

BLIND SNAKE OF SAN FELIPE

"THROW him into the rear cell," commanded the officer of the ragged, villainous patrol that had caught me. It was in the province of Oaxaca, well back among the mountains and before Mexico was as peaceful and quiet as it is now.

The men who had roped me off my horse and taken me prisoner were ostensibly military; but in reality they were bandits. They pretended that my passports were irregular. What they were really after was to take away my equipment and what money I had and then keep me in a cell till I should be glad enough to let them keep all my property in return for liberty.

The cell was a miserable little den in a tumble-down adobe house. Had I been free to move about I could have broken out in a very short time. But my captors had reckoned on that. They had tied my arms and also my legs so that I was forced to remain in a sitting position. Every time I arose it was only to fall down again after taking a few tottering steps. So I soon thought better of it, and finally I lay down to sleep.

What awakened me I do not know. It may have been the noise or it may have been instinct. At any rate, I awoke with the strong impression that I was not alone in the cell. I was lying on my side and the sunlight was shining on the floor just beyond my face. My eyes naturally wandered there first and my heart jumped hard at what they saw. Not five feet away from my head lay a huge fat rattlesnake, bloated and nauseating.

I jerked my head instinctively, and at the motion the snake moved. Its evil wrinkled body writhed and swelled, and its horrible head arose and turned in my direction. Then I saw that the thing was blind.

It had shed its skin recently and the thin white membrane that forms over the eyes of these serpents at such times had not yet come away.



I SHOUTED LUSTILY FOR HELP.

And when I fell I fell in such a way that I nearly landed on top of the serpent. I did not try to rise again. I got to my knees, and thus, on elbows and knees, I scrambled away from the blind snake as swiftly as I could. I could not go far, for the cell was not more than ten feet long and less than seven feet deep. In hustling away in my clumsy position I kicked the rattler with my heavy riding boot, and this infuriated the

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blat. With head erect, tongue poised in and out busily, and rattles whirling, it glided after me. If it had not been blind, I would not have been far too small for me to evade the snake had it been able to see, even if I had been free to move. As it was, I barely managed to escape being struck time and time again, for, blind though the rattler was, its other senses were keen enough and it could move like lightning whereas I, with my mumbered, fettered limbs, could only crawl clumsily.

I am not ashamed to say that I shouted lustily for help. At last the face of one of the bandit patrol peered through the small window.

To my horror, instead of moving to give me aid he looked down on me calmly and then said with a grin: "Senior is doing very well. But the senior will get tired soon, and—then—With these words he rolled a cigarette and disappeared.

Truly I was getting tired—terribly tired. And I knew that before long I would be unable to scramble out of the way quickly enough, and in that moment the terrible serpent would strike. I happened to be in a corner at last and the snake was gliding diagonally across the cell toward me. I lay quite still for a moment to get as much strength as possible before beginning the awful race again. Just then something rustled in the rubbish in a corner and out popped a rat.

