

A DEADLY REPTILE

The Fer-de-lance the Most Venomous of All Serpents.

ITS STING A DEATH WARRANT

Little Chance For a Victim of the Fangs of This Terror of the Island of Martinique—The Cat and the Mongoose Its Most Formidable Enemies.

Every one is perfectly well aware that there exists a large number of venomous serpents—we have many of them right here in the United States; the rattler, for example—but probably no other spot in the known world has such a death dealing reptile as has the French island of Martinique, nesting in the limpid blue waters of the Caribbean sea. It is the fer-de-lance, scientifically known as Trigonocapillus lanceolatus, that can beyond the shadow of a doubt lay claim to being the most deadly serpent of the earth. Its sting means almost certain death.

There are eight distinct varieties, the most common being a dark gray and black speckled, which coloring enables it to conceal itself easily among roots and stumps of trees. Another variety is a clear, bright yellow, and when hidden in the freshly cut cane it can hardly be distinguished from the stalks. It may also be a dark yellow or coal black with a yellow belly.

It is not a large snake, rarely exceeding five feet in length and in circumference approximately the size of a child's arm. To repeat, the sting means almost certain death, and should not the service of a physician, or "panseur," as the natives call him, be obtained within a very short time the venom does its deadly work—the flesh grows cold, softens, becomes pulpy, changes in color, quickly begins to rot, and a great chilliness creeps through the blood. This lasts only a few minutes—possibly half an hour—then death.

If the victim is fortunate enough to get a physician upon the scene post-haste and no artery or vein has been pierced there is hope—just a faint hope—but even if life is saved the danger is not entirely removed, for in many cases necrosis of the tissues follows. The flesh corrupts and falls from the bones, and the body molder as does a tree.

There is, however, a heroic method of treatment often brought into use by the Martiniquans. It is the immediate amputation of the leg or arm if the sting happens to be in either. Even this has to be done at once and before the venom circulates through the system. There are to be seen today upon the island many natives with limbs missing, and in the majority of cases it is the result of having the machete, or cane knife, applied after an experience with a fer-de-lance.

The fer-de-lance is a fighter—and no mistake about it—aggressive and pugnacious, and domestic animals, with the cat as the one exception, stand a very poor show in a battle. Pussy, in about nine cases out of ten, will come out of the scrap with colors flying because of the fact that it is apparently quite as quick in movement and at the same time uses what may be termed ring generalship.

There is but one animal other than the cat that successfully wages war upon the fer-de-lance. It is the mongoose (Ichneumon), imported from India a number of years ago for the sole purpose of getting rid of the snakes. Of the weasel family and looking very much like it, this little animal is absolutely fearless so far as snakes are concerned and will just as readily tackle one five feet in length as one a foot long. From the mongoose the fer-de-lance will flee, but if cornered will put up a great fight, using every trick at its command—a useless sort of contest, however, for within a short time it will be stretched out lifeless.

A battle between these two natural enemies is well worth witnessing. It is never a "limited" fight, but to a finish always, and probably the snakes by this time have come to understand that when they enter such a combat it is with the odds greatly against them.

The mongoose is quite as clever a ring general as the cat and uses that gift to advantage. Strategy more than strength is its asset.

When they meet, and if the snake sees no avenue of escape, it prepares for battle, as does the mongoose, but in a more leisurely manner. It takes about one minute for them to get fully prepared. There is no shaking hands, so to speak, as by prizefighters.

The mongoose circles about the reptile, always at a safe distance and "drawing fire," inviting it by moving closer and closer to dart out its head and then quickly jumping out of harm's way. It torments in every possible manner, causing the snake to change position time and time again, tiring it by forcing a strike again and again without ever reaching the objective point. At last, seeing its opponent at some particular disadvantage, the mongoose springs forward quick as a bolt of lightning, catches it firmly with the teeth behind the triangular head—a shake, possibly two, no more—and in less time than it takes to tell the fer-de-lance is dead, its vertebrae severed.—New York Times.

The gods have attached almost as many misfortunes to liberty as to serfdom.—Montesquieu.

Raw Musk.
Musk in the raw looks a good deal like axle grease and smells worse. The popular notion that the musk of commerce is obtained from the muskrat is a mistake. There is obtained a somewhat similar perfume from the muskrat, but most of the supply comes from the musk deer, a creature that is carefully reared in India for the sake of the secretion. The secretion is shipped in the crude state and is used not only in the manufacture of the liquid perfume sold as musk, but also in very small quantities to give strength and staying power to many perfumes made from the essential oils of flowers. Curiously enough, the blossoms of two native plants have a noticeably musky odor. One is the small yellow blossom of a creeping vine known as the musk plant. Its odor is marked and is counterfeited in the commercial perfume called musk. The other is the blood-root. The pure white blossom of that early spring plant has a distinct though delicate musky odor. A bean known as the musk bean is a cheap substitute for animal musk.

Fine Language.
In the school year of 1896-7, in the town of Topsfield, Mass., there was at least one committeeman whose command of language was unusual. This is shown by the annual report of the school committee for that season, part of which is copied here:
"The primary center school was instructed by Miss —. Under the guidance of this master hand in genuine philosophic simplicity the school presented the same phase of unvarying successful advancement as in former years, from the dissonant mouthings of half fledged juvenile articulation, through the winding passages of syllabicism to the Mount Hope of spell-rending, the same grateful interspersal of gymnastic, vocal, recessive and studious enactment rendering every exercise equally a pastime and romancing the reality of the first efforts in dry study."—Youth's Companion.

