spot!

There were the bodies of his wife and children, and there also was the stranger ostrich.



Osra was taken by surprise, for although he was not particularly good at hearing, he prided himself on his sight, and he was a little puzzled to know how he could have got to the very same spot again without seeing where he was going.

But, startled as he was, and puzzled as he had felt at this stranger ostrich, he suddenly did what, had he only done before, might have saved the lives of his wife and children.



Page 65

Kicking out sideways with one of his powerful legs, he knocked that stranger ostrich over, and over, and over, with such a blow that his head and neck flew in one direction, a curious thing, from which came out more fire and smoke, in another, and a straight body with the head and face of a man, or what was left of it, went in a third, and lay perfectly still.

Osra hesitated a little, and then went up and examined each part of the ostrich. It had only been an imitation ostrich after all; for the head and neck were mounted on a stick, the feathers were only sewn on to a skin stuffed with straw, and the curious, little white legs belonged to a man who was now quite dead.

Osra and his wives paced slowly about for some time, and after a while were joined by their little ones, who were worn out and exhausted by the long run.

This was one adventure, and one that frightened the young ones very much. But they had a good time afterwards, for Osra led them, with slow and stately steps, to a farm close by, where there were some nice, young broods of soft, fluffy chickens, and tiny, little yellow ducklings running about with their mothers.

With a cool and indifferent air Osra and his wives took up the little fluffy chickens one by one, and swallowed them whole; the poor bewildered mothers clucking and screaming, and spreading out their wings, wondering where on earth their families had gone.

Having picked up all the fluffy little chickens, they went on and picked up the little yellow ducklings, and the poor mothers hissed and scolded, and did everything in their power to defend their darlings from these huge, horrible, creatures which demolished them so quickly.

While they were doing this the young ostriches set to work and ate up all the stray eggs they could find, one or two small animals, and some young wild birds who were so unsophisticated as to believe them to be mother hens, and so injudicious as to hop quite close to them in order to pick up the corn.

Having eaten all they could find, the family prepared to depart, the old birds, followed by the mother hens and the mother ducks, in terrible distress and furious anger.

In vain they pecked, hissed and scolded at the huge legs and two-toed feet of the ostriches. The legs and feet went solemnly and haughtily on, occasionally stepping on the poor, distracted mothers, who cared not what they did or what happened to them now that they were bereaved of their little ones.

Away they went through the farm with their peculiar, swinging walk, followed by their young ones, who ate up all that came in their way, and felt that this delightful feast more than made up for their terrible fright in the earlier part of the day.



But just as they were going out of the gate of the farm Osra suddenly saw, in a sort of paddock, another ostrich, and stayed behind to say something to her.

[Illustration: "OSRA AND HIS WIVES TOOK UP THE CHICKENS, ONE BY ONE, AND SWALLOWED THEM WHOLE."]



Page 66

In some curious way the gate of the paddock opened, and Osra—proving, with all his high opinion of himself, how extremely stupid he could be on occasion—walked gravely in. As soon as he was in, the gate of the paddock closed in the same mysterious way, and it was not until he had been talking to the strange ostrich for some little time that he realized, with an awful shock, that his wives and children had gone, and that he was a prisoner.

Now, he had liked the strange ostrich very much, and, although she had told him that she was not an African ostrich, he thought her very beautiful; at the same time, he did not wish to stay with her altogether, away from his wives and children, and, as soon as he found that he was a prisoner and that they had gone, he did his very best to make his escape.

But the paddock was strong, and, although Osra could run round and round it in a few minutes, he could neither jump nor fly over the fence.

And so, in spite of his great strength, in spite of his huge body and wonderfully muscular legs, he could do nothing, for he could not fly. And so he had to suffer the punishment for the wrong-doing of his predecessors.

He was as savage and dangerous as he could be for a long time, and his captors were extremely careful to keep out of the reach of his hard, straight bill and strong, powerful legs.

For a little while he would not even eat, but this did not last long, and it was by the persuasion of his new friend that he began to take his food again.

Once having done this, he grew more reconciled, and, as he found that his new companion was very beautiful, he began to forget his wives and children, and in time—although not without many struggles to get out and many savage onslaughts at the fences—he settled down into an ordinary African farm ostrich, and was perhaps just as contented as any of his companions.

He never saw his wives and children again; for the matter of that, he did not want to. In time he had six wives of his own at the farm, and strutted about in his grave, dignified and conceited way, proving himself a fairly good husband, but always ready for and somewhat greedy about meals. And, although he was never allowed out on the farm, as some of the American ostriches were, he grew in time to be quite contented, and even fairly happy.



SEELA, THE SEAL

There had been a terrible storm on the Pacific coast—such a storm as even the oldest fisherman, who had lived in the same little fishing village on the North American shore all his life, never remembered to have seen before.

For days sulky, smoke-like clouds had been gathering in the sky, while the sea grew darker and darker in hue, until its darkness was accentuated into an inky appearance by the white-capped waves, which grew bigger and fiercer as each hour drew on. And at last the storm had burst after a deadly silence that could almost be felt—burst with such vindictive fury that houses and buildings, which had stood steadfast for years, toppled and fell down like a house of cards, while the stately vessels which had braved many a storm were tossed about and wrecked upon the rocks.

Page 67

Even the fish in the sea were surprised, and after a little consultation decided to swim nearer the shore and keep quiet until the storm had spent itself. The fish were not the only ones that came to the conclusion that the shore was the best place.

Seela, a full-grown seal, who thought a great deal of himself and all belonging to him, liked the sea to be a little rough at times. He knew perfectly well that roughness always meant a good meal of fish afterwards, but so much roughness as all this he did not care about. Therefore, when he had stood it for some time, and found that he could hardly keep himself from being dashed against the rocks, and the big pieces of ice which came floating along on the top of the waves, he spoke to his wives and told them to follow him to the shore.

And when they arrived there and scrambled up in their awkward, shambling manner, their sleek, lithe bodies looking as though there were no bones in them, but only soft, flexible muscles, the fishermen on the shore looked at one another in despair. For they knew only too well what the advent of seals meant. It meant that, instead of their catching the fish and so feeding their wives and families, the seals would do both for themselves.

It was not often that seals visited that part of the land, but they had been there before, and a bad time they made for the poor fishermen, who had nearly been ruined the last time, and had made up their minds that, should the seals ever come there again, they would not rest until they had destroyed them. Not that they were of much value, except for the fat of their oily bodies, for they were neither hair seals nor fur seals, but just common seals, with nothing to speak of but the habits, traits and characteristics of all other families of seals and sea lions.

“There’s that old rascal that was here last year,” one of the fishermen exclaimed, pointing at Seela. “I know him because he has only one eye, a part of one of his front flippers has been torn off, and he is covered with scars and wounds.”

Seela was certainly not handsome, and as he shambled up to a place of safety he looked a very sorry object indeed. As a rule he never went on shore when the fishermen were there, but he was sure of two things at that time, and one was that the shore was the best place for the time being, and the second was that it was far too dangerous and treacherous a spot where he had landed for the fishermen to venture close enough to harm him.