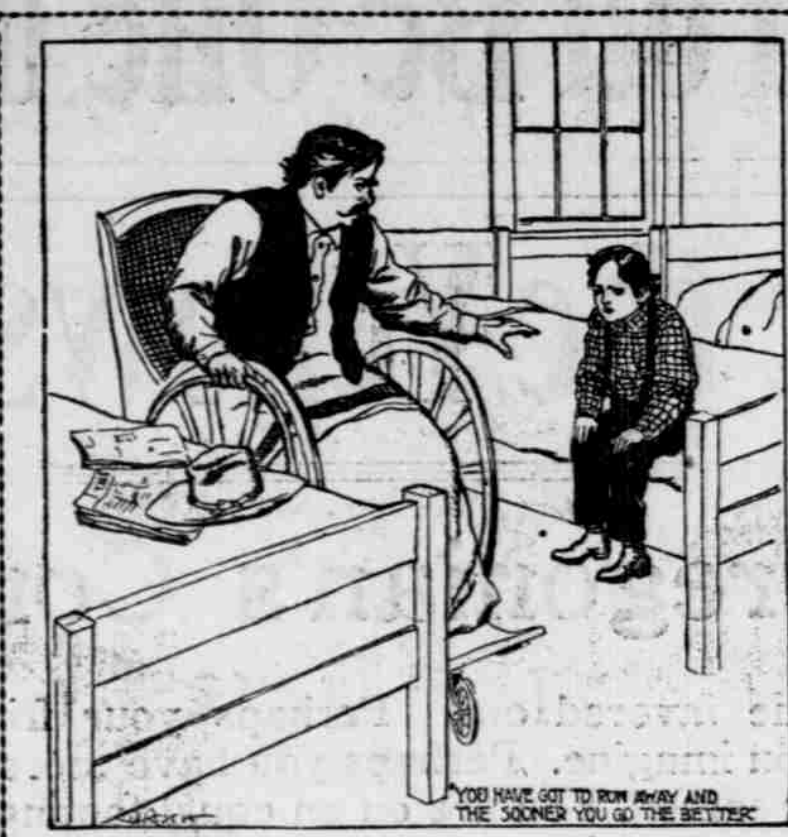
Quick as I could, I rolled over the place where it had entered in the hope that the frightened thing might face around the cell looking for exit and thus furnish a victim to the angry snake as well as I. So it happened. When the rat found its hole blocked it darted around in sudden panic. It was doing, it touched the snake at its head, and the snake, true rat rage, sprang at the blind snake and fastened its sharp teeth in the snake's head, striking one of the left into an eye. The snake whirled around, and a hissing cyclone, but the rat held tight and in a few minutes the two lay quite still, both dying.

As for me, I fell flat on the floor when the danger was over and went into a stupor from which I did not awake till a light shone into my face and kind hands untied me.

A force of real government regulars had come in, under the command of a man whom I had met in Mexico City, and he had recognized my horse in the possession of one of my captors, with the result that he was found me.

But it took a week of rest to help me recover from those few hours in a Oaxaca cell. CAPTAIN A. B. HANSEY.

TRIALS OF POORHOUSE JOE



CHAPTER III. JOE sat down on the bed beside the legless man of the poorhouse, and after a minute Mr. Phillips said: "It is a shame and a disgrace to the people the way things are run here. I have been here two years, and know all about it. If the newspapers were told how we are fed and how we are abused there would be the biggest kind of row and the superintendent and his wife would have to go. Things might be better for a time, but only for a time. Then they would drift back to what they are now. We are not here because we are too lazy to work, but because of accident or misfortune. All people should pity us, but as a matter of fact no one does. We are called paupers, and people sneer instead of pity."

Joe's tears began to fall again, and the man laid a kindly hand on his shoulder and continued: "Before I lost my legs I was a brick-layer and earned \$4 per day. Now I must pass the rest of my days as a pauper. When I think of it I almost go wild, but what can I do? A man without legs cannot work at a trade. I can braid hats and sit and knit, but I could not make enough money to support myself if I left this poorhouse for good."

here some evening after supper and walk all night, and next morning must see you 20 miles away." "But the superintendent said that if I ran away he'd follow and catch me."

"He will certainly hunt for you, but he won't go any great distance, and he won't keep it up long. When once you start don't stop until you have gone at least 20 miles, where you are asked your name, and, of course, you will be, don't give it as Joe Shaw. Take some other name. Don't tell the name of the town you came from. Never let on that you have been in the poorhouse. If any one asks if you have run away tell 'em yes. Tell 'em you had to, which will be telling the truth."

"I don't want to stay here, and yet I'm afraid to go," said Joe, after thinking things over.

