

The Professor's Panther.

I had been sure for a long time that there was a story connected with the panther, but the old professor, for some reason, never seemed to feel the bearing of my hints concerning it. The panther was a magnificent male specimen, mounted in the central case of the museum, a crouching, crawling figure, so terribly realistic that I had to school myself to go past it at night without a shiver.

"You certainly saw that beast when it was alive, professor," I remarked one day, as we were rearranging some of the smaller specimens in the case. "That's a study from life. Look at the curve of the back! And those shoulders! I can almost see them work beneath the skin."

"I can see them work," the old professor replied, pausing a moment to look at the beast; "and I'm likely to, as long as I see anything," he added.

I kept discreetly silent, and he went on: "It is a study from life, as you have guessed, and the best mount, I think, in the collection, though the study was made in Florida and the mounting done here."

"That was a peculiarly vivid lesson I had there, quite sufficient in a taxidermical way for the rest of my life."

"I was collecting along the Indian River, near where Micco stands now, taking specimens of everything, from the largest alligators down. It was a rich country there then, as crowded with wild beast as a menagerie. Panthers were by no means rare, and I had taken two when I came upon the tracks of this fellow in the sand along the river."

"The print of his foot measured twice that of the specimens I had taken, and my ambition was stirred. I wanted that big panther—for the very spot where you see him now. But he was as wary as he was big. I never could get sight of him—perhaps because I was afraid of his getting sight of me first."

"I trailed him up and down the river, and finally found a beaten path that I thought the big fellow used, running in through the brake to a heavily timbered crest. The grass about the end of the path was so heavy and the runway so hard-packed that no footprint showed; but out along the river the signs of his coming and going in this vicinity were so numerous that I determined to risk my chances in the path."

"The surest, quickest way to have taken him, if this were the runway of the beast, would have been to lie in wait at some good place along the path, and shoot him—provided, of course, that the wind, the light and the aim were all just right."

"But this was asking too much; besides, I was constantly busy collecting, and couldn't spare the time it might take to wait. So I took the two big bear-traps that I had at camp, and set them in the path, trusting that the panther, in an absent-minded moment, might walk into one of them."

"It is seldom that a wild animal especially a panther, has an absent-minded moment. Human beings are much more liable to them, according to my experience, though up to this time I had not known it."

"I selected a narrow, walled-in place along the path, where the bushes were so thick on each side that the beast would not be likely to leave the trail. Here, too, was a sharp rise of ground for about twenty feet."

"At the bottom of this I set one trap, and twenty feet away, on the very crown of the ridge, I set the other. He could hardly go up and down that hill without stepping into one of those traps."

"But he did, even though I had concealed the traps so skilfully that no eye could easily have detected them. That very night a small manatee that I had caught late in the afternoon was dragged from near the tent and half-eaten in the bushes alongside, the marks in the sand telling plainly that the thief was the big panther."

"A visit to the traps showed them undisturbed. Perhaps the beast had come out by some other path."

"To make sure, I fixed four slender sticks across the run, so that nothing could pass without brushing them aside."

"The next day I found the sticks down. Something had been through the path, and something large, too; but the traps had not been touched."

"Hoping that the creature might become used to their presence, and so grow careless, I left them several days without changing, wherein I again showed my ignorance of wild animals."

"It was folly to imagine that so keen a creature as a panther would walk abroad in his sleep and catch himself. Nevertheless, I went down the river late one afternoon and into the path, intending to make a last attempt with the bear-traps."

"The one at the crest of the ridge I moved down about five feet, replacing its former cover and all the surroundings precisely as they were, so that to all appearances the trap was in its old place. Then with infinite pains I hid it in the new spot, laying back upon it every tiny leaf that I had disturbed."

"It was as neat as nature; but so intent had I been upon the work that I had utterly forgotten about time, and looked up to see

the dust falling rapidly. The other trap still remained to be set.

"Hastening back down the ridge, I pulled up the heavy chain, and in doing so, hit the plate so sharply that the jaws came to with a snap."

"I had scooped out a place for it in the path, and was pressing the stiff spring down with my knee and the jaws with my hands, when I felt something touch my foot behind."

"The strain upon my arms was so great that I dared not risk loosing the spring with my knee, for fear the long toothed jaws would close on my hands. So without pausing, I spread the jaws on down and open and held them there."

"And I continued to hold them there, for crawling slowly up between my knees came the head and neck of a great snake. A second look was not needed to show me that it was a water moccasin, as vicious and as deadly a reptile as the rattlesnake."

"The thick, heavy jawed head slid up along my left wrist and curved out directly across the open trap. There it lay. All depended on my keeping perfectly quiet, for the beast was not alarmed, though I could see the light in its eye half smoldered. Its dull wits were aware of something unusual here, and so it had paused, suspicious."

"Fortunately, the trap was fully open now and not hard to hold. But my body was cramped into an unnatural posture with the effort to set the spring, and this, together with the terrible nervous strain of having that deadly, scaly head against my hand soon began to tell on my strength."

"If I could only get my knee of the spring without arousing the snake, and still hold the trap open with my hands, I might be able to release the jaws quickly enough to cut the muddy, horrid head clean off."