So, cunning old rogue as he was, he shambled up and settled himself as well as the still terrific wind would let him, taking very good care, however, to keep close enough to the water to be able to slip in at a moment’s notice. His wives followed him obediently, and seemed gentle and meek enough for anything. In his curious, hoarse voice he told them it was pretty safe, and that they need not be concerned about the fishermen.



Accordingly, they stayed where they were until the storm began to subside, and then, seeing the fishermen prepare to come closer, Seela gave the alarm, and, shambling down to the water with peculiar, little jumpy movements, they all, with one turn of their slim, lithe bodies, slipped into the water as though they had been oiled.



Page 68

Then they had a fine time. As it happened, they met a large shoal of fish just making for the shore, and, being tremendously hungry—and all seals have enormous appetites, being able to easily eat ten pounds of fish a day, and it takes about forty herrings to make ten pounds—they caught and swallowed as many as ever they could eat. Not only that. When they had gorged themselves, and their jaws ached with the constant gulping, they amused themselves by chasing the fish for miles—so many miles that the shoal returned no more to that particular place, and the poor fishermen suffered again, and their wives and babies went hungry.

But Seela cared nothing for the fishermen or their wives and children. He had his own wives to think of, and, as he liked that particular part of the shore in stormy weather, he determined to visit it again after a while.

So, for a time, he and his wives enjoyed themselves. They swam and dived, turned and twisted about in the water, went down to the bottom of the sea and up again, snorting, puffing, panting, and just making as much fuss as only seals can. Sometimes Seela would take a good, long breath and disappear for some time, and, while his wives were looking out for him to appear in one direction, he would suddenly pop up in another, and this he seemed to think was great fun.

When they had led this sort of life for some months, and had made occasional visits to the land on various parts of the coast, one or two of his wives told Seela they wanted to go to some nice, quiet, sunny place, where there were plenty of fish to be had, and then it was that Seela decided to pay another visit to the shore where the fishermen lived.

It seemed ages since they had last been there; the storms were nearly over now, for it was May and getting nice and warm. The coast by the fishermen's village was not only a nice place in stormy weather, but nice and sunny in fine weather, and Seela thought those even banks by the shore would be the very place for his wives just now. So he led the way, and the fishermen found them all one morning comfortably settled on the shore close to the water, basking lazily in the sun.

At first there was general alarm among the fisher folk, and plans and schemes were set afloat to either capture or kill the seals, for there was every probability that a whole herd would shortly appear if Seela and his wives were allowed to remain. But, by the time they were ready to carry out the scheme they had adopted, an event happened on the beach which made the fishermen decide to wait awhile, and this was the appearance of two or three little baby seals. Such funny-looking, little things they were, only about twelve inches long and each weighing about three or four pounds apiece.

Unlike most newly-born animals, their bright, quick little eyes were wide open, and they looked around in the most inquisitive manner, and were just as curious as seals always are, even in their infancy. They were wonderfully active, too, and began moving about

within a few minutes of their birth, uttering soft little “bahs” for their mother, and making themselves quite at home.



Page 69

The mothers were very devoted to the calves, and tended and fed them in the same way that all mammals feed their young. They had all been very quiet and docile before the birth of the calves, but, as soon as they became mothers, the wonderful mother-love made them alert and fierce in defence of their children. Seela looked on at it all with great satisfaction. It was just what he had expected, and, having seen that the mothers and babies were happy and comfortable, he proceeded to enjoy himself by sliding into the water at every opportunity, and gorging himself with fish to his heart's content.

For some time the mother-seals and their young made the rocks their home, basking in the warm sun by day, and taking short excursions into the sea in order to get a little exercise and food for the mothers. The calves had not been allowed to go into the water until their first coats of very thick, soft and greyish fur had dropped off, and then, as some of them seemed a little reluctant, their mothers pushed them in, and, once having found how enjoyable swimming and diving were, they were only too ready to follow afterwards.

Indeed, sometimes they wanted to go in too often, and, as the mothers did not always like them to go in alone, there were some fine scoldings and grumblings occasionally. But, on the whole, they were very happy. They had been joined by other seals now, and their numbers had increased to nearly a hundred, and, although there were a few terrific fights every now and then among the fathers of the various families, the herd behaved well and appeared to have quite settled down.

By this time the fisher folk had got so interested in the little seal calves that they gave up all thoughts of killing their fathers and mothers, and just let them alone. They were kindly, warm-hearted people, and, had it not been that they had been obliged to face so many hardships and difficulties caused by the seals chasing away the fish, they would never have so much as thought of lifting a finger to hurt them. As long as they behaved themselves, they resolved not to molest them.

And so things went on until there came one unfortunate day when Seela, going out for his usual feast and frolic, discovered a beautiful array of fishing nets, arranged in such a manner that any fish would be tempted just to go in and see what they were. But Seela resolved to do a little bit of mischief himself, and, taking the lead, got adroitly between the shoal of fish and the nets, and so drove the fish exactly in the opposite direction. Not content with this, he chased them until he could chase them no longer, and then found that he had left all the other seals behind.

It took him until the next day to find his way back, and when he got home he found everything in confusion and uproar. Two of his wives had been killed, and one was a favorite, for it had taken several desperate fights to win her, and he therefore, naturally, valued her more than the others.[Footnote: It is a well-known fact that no seal cares for a wife unless he has had a good fight for her. The fiercer the fight, the more valuable



the wife.—*Author.*] Some of his children, too, had disappeared, and only a few seals were on the shore.



Page 70

The fact was, the fisher folk, driven wild by this last crafty and treacherous act of Seela's, resolved to have no more pity, but just to destroy as many of the intruders as they could. So, as soon as the seals returned and settled themselves down again, the fishermen, armed with clubs and knives, surrounded the animals and dispatched a good many, by first giving them a good blow on the nose with a club, and then finishing them with knives.

They did not mind killing the adult seals, but there was something very pathetic about killing the calves. The poor, awkward little things did their very best to run away, and kept uttering their peculiar little "bahs" all the time, but their walk or shamle was very tiring, and required a great effort, and only too soon they sank down utterly exhausted, asking, in their poor, dumb way, that their lives might be spared.

But the only lives which were spared were those of the seals who were quick and fortunate enough to slide into the water, and so swim out of danger. The others were all killed, and this was the reason Seela found such uproar and confusion on his return. In vain he looked for his favorite wife—in vain he called his other wives and children. No one answered, and the few remaining seals seemed subdued and frightened.

The only effect the sound of Seela's hoarse, harsh voice had was to bring out the fisher folk again, and these, armed with their clubs and knives, were overjoyed to find Seela himself, for whom they had been on the lookout. They made straight for him, but Seela was too old a hand. With one turn of his flexible body and limbs, he was in the water again, and no weapon could touch him but a harpoon, and this they did not possess.

