

SOME SNAKE STORIES.

How a Blacksnake Hunts the Rattler's Fox
Rescuing a Ship from a Python.

"Sit down and sharpen your pencil, while I overhauled my mental shelves," remarked Mr. Thompson, curator of the zoological collection in the park, in answer to a request for some snake stories. "Before giving you some of my experiences, I want to enter a protest against the indiscriminate slaughter of our common harmless snakes, such as the blacksnake, garter snake and the like. Every farmer should protect them, for they are beneficial, instead of being harmful, as is generally supposed by a large majority of humanity. Any naturalist will tell you that the food of the blacksnake consists largely of rats, mice, &c., while that of the garter snake is principally insects, such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, &c."

"Now for some of my experiences. In my younger days I was crossing Ashby's Gap, over the Blue Ridge Virginia, in company with an uncle of the famous Black Horse Cavalry, Ashby. We were making a portion of the ascent through quite a deep cut, when our attention was attracted by a toad, which rolled instead of hopping down the side slope. Ashby pulled up the horse and said, 'There's a blacksnake after that fellow.' An instant after the snake thrust his head through the fence, and, on observing us, drew back. In the meanwhile the toad had gathered himself together, and was hopping at a lively gallop up the road. Ashby remarked, 'Now I will show you something, and sprang out of the buggy, caught the toad, which he carried a short distance and released. Returning, he turned the buggy, and drove back down the road some fifty steps, when he lighted and tied the horse. Climbing over the fence, on the opposite side of the road to that on which the snake had made his appearance, we stealthily worked our way up, until we came in sight of the point where he was first seen. Living down in the long grass and peering through the rails, we did not have to wait long before the snake reappeared."

"He looked about for a few seconds, and then descended the slope down which the toad had rolled, and followed his trail up the road. On coming to the spot where it had been picked up, he began to circle, precisely as a dog would act, having lost the scent. He gradually increased the size of his circles until he struck the spot where the toad had been put down, when he made a bee line after it. We leaped into the road and hurried after its snake-ship, who as soon as he discovered that he was being followed, turned up the slope and squirmed out of sight through the fence. Ashby said: 'I am sure you are satisfied now that the blacksnake hunts its prey by scent.' I assented, and he turned back after the buggy, while I pushed forward, picked up the frightened toad and carried it fully half a mile before releasing it."

"Many years ago I visited the Capon Springs, Hampshire county, W. Va. While there I often amused myself squirrel hunting. The landlord owned a small terrier, which had been taught to hunt and tree them, and an old-fashioned Kentucky rifle. I frequently borrowed both dog and gun, and with their assistance managed to have fair sport. One afternoon I was making my way through the undergrowth, attracted by the barking of the dog, when just in front of me I saw a blacksnake with his head well aloft, intently looking over an old rotten log. I remained still and awaited developments, and in a few seconds he darted over the log, and there was a fearful rustling among the dry leaves. On advancing so far as a clear view beyond the log, I saw that he had seized a rattlesnake just back of the log, and was killing it by constriction. Just then the dog began to bark with increased vehemence, and fearing that the squirrel would become so frightened as to commence jumping from tree to tree, I hastened away to secure my game. On my return I found the rattler dead and the blacksnake gone. The conclusion I drew from this incident was that Constrictor bas nion and Crotalus durissus were not loving neighbors."

Bicycle Books for Women.

The bicycle book is the latest, a pretty conceit which will doubtless find favor with the fair devotees of the wheel, if not those of the sterner sex. It is intended to be used as a sort of diary of one's trips and to record the speed and length of each ride. Like the address book and the calling book, which have been found really useful, this little book is hard-made. The best of papers should be used, and the cover should be of canvas, parchment or leather. A tiny painting, or pen-and-ink drawing of a wheel, with a suitable motto or apt quotation, would be just right for decoration. Two symptoms of the gradual emancipation of women being brought about by the bicycles are already observable this season. The first is the much more general abandonment of the ordinary corset. The other is the frequent acknowledgment that the use of the leggin is now a matter of discretion. Last year, even indoors in the height of summer when no sane woman would of thought of wearing a double thickness of hose, custom declared leather leggings to be indispensable. But common sense now prevails to the extent of permitting an extra covering to be dispensed with when, instead of being useful, it is plainly inconvenient.

Interesting Reading.

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