"I would risk it while I had the power; but instantly that power left me. Whether I had half consciously heard a twig break, or by some mysterious telepathy felt the gaze of the panther fixed upon me, I do not know; but without looking up I knew that the beast lay in the path at the top of the ridge above me."

"I had scarcely to move my head in order to see him. There in the deepening twilight he stood motionless, his front paws on the ridge, his head lifted high, looking in surprise at me."

"Then the head was slowly lowered, the big paws reached down, and the long body flattened itself to the ground. My flesh might have been of stone, so far as any trace of feeling went. I was frozen to the spot and to the open trap. But trap and snake were forgotten while I glared back into the blazing eyes that glared down into mine, as the great cat began its stealthy crawl over the ridge for a footing to spring."

"I could see only the blaze of the eyes, the hump of the working shoulders and the twitch, twitch of the slowly awaying tail, so quickly had the darkness settled. But I knew every motion the brute made."

"He had come entirely over the ridge when the hump of his shoulders sank. He had flattened. Then it began to rise slowly, and I knew the moment of crisis had come. The creature was gathering himself together for the leap."

"Suddenly, with a scream that was half-snarl, he sprang, snapped short in the air, turned heels over, and was jerked head down into the path before me."

"I was standing, with the moccasin's scaly tail lashing my boots."

"The panther had crept one step too close, and had planted his paw in the open trap near the top of the hill."

"In my excitement and fright, I had entirely forgotten that it was there, and the brute as he crawled down upon me had been too eager to notice it."

"The moccasin was squirming in the trap I had been holding, its head nearly severed. But how I did it, how I got off the trap to my feet, I have never known at all."

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Vegetable Time Table.

Bake potatoes, 30 to 40 minutes.
Steam potatoes, 20 to 40 minutes.
Boil potatoes (in their skins), 20 to 30 minutes.
Boil potatoes (pared), 25 to 45 minutes.
Asparagus (young), 15 to 30 minutes.
Corn (green), 12 to 20 minutes.
Cauliflower, 20 to 40 minutes.
Cabbage (young), 35 to 60 minutes.
Celery, 20 to 30 minutes.
Carrots, one to two hours.
Lima or shell beans, 45 minutes to 1½ hours.
Onions, 30 to 60 minutes.
Oyster plant, 45 to 60 minutes.
Peas, 20 to 60 minutes.
Parsnips (young) 30 to 45 minutes.
Spinach, 20 to 60 minutes.
String beans, 30 to 60 minutes.
Summer squash, 20 to 60 minutes.
Turnips (young), 45 minutes.
Tomatoes (stewed), 45 to 60 minutes.
When vegetables are served with boiled salt meat they must be cooked in the liquor from the meat after it has been removed.

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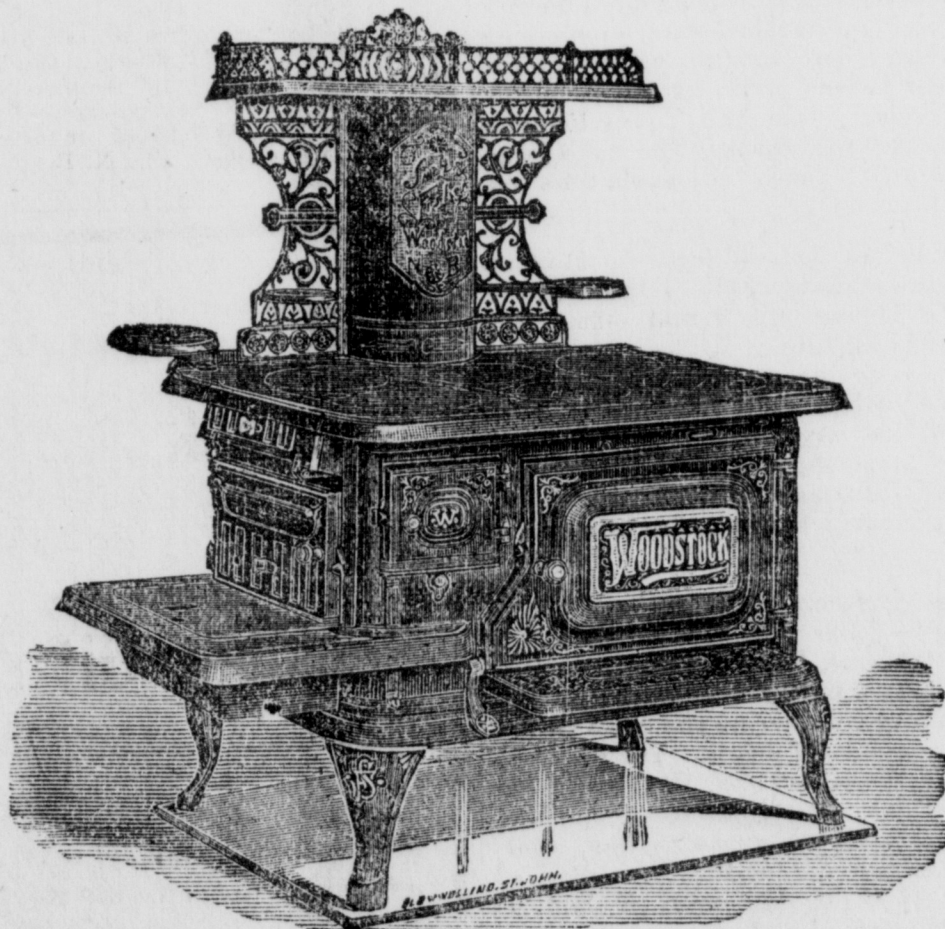
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The Methodist Parsonage, Jacksonville, Carleton Co., N. B., Oct. 11th, 1902 Messrs. Small & Fisher, Woodstock:

Gentlemen,—After upwards of thirty years experience with a large variety of cook stoves, none has ever given the satisfaction derived from your "Woodstock". It is a perfect heater and baker, keeps the water tank hot day and night, with less fuel than any stove we have ever had in our parsonages.

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P. S.—I kept the fire going night and day from the 1st of October to the end March with less than five cords of hardwood.—J.C.B.

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MONEY TO LOAN

On Real Estate.

APPLY TO D. McLEOD VINCE

Barrister-at-Law, Woodstock, N. B.

WOODSTOCK, N. B., DEC. 21, 1904.

Fraud in Fruit Buying.

A disquieting story regarding the handling of Canadian and American apples in Britain has been published by The New York Journal of Commerce. The story is simply a charge of systematic fraud on the part of the English commission merchants, and it is vouched for by Mr. George A. Cochran of Boston, a recognized authority on the fruit trade. He says that for several years a coterie of English fruit handlers have combined to deprive the shippers of a fair return for their goods. It is charged that the dealers receive the fruit and put it in the hands of auctioneers, who make a pretence of disposing of it in the open market. These sales are so conducted that the commission merchants who receive the fruit have a chance to buy it in at unfairly low prices. The returns from these auctions are made to the shippers in Canada or the United States, and the dealers who have bought the fruit in sell it again at a substantial profit. Mr. Cochran declares that the commission merchants who have systematically carried on this line of operations have agents in Toronto, Montreal, Nova Scotia and Boston.

This is a matter that should be investigated thoroughly and at once by the Canadian Commissioner. It would be most mischievous and unfair to allow a general charge to lie against English commission merchants, the great majority of whom are undoubtedly men of strict commercial probity. Without commercial honor and the confidence it engenders modern business would be impossible. Men must have an assurance of fair treatment when they put their goods into the hands of commission merchants, otherwise the international commerce that has been so beneficial to the world at large would come to an end. The first essential of commerce is confidence, and it is the duty of the Government and of the business community to see that it is not destroyed. No doubt an investigation will show that any fraudulent scheme in operation was confined to a very small number of dealers. But without an investigation and exposure the few unscrupulous operators will cast discredit on a large and important mercantile class. Until all suspicion is allayed by the exposure of the dishonest dealers, fruit growers on this side of the Atlantic will be reluctant to risk the English market, and a profitable and promising trade will be destroyed. It may be found advisable for the Canadian and American fruit growers to establish an agent in Britain. It is an enterprise worth considering, and need not necessarily imply a general lack of honesty on the part of British commission merchants. The present evidences of dishonesty are sufficient to shake business confidence and to warrant a thorough investigation.

Wondrous Ways of Ants.

(London 'Spectator'.)

Lieut.-Colonel Syke saw at Poonah ants carrying out grain to dry in the sun. Dr. Lincecum, in Texas, found ants who planted a certain seed-bearing grass, reaped it, and carried the grain into their cells, where they sipped it of chaff and packed it away. The paper relating to this was read by Darwin before the Linnaean Society. Another observer has told us of ants which grow mushrooms.

The foraging ants of Brazil and Western Equatorial Africa are terrible creatures. Elephants and gorillas fly before them; the python takes care not to indulge in a meal till he has satisfied himself that there are none of them about. They have a 'leisured class,' much larger creatures, who accompany their march, 'like subaltern officers in a marching regiment'; they are not fighters, however. One curious conjecture as to their function has been made. They are indigestible, and birds spare the whole army lest they should get hold of one of these tough morsels. This, it must be allowed, looks a little too strange.

Slaves the ants certainly have, but they do not make slave raids; the larvae of the inferior race are carried off and hatched out. The crowning marvel, however, is that the British slave-owning ant, and he alone, makes his slave fight for him.

The Barber's Shop.

The St. James' Gazette says: In the barber's shop there lurks many microbes, we are told, and it is with the object of expelling the intruders that the city corporation has just adopted a series of regulations dealing with the sanitation of such establishments. The proposals are detailed and particular, and if properly enforced will make life impossible for any self-respecting microbe. Of course, we are all glad that such good care is to be taken of us, but we cannot help feeling that the value of the regulations lies in their application. In spite of the rules and prescriptions we shall still be in the hands of our barber. The cleanly barber will naturally welcome the formulation of precautions which he has to a great extent practiced already, the uncleanly one will shrug his shoulders and proceed on his unsavory way. There will still always be an element of risk in a visit to a hairdresser's.