He took care not to go on land again, and would have kept away altogether, but that, as he was swimming and diving, he came up once to breathe, and, as he was puffing and panting, he suddenly heard some very enticing sounds, which made him stop and listen. It was only one of the fishermen playing a simple tune on a little whistle, but Seela loved music of all kinds, and was always attracted by it.

In this case he promptly left the water, and although he knew there were enemies and danger about, he went recklessly on, his harsh, hoarse bark or grunt giving place to a plaintive bleat. He scrambled up to his old spot, and the farther he went the farther off the music seemed to be, and although he was getting very tired, he could not resist the charm and fascination of the music, and so shambled on until he was quite a distance from the water.

So taken up was he with the sweet sounds, and partly because of his blind eye, that he never noticed a fisherman coming up on one side of him—never realized that anyone was near him until he felt a sharp, stinging sensation on his nose, and then a much sharper, far deeper pain in his side. He knew well enough then what it was, and with a loud, harsh cry he turned fiercely round to find the fisherman had crept round to his other side and stabbed him again.



Page 71

Seela thought no more of the fisherman after this; he only thought of the agonizing pain all over him and of the water—the cool sea water, where he would not only be eased and comforted, but where he would be safe. But alas! he had gone so far from the water in his eagerness to get near that treacherous music that it was now impossible to get back. It was always a great effort for him to walk on land and very exhausting, but now he was getting so weak that he could scarcely move at all.

In vain he looked round for that fisherman, but the fisherman took very good care to keep on the blind side of him, for a wounded seal is a dangerous animal to face. In vain he tried over and over again to turn round and make his way back to the sea, all the time sending forth harsh cries, which filled the air with curious echoes.

His voice grew hoarser and fainter after a few minutes, and his flabby, soft body was now lying in a pool of thick, dark blood, which trickled down the banks and crept in between the grass, stones and pebbles as though to hide itself.

Presently there was a convulsive struggle, a faint sound like a soft, hoarse whisper, and Seela was dead. He had been a real old rascal in his time, and had scarcely ever thought of any one but himself: moreover, he had robbed the fishermen time after time of their food, and yet he had died at last, not from any fresh treachery or meanness, but simply from a love of music, which had drawn him on and led him to his death.

BRUNIE, THE BEAR

Brunie was feeling very lonely and sad, and sat, with her brown body all huddled up, sucking the soles of her feet in a subdued, disconsolate manner.

For the summer was over; October had come with its autumnal chills and cloudy days, and Brunie's husband had already betaken himself to his winter quarters to commence his long sleep, utterly regardless, and supremely indifferent, as to what became of his wife.

He had fattened himself well before retiring by eating large quantities of honey, nice ripe cranberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cloudberries, and all sorts of other berries which grow so plentifully in the Scandinavian forests; not to speak of some beautiful, ripe corn, which he had eaten in a luxurious manner— seating himself on his wide haunches, and collecting with his outstretched arms great sheaves at a time, the ears of which he picked off and consumed at his leisure.

Then he had laid in a good stock of ants and ants' eggs, together with the remains of pine leaves, and other substances which he had scratched out of the ants' nests.

Old Bruin knew perfectly well that this matter, composed of pine leaves and other substances, was absolutely essential to him for the winter, for this is what makes the



"tappen." And as the bear sleeps the whole of the winter without food, nature has provided this wonderful contrivance by which he can go on sleeping and remain as fat as ever.



Page 72

As his stomach receives no food, it naturally becomes empty, and, when empty, subsides into a very small space. Then the “*tappen*” comes forward, blocks up a passage in the stomach, so that no food can pass through the system, and stays there until the bear wakes up in the spring. Then, as soon as he begins to take food, everything goes on as before.

Brunie knew perfectly well, as she sat there sucking her feet—for she changed the thick, hard skin which covered the soles of her feet every winter, and the sucking helped the new growth—that it was quite time she also looked out for and prepared her winter home.

And so when she had sucked them a little while longer, she hunted round for some nice convenient cave or hollow, and chose one which was hidden so cunningly that no one but a bear would have guessed at its existence.

Some bears make a big hillock of moss, and crawl into the middle of it, but Brunie preferred a cave; it was warmer, more private, and not so likely to be discovered, for she was looking forward to an important domestic event, and wished for privacy.

Having selected her winter home, she collected as many branches of the pine tree as she could find, and with some dry leaves, grass and twigs nearly filled up the cave, only leaving just enough room for herself to crawl in.

She, also, had been feeding well, and had become tremendously fat, for some of her feasts had been enormous.

But it was the end of October before she had completed her house and prepared to settle herself for her winter nap. The last thing she did before she went in was to have a big feed of honey, and a lot of bother and trouble she had to take to obtain it. For the little bees resented the big, brown animal coming and deliberately, eating up the whole of their winter stock which had taken them one long, long summer to collect.

But Brunie cared nothing about their anger, and their tiny stings could not penetrate her long, thick coat, and a good feed of honey was always worth a little trouble.

So, after patting the hives with her big paws in order to make the bees fly away, she lifted up the beautifully made honeycombs and devoured them ravenously.

Having eaten as much as she possibly could, she then betook herself, feeling very subdued and lonely, and very, very sleepy, to her nice, comfortable cave, and in a short time was fast asleep.

She remembered nothing more and never knew—and indeed was far too sleepy to care—that one of those horrible hunters had passed by the very mouth of her cave without knowing she was there.



But he had found Mr. Bruin, however, a little further on. He also was so dreadfully sleepy that he could not rouse himself, and the hunter could hardly get him even to turn over so that he could get a good shot at him.

But he was able to manage the deed very comfortably, as Bruin showed no signs of waking up; and having killed him, dragged him out with the help of some other hunters, stripped off his nice warm coat, and then had a good meal of bear steak, of which hunters are very fond.



Page 73

But Brunie never even heard the shots which killed her husband, although they were so close by, and the vibrations made the very leaves and twigs on which she was lying quiver again.

She slept heavily on and on, in her snug home, but about the beginning of February woke up, gave one big yawn, and then bustled about.

For she was a very important bear that day.

The next day she was a more important bear still, for she was a mother bear, and had four pretty little children—very small, only about six or eight inches in length, but finely made little animals, and all healthy and strong.

Very, very pleased and proud Brunie was of them, and very tender and careful.

She had forgotten all about Bruin, her husband, now, her only thought being for her little ones.

She kept them carefully in the nice warm cave until the cold weather had passed, and the little bears knew that all they had to do if they felt chilly was to creep up to their mother, and nestle in among her nice warm fur.

And, oh, how proud Brunie felt when she had them all nestling up to her like that! And, oh, how happy she was! Surely no bear ever had such beautiful cubs as hers! And so well had she chosen her home that no one—not even a hunter—ever found the mother bear and her little ones.

Her naturally affectionate nature glowed with love, and not once did she leave her children until the spring had fairly set in, and she began to think it was time to set about finding a little food for herself.