"Don't talk that way, boy," replied the man. "You are old enough to take care of yourself. I was earning my own living when I was only 11 years old. If you are a good, honest boy and do your best you will find people to help you. If you stay here that man Tompkins and the superintendent are going to make it just as hard for you as they can. If they bind you out to some farmer after awhile he will misuse you simply because he took you from the poorhouse and knows that you have no friends. You have got to run away, and the sooner you go the better."

"But I have no money, and how will I get anything to eat? Where will I sleep?" "Don't worry about that, my boy. In the first place, if you stop at any farmhouse and offer to do chores for a cold bite you will get it. It is summer, and it won't hurt you a bit to sleep under a tree or beside a haystack. You may possibly find some money too, and not always as honest as I should have been. Yes, I have been pretty tough, but I can feel for you and give you good advice just the same. You want to get right out of here and get away as you can, and I am willing to help you in any way. If I had my legs back I'd walk into town tomorrow and hunt up those selectmen and talk to them in a way to make their ears burn. Tomorrow evening you go. Now tumble into bed and get all the sleep you can. Tomorrow night you will be walking away from here as fast as you can, and I shall be lying here and hoping you will meet with the kindest sort of people and the best of luck." (To Be Continued.)

The Doll Changeling. Illustration of a woman and a child. Text: THE little sisters, Molly and Peggy, were found 6 years of age. Once upon a time they owned dolls of which they were particularly fond.

London Beggars. Exchange. It is calculated that in London alone about 600 persons regularly make a living by begging; that the average income for each amounts to \$1.50 a week, or together over \$1,500,000 a year. Last year about 200 persons were arrested for begging in the streets of London, and many of them were possessed of considerable sums of money and even of bankbooks, showing handsome deposits.

JEAN'S AND ISOBEL'S FROLIC

AND they're going to be away over Sunday," said Isobel. "And I'm going to ask your mother if you couldn't stay with me, please, and we can have the whole house to ourselves and do anything we want and—did you ever hear of such a lark?"

Charmed with their success, Isobel and Jean arrayed themselves in sweeping tea gowns and went up to Isobel's room. There they pretended to be ladies in their beauty. They read aloud and ate chocolate, which Mr. Strickland had left for them.

THE little sisters, Molly and Peggy, were found 6 years of age. Once upon a time they owned dolls of which they were particularly fond. A big boy-cousin came from another town to stay with them, and one day he would insist on playing that he was a brigand, and he took the dolls prisoner, in spite of their young mistresses. He tied them back to back to the top of a pole that stood in the garden. And he laughed at the vain attempts the little girls made to reach them.

Peter's Wild Sleep Guests. Illustration of a bear and a dog. Text: One night the counterpane came. A jungle filled with fearful game. With savage beasts whose awful screams awoke poor Peter from his dreams.

The Art of Thimble-Making. Intricate Processes Are Involved in Fashioning the Gold. THE gold from which thimbles are made is bought at a United States mint in the form of snug little ingots, brick-shaped and 2 1/2 inches long and an inch and a quarter wide and an inch thick. Each one contains of pure gold 24 carats fine, metal of the value of \$50.

Queer Ways of the Man-Ape. RECENTLY I had the pleasure of making a close and long study of a young gorilla, which is in the zoological gardens of Leipzig. This is a genuine gorilla—not a chimpanzee, or other sort of man-ape, like most of the animals that are called "gorillas" in shows.

Illustration of a man and a gorilla. Text: "THIS RIGHT WAS NEVER CAUSED BY PILE."

AN A-MEWS-ING TALE. Illustration of a man and a child. Text: The thimble in the lathe is turning with 350 revolutions a minute and it seems as if the application to its surface of any sort of tool with protuberances on it must leave there only a jagged and mixed-up lot of surfaces that serve to support the end knurle, the thimble-maker makes an indentation in the center of the top of the thimble and then he proceeds rapidly and with perfect certainty with the end knurle to describe around that center concentric rings of indentations, with the indentations all perfectly made and the rings all perfectly spaced from the center to the circumference of the top.