

A KING-RATTLER FIGHT.

A PLAINSMAN'S STORY OF A SNAKE DUEL TO THE DEATH.

How the Little King, which has no Poison Sac, encircled About a Rattler, Dodging Blows—a Spring and the Rattler was Choked Dead.

The king snake is a bright green little fellow no thicker than a walking stick and vanishes at one's approach with every manifestation of fear, although in many other ways he shows a courage and daring out of all proportion to his size.

The largest king snakes seldom exceed a length of three feet. The average size is between two and two and a half feet.

'It took place near Clarendon, Tex.,' said Mr. McAfee, 'at the close of one sweltering day in the hot season. I had been exercising a vicious young broncho, which managed to unseat me and break for home, leaving me some miles from town to trudge back on foot.

'As I found then the rattler was striving for a position in the very centre of the space, which he soon attained and where he coiled to strike. His tail was thrashing the air and his rattles were clacking.

'These tactics the little fellow used to harass his antagonist for fully ten minutes, and in that time the rattler struck at him no less than twenty times without so much as grazing him, the cunning little tantalizer invariably making good his escape before the fangs were half way on their death dealing mission.

'In the beginning the rattler aimed at the slender head of the king snake, but eventually, as his failures to wound the wily fellow became more and more pronounced. He began to strike at random, trusting to settle him by a chance blow.

'By and by the great expenditure of force began to tell on the rattler. Apparently appreciating the fact and the necessity for recuperation, he ceased to follow his tormentor and withdrew to his first position within the centre of the space.

'Two more minutes wrought a decided change. The little fellow again decreased the circle, humped himself, and began to 'scorch' like a professional bicycle rider.

'Nearer and nearer whizzed the little green monarch, now going at express train speed, the circle he described was marked by an unbroken band of green against the blackened stubble of the burnt grass.

'How long the little fellow continued to fly around the big rattler at this wonderful pace I cannot say. Possibly not more than a minute or two, yet it seemed to me, and no doubt the rattler was likewise so impressed, that he was at it for half an hour.

'I took out my watch and counted the minutes. Before five had expired the big rattler had ceased to move. Five minutes more and I was satisfied that he was dead, and so moved up to get a closer view.

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his own volition, but as he still clung to the dead rattler I stooped down, and began to unwind him. This he allowed me to do without a resisting struggle, and even after I had stretched him on the ground to take his measure he made no effort to get away.

'This little champion measured about two feet ten inches. The rattler, which I carried to Clarendon, was within two inches of six feet and had fourteen rattles and a button. In weight he was probably nine times superior to his slayer.

'When the little king snake had revied, which did not occur until a good quarter of an hour had passed, he crawled slowly away and vanished in the grass without so much as a backward glance at the corpse of his victim.

NOT TOO OLD TO WHEEL.

Mrs. Bradish Found That Her Husband Had been Influenced.

'It isn't much use for anybody to go down to Niece Annie and expect to hear talk of anything but 'wheels', as they call them," said Mrs. Bradish in an aggrieved tone, as she entered the sitting-room where her husband sat close to the franklin stove.

'That's so; that's the very thing I've been saying to you for a long time," said Mr. Bradish, with a nod, as he moved along to share the warmth with the partner of his joys.

'When I asked Ned if he'd read about that dreadful railroad accident, he said, 'Yes, auntie, I did. There's no use. I believe I'd rather trust to my wheel than a railroad corporation any day, no matter how long or rough the journey is.

'Then I asked Annie if she'd heard about Mary Ellen's having slow fever, and she said, 'Yes, and she never would have had it if Uncle Will had bought her a wheel last summer when we had ours.

'How in the world you can stand it to go down there so often as you do, James, is beyond me," continued Mrs. Bradish, with energy, as she turned towards her husband.

Suddenly a strange idea dawned upon her. James Bradish, she demanded, 'you don't mean to tell me they've talked you into—that you've any thoughts of—do you realize how old you are?'

'I'm only sixty-nine, Martha,' returned her husband, with a mixture of dignity and triumph, while a youthful gleam lighted his faded eyes.

'My oldest daughter,' said Mr. Glimmerton, 'is forever saying funny things. I don't mean the funniest things in the world, but just cheerful, breezy, bright things, that make us laugh.

A Little Wild Apple-Tree.

There's a little wild apple-tree out in the pasture, Crooked, and stunted, and queer in its shape, and it waves its long arms as the summer winds sweep it.

I have never found fruit on its gnarled, twisted branches; Green moss clothes its trunk from its boughs to its feet; But its blossoms each spring with the best of the orchard, And oh, but its delicate blossoms are sweet!

WISE OLD CROWS.

How They Solved the Clam-Opening Problem and Administered Justice.

Few pastimes are more interesting and instructive to a person living in the country than observation of the habits and peculiarities of the common birds and animals which he sees.

Of all the birds that I have watched I think none has repaid me more richly than that amusing old reprobate, the crow. His sagacity is notorious, and from some things that I have myself observed it would almost seem as if he must be endowed with something nearly akin to reason.

On one occasion, while I was living in New Jersey, near Long Branch, I was one day attracted by the loud and excited cawing of a number of crows down on the shore of the Navesink River, which ran only a few yards from my door.

These clams, of which crows are very fond, are oblong in shape, about four or five inches long and two wide, with a shell not much thicker than a mussel, but still too hard for a crow to break with its beak.

For half an hour or more the crows argued noisily; then the dispute subsided, and it was evident that they had arrived at some decision which they were about to put to the test.

That it proved the soundness of their reasoning was evident, for each crow at once possessed himself of a clam, flew up into the air with it, let it drop on the stones to break its shell, and then ate its contents with great apparent satisfaction.

At another time I saw something which convinced me that they have some sort of government among themselves, and that an infringement of their laws is followed by punishment. This happened in Virginia, which, by the way, is a perfect paradise for crows, with its immense corn and peanut fields.

They were very quiet, which is unusual where many of them are together, and it was evident that they had met for a purpose. Presently one flew up in the air some little distance, appeared to be looking for something, and then returned.

Then began a great noise. Each crow seemed to be trying to outtalk every other. This continued for about ten minutes, I should think, when, with one accord, they pitched on the unfortunate prisoner and pecked him to death, after which they dispersed as quietly as they had come.

The Midnight Hint.

'Yes,' remarked young Borem, 'it is undoubtedly true that every dog has his day.'

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Enough and More. Tourist—Is there much corn raised in Kentucky? Native—Oh, yes; lots of it.

A Dry Dock. 'George, why do you call the Rev. Dr. Whitehead by such a coarse and familiar title?'

Total Darkness Not Wanted. Mrs. Burleigh—How is it that your daughter never seems to have any steady company? Dear me! I wish it was that way with my Beatrice.

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World Exercise his Talent. Burglar Bill (to his new cellmate)—So you're a musician, are ye, an' got sent here fer stealin' a piasny? Well, ye won't do much musical practisin' in his place, I'll bet.

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