It was, however, very scarce. There were no nice berries or corn, and very little honey left. But she found some winter vegetables and several kinds of roots, nuts, snails, small limbs of aspen trees, and plenty of acorns; so that she was able to make a good meal, and then lumber heavily back to her cave.

It was April now, and the other mother-bears began to make their appearance with their various families, and the male bears, too, began to wake up and come out.

Once having got over their long winter sleep, bears begin to be sociable again, and take an interest in their fellow-creatures.

The mother-bears were particularly busy, for they had to teach and educate their little ones, and there is no quainter sight on the earth than a heavy, lumbering, brown mother-bear followed by her funny little woolly cubs.



Brunie commenced to take her children now for daily walks, showed them the most likely places to find dainty bits of food, taught them to climb and dig, and, as they grew older, to swim; and, by way of amusement when resting occasionally, told them about their many relations who existed in all parts of the world.

She told them about their various cousins: the Black Bear, the Syrian bear, the Grizzly bear of America the Thibetan sun bear, the Polar bear of the Arctic regions, the Aswail hear of India, the Bruany bear (also of India), the Sloth bear, the White bear, and the Brown bears who lived in Asia.



Page 74

The bear family was so varied, and so enormously large, Brunie explained to them, that she did not even know one-quarter of her own brown bears who lived in Northern Europe.

She told them, too—for she was a very intelligent mother-bear—that in whatever country bears lived they were peculiarly adapted to it. The Polar bear, for instance, had nice thick fur all over the bottoms of his feet; this protected him from the intense cold of the ice, and also prevented him from slipping. Then the bears who lived in hot countries did not have such thick coats as those who lived where it was cold.

“But,” said Brunie, in conclusion, “all bears are very much alike, and have much the same habits; all can climb, dig and swim, and all are very, very fond of honey.”

And the little bears listened to it all, and thought what a nice little mother-bear Brunie was, and what an extremely important family they belonged to.

But, as the months went on, Brunie began to get very thin and very touchy and irritable, and by the time June came she was so cross and savage that even her little ones were sometimes afraid of her. Curiously enough, all the other bears were just as cross and savage as Brunie; perhaps it was that they were all so dreadfully thin. But, whatever the reason, they snarled and growled, quarreled and fought until sometimes the little bears wondered what on earth was the matter.

The male bears seemed to be particularly savage, and even the hunters —those men who never seemed to be afraid of anything: not even a bear —were very careful to keep at a safe distance, and never attempted to molest them in any way.

All through that month of June the amiable affectionate nature of the bears seemed to have departed, and left in its place a vindictive, irritable and savage one—savage to their companions and to everything but the little cubs, and these the mother-bears never forsook. They took the same care of them as formerly, and fed and cared for them in spite of their irritable, bad-tempered mood. And woe betide anything, whether man or beast, who attempted to touch their little ones.

Brunie herself had a terrible time one day, when a band of hunters, seeing a mother-bear and her cubs alone, tried to capture them.

Furious with rage, Brunie rose up, and in her stiff, ungainly way went to meet them. Each of the hunters held a hatchet in his hands ready to strike at her, but Brunie cared not for hatchets, or anything else, where her little ones were concerned, and, going straight up to one of the hunters, she reared up on her hind feet, and with a terrific blow with one of her fore paws, which she aimed direct at the hunter’s head, she killed him on the spot.



Not hesitating a moment, she did the same with two other hunters, always aiming her blows at the head. And here she proved the truth of an old Scandinavian proverb, which says that, "a bear has the strength of ten men and the sense of twelve." Brunie knew perfectly well that the quickest way to kill a man was to aim all the blows at his head, and this she did with fearful effect.



Page 75

But when she was finishing the fourth, another hunter ran up and struck her a fearful blow with his hatchet, which cut deeply into her hind leg, severing some of the tendons, and causing the blood to gush forth and dye the spot a deep, dark red.

At the same moment that he dealt Brunie the blow, the hunter, with a deft movement, captured one of her cubs, and while Brunie's attention was taken up with the two remaining hunters her little one was carried off.

[Illustration: "FURIOUS WITH RAGE, BRUNIE ROSE UP AND WENT TO MEET THEM"]

But the pain of her wound and the loss of her cub made Brunie so wildly fierce and savage that the two hunters, remembering the fate of their comrades, came to the conclusion that "discretion was the better part of valor," and with much difficulty managed to get away.

Poor Brunie was, by this time, weak from loss of blood, and sat down, doing her best to lick her wound and comfort her remaining cubs. The little ones in their turn did their best for her, helping her to lick the sore place, and every now and then sucking it with their little lips.

This adventure upset poor Brunie for several days, and the loss of blood made her more weak, irritable and savage than ever.

But she had not forgotten the hunter that struck her with his hatchet, or the loss of her little one, and so, one warm moonlight night, when she was feeling better, and her three remaining cubs were in a sound sleep, she betook herself quietly through the forest, and at last came near the very place where that particular hunter lived.

There was but one field that separated her from the hunter's house, and that was occupied by big, horned cattle, and these cattle, not liking the look of Brunie in the moonlight, and not having sense enough to keep quiet and not molest her, commenced at once to bellow and charge at her as soon as she entered the field.

Brunie had never, like some bears, gone in for cattle killing, but had always kept to a vegetable diet; and she was not at all anxious— particularly at this moment—to have anything to do with cattle. So, with a few growls and a hoarse kind of a grumbling sound, she took no notice of them, but swung herself heavily along towards the farmyard.

The cattle, unfortunately, had not sense enough to let well enough alone and allow her to go quietly on her way, but kept on bellowing, prancing about and charging until Brunie lost her temper.



What! She could not even cross a field without these stupid cattle bothering and worrying her to death, when her little one was a few yards off, and already calling for her! It was too much. So, with a growl of rage, which was more like a hoarse bellow, Brunie made for them, and very soon killed two or three. So excited did she become at last, that for the moment she even forgot her beloved little one, and set herself to work all the destruction she possibly could, out of pure revenge.



Page 76

But the bellowing and lowing of the cattle, and the growling and grumbling of the bear, had awakened the hunter, and, while Brunie was killing off his cattle, he called up his farm hands, and was already on the spot with guns, and quite close to her before she had any idea of it.

Hiding themselves under the shade of some bushes, the hunter and his men waited until a fine young heifer galloped madly by them followed by Brunie, and then fired. No less than five of the shots took effect, and poor Brunie's life-blood began to gush out.

But, recalled to herself and her mission by her danger, she bethought herself of her little one, and, never stopping to even look at her enemies, made straight for the farmyard, where her beloved one was calling her, leaving a trail of blood as she went.

Had her cub not been there, she would have faced the hunter and his men, and probably have dispatched them in a few minutes; as it was, having forgotten the cattle, her mother-love returned, and she determined to get her cub if she died for it.

But, curiously enough, the little bear seemed to be fully aware of his mother's presence, and, as she came closer, his excitement grew intense, and, calling forth all his strength, by one desperate push he broke open the door of his shed and trotted forth to meet his dying mother.

Poor Brunie sank down just as he came up to her, and licked and caressed him in a most touching fashion, while the little cub, overwhelmed with joy—and yet uneasy and worried at his mother's condition—gave alternate little sounds of pleasure and fright and distress.

Brunie's joy was complete at having her cub restored to her, but her head was swimming and her eyes growing dim, and she groped in vain through the gathering darkness to catch a glimpse of her little one. She was lying at full length, with one huge paw stretched out towards the cub in a peculiarly pathetic manner, and panting her life out when the hunter and his men came up.

A few more pants, a struggle, and, with a deep gasp, Brunie lay quite, quite still, while the little cub jumped about, restless and ill at ease, and giving little, beseeching cries of distress.

First making sure, as he thought, that the bear was dead, the hunter attempted, with the help of his men, to once more capture the cub. But Brunie had—as all bears have—extreme tenacity of life, and she seemed to have compressed all her energy into her last moment of existence; for she was not yet dead, as the hunter supposed, and, just as he laid hands on the cub, with a great effort she raised herself up, struck him a terrible blow on his head, which killed him instantly, and then sank back and died.



And this was the end of Brunie. Had she lived she would probably, as all mother-bears do, have taken great care of her children all the summer, but in the winter she would have left them, for she would probably have had another family, which would have taken up all her time and attention.



Page 77

As it was, the little cubs had to do the best they could, and soon learned to shift for themselves.

The little captured one—after he had got over the death of his mother—grew quite tame, and was taught many tricks. He was always well treated and well fed, and he grew extremely fond of his master; and there he may be seen to this day, walking and running about that Scandinavian farm, scaring the other animals, thinking a great deal of himself, but always looking just what he is—a brown bear.

MONA, THE MONKEY

A Senegal forest in Western Africa is an ideal home for a monkey—a perfect paradise, in fact.

The trees, with their delightful branches, which seem to be just made for monkeys to sit on; the nice, bushy leaves, which form such cosy hiding-places, and the delicious nuts, berries and various kinds of fruit, all combine to make monkey life extremely happy.

In this delightful place, one fine, warm evening, Mona was born.

His mother had prepared her nursery some time before; she had built a nice little hut, where it was warm and dry, under the outgrowing boughs of a tree; had carpeted it with thick, dry leaves and grass, twined and interlaced twigs and branches overhead to keep out the fierce rays of the midday sun and the occasional heavy showers, and had, in fact, made it just as cosy as it was possible for a monkey nursery to be.

So, in one way, Mona's birth took place under good auspices, and he, being her first-born, more than came up to his mother's expectations. In her eyes he was the finest, the strongest and the most beautiful monkey that had ever existed, and although he whimpered all through that night, and squirmed and wrinkled up his already wrinkled little face into the most hideous contortions and grimaces, he was, notwithstanding, an ideal and lovely baby.

His mother forgot all her anxieties and troubles respecting him, and gathered him to her motherly breast with a little guttural cry of joy.

Unlike most of her tribe, Monica, Mona's mother, was somewhat reserved, and had not, as is usually the case with matronly monkeys, chattered and gossiped about her private affairs. And, as she clasped her little son to her, with her mother's heart swelling with love and pride, she thought, with pleasurable anticipation, of the surprise and gossip there would be in the morning when the wonderful event became known.

But Monica understood little of her own species if she thought this great secret was to be kept until the morning; for several neighbors heard that little whimpering cry, and



pricked up their sharp little ears, while their little eyes glinted about, and in a very short time their active bodies scrambled down from their various night abodes, and peeped, with true monkey curiosity, into Monica's hut.

Instantly there was the very greatest excitement. Most of the newcomers were mothers themselves, and therefore understood all about it, and the way in which a baby monkey should be treated from the very first. One and all began telling Monica what to do, giving her good advice, and many scoldings for not letting them into the secret.



Page 78

But Monica took very little notice; she hugged her baby all the closer, and her bright little eyes glanced quickly and furtively round at the newcomers, only she felt prouder than ever.

She was induced, after much persuasion, to allow the baby to be inspected, which the newcomers did thoroughly. Not an eye, a limb, a finger-nail, or even a hair, escaped their attention, but were examined and criticized with the utmost gravity.

One old mother monkey, who had a large family herself, regarded the baby gravely, and her worried, careworn old face looked a little more worried and a little more careworn, if possible, while criticizing him.

“Isn’t he lovely?” Monica whispered proudly.

“Not a bad baby,” the old mother monkey said, gravely, “but delicate, Monica, delicate—and born under an unlucky star.”

The young mother started, and grasped her baby as though it were going to be torn from her.

“He will never have any luck,” the mother monkey went on, gravely; “but he will never come to very much harm.

“He will never have any luck, but he will never come to very much harm.” This significant sentence Monica repeated to herself, over and over again, all through that night, never losing the dread which this ominous saying had implanted in her heart. The dreadful words seemed to be ringing in her ears all the time the chattering of the neighbors was going on, and when they had left her, and had gone back to their respective homes, full of the new event, she listened to their chattering dying away in the distance, and then suddenly a few hot tears fell on the baby’s head. And these few tears were Mona’s christening.

The next day, however, Monica began to think she had been very foolish in paying any attention to what the old mother monkey had said. The joy of motherhood, and the proud possession of a baby monkey of her own, eclipsed everything else, even the ominous warning. She was so busy, too, with the cares and duties of motherhood; there was so much to be seen and attended to, and the new baby required so much attention.

Monica was very, very proud of him, but as the days grew into weeks she began to wish that Mona, as she had called him, and which was a family name, would not whimper quite so much; it made her nervous sometimes, and irritated her, and once she had even gone so far as to give him a smart slap in reprimand. She began to realize, too,



as time went on, that there was something in what the mother monkey had said: Mona was decidedly delicate and undoubtedly unlucky.

When he was about a week old, his mother left him for a somewhat longer time than usual to get a little fresh fruit for herself. Before leaving Mona, however, she had given him his breakfast of nice, warm milk, and covered him over with dry leaves and grass. Not that it was cold, but by covering him up she guarded against danger. His funny little, brown head and face were so much the color and so like the dry leaves and grass he was lying in that it would have been very difficult for anyone but a mother monkey to know that there was anything there at all.



Page 79

Monica waited until she was quite sure that he was asleep, and then stole away.

But, for some reason or other, Mona was not particularly sleepy that morning, and after a short nap opened his bright little eyes and glanced quickly round. His mother was not to be seen, but he did not mind that very much; he was not hungry and he was very comfortable; so he just lay where he was, and amused himself by picking to pieces some of the long grass and ferns which formed his bed with his nimble little fingers. At the same time he pricked up his sharp little ears so he would be able to hear his mother a long way off.

There was a little rustle, presently, and for a moment Mona thought his mother was returning, but yet it did not sound quite like her. It was a peculiar rustling of leaves and grass, which kept on softly and continuously. His mother rustled the grass and leaves, it is true, but she always made sharp little pats and thumps as she came along. There were no pats and thumps now, only one long, soft, continued rustle.

Mona had no fear, simply from the fact that as yet he knew nothing to be afraid of. And so, as the rustling went on, he poked up his small head sharply, and peered curiously around. There was nothing to be seen, however, and from the moment he made the movement the rustling had ceased.

What could it be? he wondered. He was a born monkey, and he had as much curiosity as any other member of his tribe, and, baby as he was, he determined to find out; so, keeping perfectly still, he waited until the rustling began again.

This time it was much nearer, and in some vague, incomprehensible way Mona felt horribly frightened, at what he could not think or imagine; but he had a curious, uncanny feeling, and he shivered all over, while from some reason or other he was unable to move anything but his quick little eyes, which darted hither and thither, up and down, although his small head was as motionless as a statue.

Suddenly, however, his quick little eyes stopped darting hither and thither, for in one corner of the hut a something, which was lying coiled up there, drew his eyes in spite of himself, and, do what he would, he could not turn them back again.

The Something was a long, long, thick coil, with a curious flat head, horrible eyes, and a frightful thing, in the shape of a two-pronged fork, which darted in and out of his wide mouth so quickly that it was difficult to tell when it was in and when it was out.

The horrible thing began to wave its head to and fro with a weird, graceful movement, and, as it waved, so Mona's eyes followed it—to and fro, to and fro—followed it because he could not help himself.



He was so young that as yet he could only crawl feebly round the hut, but at this moment he felt bound to go towards this horrible thing, although he was frightened, and although he did his very best to keep back.



Page 80

Trembling all over, and too terrified to utter one little cry for his mother, Mona found himself at last outside his bed, getting nearer and nearer to that horrible thing in the corner. His poor, little head began to feel sick and dizzy; his poor little limbs were shaking so that he could scarcely move, and yet he was going on and on, closer and closer, and not once since he encountered the gaze of those terrible eyes had he been able to move his own.

At this moment he became so frightfully sick and giddy, while his eyes were getting so strained that they ached painfully, that he began to forget where he was. He seemed to be going off in some dreadful dream from which he had no power to rouse himself; and there was a curious hissing going on, which seemed to have a dreadful menace in it.

Just as he was going off in this dream, however, he heard faintly in the distance his mother's voice. He did his best to call to her, to cry out, but he was going deeper and deeper into the dream, and in a very few seconds knew nothing more.

When Mona woke up it was to find his little mother's arms round him; his little mother raining tears of joy and thankfulness upon his face, and a number of sympathizing neighbors chattering at the very top of their voices.

Mona, it seemed, had had a terrible adventure. Such a narrow escape, in fact, that it was a great wonder he was still alive. For the horrible thing in the corner turned out to be a dreadful snake.

"One of our greatest enemies," his mother told him, her motherly eyes still full of tears. "Monkeys have such a lot of enemies, Mona," she said, gently. "There are snakes, and leopards, and parrots and—"

"Tut, tut!" the old mother-monkey interrupted, sharply. "What is the good of telling the child all that? He will get to know fast enough."

"But if he had known," Monica said, gently, caressing her little one with a tender air, and feeling thankful—oh, so thankful!—that she had arrived just in time to call off the snake's attention. "If he had known, he might have—"

"Well, what could he have done?" the old mother monkey said, sharply. "You know what snakes are."

All the monkeys gathered together, shivered, and glanced round uneasily.

"You know what snakes are; what can you do when you are brought face to face with them like that, and both in a hut?"

Monica nodded gravely, and felt more thankful than ever that her baby had been spared to her.



“I told you he was unlucky,” the old mother monkey said, gravely, “but I also told you that he would never come to much harm.”

And so it proved. For Mona, as life went on, was always unlucky, but he never came to much harm, although he had some exciting adventures.

As he grew up he became stronger, but always remained a quiet monkey, inclined to whimper.

Quiet monkeys, when inclined to whimper, always have a bad time. Their fellow-monkeys have no patience with their delicacy or whimpering, and do their very best to impress this upon their fellow-creatures as much as possible, in a practical manner. Slaps, sharp tweaks of the tail, and continual teasing, are considered good for both these complaints, and of these little Mona got the full benefit. Altogether, he had an extremely hard time of it.



Page 81

To begin with, none of the other monkeys seemed to care to associate with him. They never gambolled about and let him join; never asked or even attempted to attend to his toilet for him; and the only part of his person which appeared to form any attraction was his tail, which, he being a Mona monkey, was an extremely long one.

There were times when Mona wished he had no tail; it was impossible to keep it still; he was busy all day long whisking it about out of the way of mischievous fingers.

Unlike all the other monkeys, who sat about in groups, chattering, screaming, laughing and scolding, as they felt inclined, Mona generally sat quite alone, with his pathetic little face looking very miserable, and his sad eyes following the many groups of monkeys from place to place.

Mona was a great admirer of the beautiful, and the Vervet monkeys were his chief admiration. Now, these little Vervet monkeys think a great deal of themselves, and consider, in their own way, that they are the masters of the Senegal woods; they are deeply insulted and fiercely angry should a stranger intrude into their domain, and make no scruples about showing what they feel.

They sit about on the branches in immense troops, and are so wonderfully quick and active that at times it is almost impossible to follow their movements.

Very knowing, and cautious, too, are the little Vervets; a stranger may be sitting underneath the very tree on which they are crowding, and not have the faintest idea that there is a monkey near him; should he suddenly look up, however, he would see some hundreds of little heads peeping through the branches, and hundreds of sharp little eyes watching his every movement. Should they wish to attract the stranger's attention, they will drop a stick so cleverly, and with such precision, that it often hits his nose.

Many a morning Mona passed watching the gambols and the amusing tricks of the little Vervets; but they never invited him to come and play with them or to take any part in their games. For one thing, he was a Mona monkey, and the families or tribes in the Senegal forest are very particular about keeping together.

There was one monkey, of another family, that Mona took great interest in, and this was a little white-nosed lady-monkey.

This white-nosed monkey was a curious little creature; she had a big, white spot on her nose, like all her family, and a little fringe of white hair all around her face, which looked as though she had put her collar round her face instead of her neck, and gave her a somewhat ludicrous air.



But not in Mona's eyes. In Mona's eyes she was absolutely beautiful, and her long tail—nearly black at the top and dwindling to a peculiar greyish hue at the bottom—was another source of admiration to him.

The little white-nosed monkey was a born flirt; graceful, petulant and coquettish to a degree, and she knew perfectly well from the very first that Mona admired her. She was quite content to be admired, and was, in fact—like all white-nosed monkeys—particularly fond of notice and admiration, not to speak of nuts.



Page 82

She took care to come, day after day, to some conspicuous place where Mona could have a good view of her. But this was not all for Mona's edification; she had another admirer, and this was a Patas, or red monkey.

This red monkey was a big fellow, three feet in length, who, with his bright, chestnut fur, with its deep shade of red, and his darkish, cream-colored legs, thought a good deal of himself.

He detested Mona monkeys, and waged war on them continually; but it was not until the fourth day that he discovered the presence of Mona, and found, to his very great disgust, that he was admiring the little white-nosed monkey, too.

This was quite enough. Down came the red monkey so quickly, so softly and swiftly, that he was on Mona before he realized his presence.

The wicked little white-nosed monkey knew perfectly well what was going to happen, and sat up on her branch, put on her most coquettish air, and prepared to thoroughly enjoy herself.

As a rule, Mona had not much spirit, but he realized that his beloved one was looking on, and he made a brave fight. But the red monkey of Senegal is a very powerful animal when provoked, and he was not going to stand any nonsense from a Mona monkey, and so it came to pass that, after a few minutes' sharp fight, poor little Mona was only too thankful to creep painfully away and hide himself under some bushes, where he cried bitterly.

Sad to relate, the little white-nosed monkey, after this, took no further notice of Mona, but sneered and jeered at him whenever an opportunity offered. She did her best to show him that she despised him, and wished to have nothing more to do with him. And Mona took it meekly, as he took most things.

There was one tribe of monkeys, however, that even Mona would have nothing to do with, and these were the "Knuckle-Walkers." These Knuckle-Walkers had not yet become civilized enough to learn how to walk on the palms of their hands, and no monkey tribe, who thinks anything of itself, ever associated with the Knuckle-Walkers. They were a distinct race of monkeys, and this fact was impressed on them rather forcibly occasionally.

Mona had lost his mother by this time. Loving and gentle as she had been when Mona was a baby, as he grew up she grew tired of him, and, as she had other children since his birth, she had moved off with them to another part of the forest.

Mona had learned by this time that if ever the other monkeys were friendly towards him, it was simply that they wanted to make use of him in some way or other.



One eventful day they had invited him to a feast of parrots' feathers. The young tail feathers of these birds, if plucked out properly, contain some delicious juicy stuff in the quill parts which all monkeys love. Perhaps, it is the difficulty of obtaining this delicious stuff which makes it seem doubly delightful; but, whatever it is, all monkeys will go through a great deal to obtain it.



Page 83

Mona was deputed to stand in front of the parrots to take off their attention. He was told that this was not nearly so dangerous as pulling the feathers out, and so he believed what was told him, and did his best to attract the parrot's attention, while his fellow-monkeys got behind and pulled out its feathers.

In doing this, careful as he was, poor Mona got some terrific pecks, one of which nearly blinded him; for a parrot's beak can inflict a bad wound, especially if he is really angry.

As Mona did not get a single feather as a reward, he never again consented to attract a parrot's attention while the others obtained their feast.

It was always the same; Mona never came to much harm, yet he was always unlucky.

Once he had really been very much in love with a little lady monkey of his own tribe, and for a time she had seemed very fond of him. But, alas, just as they were getting on so beautifully, the little lady monkey was killed in a quarrel, and poor Mona was left lonely once more.

Another time Mona was sitting on a branch of a tree, thinking about many sad things, when a little movement in front attracted his attention. In an instant his bright little eyes glanced down, and there, creeping slowly up the thick trunk of the tree, was a jaguar.

All the other monkeys were away; they had seen him long ago, but Mona had been dreaming.

With a shrill shriek of terror, Mona looked round for some way of escape, but there was none. To jump would be fatal; to stay where he was would be also fatal. And so Mona crouched down, crying so bitterly, and making such pathetic, little gestures of appeal that even the heart of a jaguar ought to have been touched.

But jaguars have very little heart, and they are extremely fond of monkeys; so, notwithstanding Mona's little beseeching prayers, with one soft spring the jaguar leaped, and in a few moments Mona was no more.

His sad little life, with all its troubles and loneliness, was at an end, and there was not even one monkey to mourn for him.

"A very good thing," the red monkey said, disdainfully. "I hated that Mona monkey. If it hadn't been for him, I should have married the little white-nosed monkey; as it was, she ran away, and married one of her own tribe."

[Illustration: MONA DID HIS BEST TO ATTRACT THE PARROT'S ATTENTION"]

"I always said," the old mother monkey remarked, who had looked on at the death from a safe corner. "I always said that Mona was unlucky."



“Yes,” jeered the red monkey, “but you also said that he would never come to much harm. And he was killed by a jaguar.”

“He never came to much harm in life,” the old mother monkey said, impressively; “but he died as a great many other monkeys do, a quick death. Far better that”—with a sad and somewhat grave shake of the head—“far better—far more happy—than to grow old and stiff and feeble. But I always liked Mona, and I am sorry that he is dead.”



Page 84

And so it came to pass that the only one who felt the least sorrow or faintest regret was the old mother monkey, who had been one of the first to see Mona after he was born.

BULON, THE BUFFALO

In the thick mud of one of the marshy swamps of South Africa a herd of buffaloes, some sixteen in number, stood almost knee-deep. The thick fog which arose from the swamp hung round and about like a huge, vapory cloud, making the hot air moist and stifling.

But the buffaloes cared not; to them it was pleasant and enjoyable, and they, one and all, stood placidly chewing their cud and gazing calmly at nothing in particular.

The leader of the herd, a sturdy, shaggy animal of exceptional size, stood a little apart from the others, on guard and on the lookout for danger. The birds of the herd fluttered and hopped around and appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.[Footnote: A herd of buffaloes is generally accompanied by one or more red-beaked rhinoceros birds. These birds feed on the ticks or insects which infest the animals' skin, and also give warning of danger.—*Author.*]

It was such fun to fly from one animal to another, perching lightly on the mass of woolly hair, and then to peep and hunt, first with one bright little eye and then with the other, until some unwary insect came in sight. These little insects—the ticks—were quick and moved with lightning-like rapidity, but they were not so quick as the birds, for, almost before they realized their danger, the sharp red beaks opened simultaneously with a quick dart forward of their heads, and the next instant the insects were out of sight.

Bulon, the leader of the herd, glanced from under his shaggy brows, first at the birds and then at the buffaloes; his wild fiery eyes were blood-red, and his shaggy mane and almost hairless shanks—for he was getting old—showed unmistakable signs of a recent fight.

And a terrible fight it had been, too, for one of the younger males had dared to show a little attention to one of Bulon's wives, and this in buffalo land is a great insult and not to be overlooked.

So Bulon had promptly challenged the offender; his rival had just as promptly responded to the challenge, and a great fight they had. In times gone by no one would have dared to interfere with Bulon, unless, perhaps, the leader of some other herd, for in those days his strength had been magnificent, and even lions and tigers quailed before him. But old age was creeping on, which the other buffaloes realized only too quickly. His massive shoulders and sturdy limbs were shrinking a little, while his tough, thick skin was now almost hairless, except for his mane and a thin fringe on his back and withers.

But, in spite of his age and diminished strength, Bulon had won the day. It had seemed doubtful at first, very doubtful, and some of the herd had looked on with interest, but with grave doubts as to the result.



Page 85

A male buffalo is one of the most jealous things on the face of the earth, and his jealousy makes him quite mad for the time being. In a fight neither will give in until one kills the other, and so it was in Bulon's case. He was determined to get the best of it, for he knew that, should the other buffalo kill him, the herd would probably select the conqueror as its leader in his place.

But, after a great clashing of horns, stamping of hoofs, and sharp snorts and grunts, Bulon's opponent began to breathe heavily and show signs of distress, and when this took place the fight soon came to an end.

Bulon followed up his advantage with true buffalo skill, and in a very short time his enemy was in the dust and panting out his life. The fight once over, the herd moved on, leaving the dying buffalo by himself, for, in animal life, the old, sick or decrepit, are always treated with contempt.

Bulon led the way until they reached a nice, muddy swamp. The birds, however, having given warning of approaching danger, the males stationed themselves in an irregular circle in all the most dangerous positions—having first put the mothers and calves in the middle—while Bulon stood a little apart and kept his wicked little eyes first on the herd and then on the birds. He knew as well as the birds that an enemy was near, and but for this would have given the signal to feed. But the buffaloes were quite content; they were knee-deep in mud, surrounded by a thick, damp, hot mist, and as they were not particularly hungry, stood still and ruminated—that is to say, chewed their cud and enjoyed themselves.

Having four stomachs, buffaloes' food has the same process to go through as the food of all ruminants; that is to say, when vegetable matter is first eaten, it passes into the first stomach, where it stays until it is ready for the next one. The second stomach is much smaller, and covered with a number of curious little cells. After it has been in the second stomach for some time, and whenever the buffalo feels ready for it, the food comes back into the mouth, and he then bites or masticates it just as long as he likes. This is "chewing the cud." When he has finished chewing the cud, the food goes into the third stomach, and after it has been there some time, it passes into the fourth one, where it is at last digested. So, although Bulon would not give the signal to feed, the buffaloes were quite happy, as they had plenty of food with which to chew the cud—an action which is invariably a sign of placid content among ruminants.

Bulon was the only one who was not ruminating. But then he was on the lookout for enemies, and, moreover, his temper was still exceedingly ruffled.

There were signs of a storm coming up; the air was quiet and still, and it was in this peculiar stillness that Bulon thought he heard an unusual sound in the bushes. He turned his huge head and sharp eyes in that direction, but in the next instant there was

a short, sharp sound—a stinging, burning, pain in his shoulder and the old buffalo knew that he had been wounded.

Page 86

Just as he realized this a small, upright form came forward from the left side and stood in front of him. Had the form, which was a man, only been in front at first, Bulon would have seen it; but he could not—like all buffaloes—see very well unless things were in a straight line before him.

The moment Bulon caught sight of his enemy he made a mad rush, and as he plunged violently he splashed and covered the traveler with thick mud, which nearly blinded him. Unfortunately, Bulon was in a soft spot, and the more he wallowed the deeper he sank in the mud. But he made one grand struggle, and, getting a slight grasp, he floundered up and made another wild dash at his enemy. It would, indeed, have gone hard with the enemy if just behind him there had not grown one of those peculiarly thick thorn bushes which grow so plentifully in South Africa—a bush which has long, thick thorns like big needles.

As Bulon plunged madly at his enemy, the man darted to one side, and Bulon crashed into the bush, running the cruel thorns into his nose and eyes, and tumbling head over heels with the impetus. He gathered himself up, nearly mad with pain—for the cruel thorns had completely blinded him—and in his agony tore round and round—forgetting his enemy—forgetting the soft, boggy spot—forgetting the herd—forgetting everything except the awful anguish and bewildering darkness.

It went hard with Bulon after this, for he was in a sad plight. He had spent the greater part of his strength in the fight; the wallowing in the soft mire had exhausted him; he had a burning, raging pain in his shoulder caused by the bullet fired by his human enemy, while the pain in his poor, blinded eyes and his sensitive nose took nearly all his remaining strength. He felt he could not keep up his wild career much longer, but he kept on for a time, only stopping occasionally to rub his poor nose and eyes in the soft, wet ground—an action which only added to his misery, for the harder he rubbed the deeper he drove in the thorns which pierced and lacerated him, poisoning his blood and sowing the seeds of death.

Meanwhile, the buffaloes at the sound of that peculiar “bang” stopped chewing their cuds instantly, and in one of their wild, excitable fits started off in a mad rush, males, mothers and calves all huddled together. In an almost incredible time the buffaloes were out of sight, except a few unfortunate mothers and little ones who, having once stumbled, lost their lives by being trampled to death by the others. This was the reason that Bulon, with all his bellowings of rage, pain and distress, received no answer to his cries, and could find no one of his fellow-creatures to give him comfort.

The hunter had such a narrow escape from the sudden onrush of the buffalo that he deemed it wise—not realizing that the animal had been blinded—to retreat. Had he only known the piteous plight in which poor Bulon was, it would have been an easy matter to have put another bullet into him, and so ended his life and sufferings.



Page 87

As it was, Bulon wandered about for days in a pitiable plight. The wound in his shoulder, although it still contained the bullet, was not enough to kill him, and, although his blinded eyes and swollen nose caused him intense suffering, there was no likelihood of his dying for some days. So it was that he wandered on seeking food, and, when it was found, having the greatest difficulty in eating it, owing to his swollen nose and mouth. He did his best to follow the herd, but, as the days went on, he grew weaker and weaker. The thorns had caused inflammation now, and the only thing he could do was to sway his huge head from side to side, and totter with short, uneven steps over the heavy, marshy ground.

Then came a day when he struck another treacherous, soft spot, and this time he had neither strength nor will to save himself. He sank softly and slowly into the liquid mud, which covered him as with a mantle, and soothed him in spite of himself, for, in any case, it saved him from the sharp, stinging bites of the great gadflies, which are able to pierce even the thick skin of the buffalo.

By the time night swept over the land the only thing to be seen of Bulon was his grand, huge head and big horns standing out in a bold curve; his shaggy, woolly masses of hair, and his nose and mouth swollen now into an almost shapeless mass. As the night wore on, Bulon's sufferings increased, and his groans were unearthly sounds, echoing and re-echoing through the darkness.

But he grew quieter at last, and towards morning, just as the sun was tinting the sky with glorious colors, Bulon sank a little further into the soft mud he had always loved so well and died.

His own particular herd had forgotten all about him long before this, and had chosen a new leader—a young, strong, vigorous male, who was looked up to and respected far more than Bulon had been during the last few months of his life, for the buffaloes had already begun to realize that Bulon was getting old, and had been losing their respect for him accordingly.

His day had passed. He had guarded his herd carefully and well; led them to the best swamps and pastures, and on hot days picked out the softest and coolest mud for his wives to wallow in, while he had always left the youngest and freshest food for the calves.

So he had fulfilled his duties, and his many children grew up strong and healthy, became fathers and mothers themselves, and did very much the same sort of things that Bulon, the noted leader of buffaloes, had himself done.