An Ancient Die.
In the museum at Athens is shown what is probably the only genuine antique die used for cologne that is now extant. It was found in Egypt in 1904 and consists of bronze, engraved with the owl that was stamped on Athenian tetradrachma pieces, which contained about as much silver as three quarter dollars. The die is of scientific interest on account of the evidence it gives of the skill of the ancients three or four hundred years before Christ in metallurgy. It contains about 22 1/2 per cent of tin and nearly 70 per cent of copper. It is extremely hard, but at the same time possesses a certain malleability, due to the great purity of the copper and tin, which were carefully freed from all traces of lead and zinc to preserve the hardness and from arsenic and antimony to avoid brittleness.—Harper's Weekly.

Making a Locomotive.
A young lady once visited the Baldwin Locomotive works and then told how a locomotive is made.
"You pour," she said, "a lot of sand into a lot of boxes, and you throw old stove lids and things into a furnace, and then you empty the molten stream into a hole in the sand, and everybody yells and swears. Then you pour it out and let it cool and pound it, and then you put it in a thing that bores holes in it. Then you screw it together and paint it and put steam in it, and it goes splendidly, and they take it to a drafting room and make a blue print of it. But one thing I forgot—they have to make a boiler. One man gets inside and one outside, and they pound frightfully, and then they tie it to the other things, and you ought to see it go!"

Napoleon's Peepholes.
A curious Napoleonic relic still preserved in St. Helena is a pair of shutters, each with a peephole. St. Helena was strongly garrisoned in Napoleon's time for divers reasons, and the British soldiers exercised on Deadwood plain, close to Longwood.
Napoleon liked to look at them, but did not like them to look at him; hence those two shutters, one with a hole on a level with his eye while standing and the other with a hole adapted to his vision while seated.

Hard to Deny.
As Miss Hypatia Squarcees reached the culminating point of her lecture on "Woman's Rights and How to Wield Them" she threw back her head and stood in an attitude of defiance.
"Talk of man!" she cried. "What has man ever done for woman?"
"He's furnished the model she's trying her best to imitate!" boomed a manly voice from the rear of the hall. And then a palpitating silence reigned for nearly a minute.

Found a Rhyme.
A bold poet once tried to overcome the difficulty of finding a rhyme for carpet by the following: "Sweet maid of the inn, 'tis surely no sin to toast such a beautiful bar pet; believe me, my dear, your feet would appear at home on a nobleman's carpet!"—London Mail.

A Fine Hunt.
"Back from your fishing trip, I see."
"Yep."
"Catch anything noteworthy?"
"Caught four acres one night."—Washington Herald.

The Cook Ignored.
The prodigal son's father got a lot of applause for killing the fatted calf, but his mother didn't get a line of praise for cooking it.—Galveston News.

Livery Stable Proprietor—I'm afraid we shall have to cast him, Murphy. He's about worn out.
Murphy—I was not be sayin' that. Barrin's the weakness he has in the legs an' that touch of catarrh, forbye a thiridin' suggestion of the stingers, 'tis a grand horse he'd be for the funeral if 'twere not for the color of 'im.—Bystander.

Little Boopieep
Has lost her sleep.
What ails her's a serious question.
She thinks it is love
And the anomaly thereof,
Whereas it is indigestion. —Judge.

"I have a chance to buy a lot of masquerade costumes cheap."
"But we can't sell masquerade costumes for street wear."
"Oh, yes, we can. Many people still have quiet tastes."—Washington Herald.

[A daily paper is responsible for the statement that the gum on English stamps is so pure that, far from causing harm, licking them is actually beneficial.]

Our William was as frail a child
As ever, ever grew.
A goose, however meek and mild,
He barely dared to boo.
But still we hoped the storm and stress
Of business life would serve
To cure his chronic weediness,
His total lack of nerve.
An office urchin's duties first
Ensnared his prentice skill,
And soon upon our view there burst
A transmuted Bill.
Such benefits are his who damps
The gum the state employs.
In May he started licking stamps;
In June, the bigger boys. —Punch.

"You wish to divorce your husband? You can't agree? In what way does your incompatibility of temperament manifest itself?"
"Oh, I wish to get divorced and he doesn't!"—Le Rire.

The timid youth who lacks the sand
May see his idols crumble.
For he who never takes a stand
Will never take a tumble. —Philadelphia Ledger.

The Sympathetic Pal—Wotcher, Bill! You looks bad. Been laid up?
Bill—Yus, sort of. 'Aven't been outer doors for free munts.
The Sympathetic Pal—Wot was the matter wiv yer?
Bill—Nuffin', only the judge wouldn't believe it.—Sketch.

She used to shed a gracious light
Along the way he went—
At least he used to tell her so,
And what he said he meant.
Today he sits back all alone.
A bitter brew he sips.
She sheds no light upon him now,
But has him in eclipse. —Chicago Record-Herald.

"Old 'ard, Johnny," cried one hobby to another during the suffragette raid on the house of parliament when the order came to grab partners. "Let me get that one—er with the red 'at."
"Right, my son. But you've got a job. She looks a game 'un."
"Well, oughtn't I to know? She's my missus!"—Sporting Times.

I'm sort of stuck on "recherche."
It is a noble word and great.
You must pronounce it "re-ah-shay"
And push down on the ultimate. —Houston Post.

And I admire "decollete"—
When the neck is fair and plump.
You must of course say "da-ka-to-tay"
And give the "tay" a thump. —Scranton Tribune-Republican.

And I like "lingerie" quite well.
It is quite fine to see.
But to pronounce it passing well
Don't "linger" on the "ree." —Boston Herald.

Huh! Driving an automobile, eh? Young man, when I started in life I had to walk.
The Young Chap—You were smarter than most, sir. When I first started life I couldn't walk.—New York Journal.

There are two sides to an argument.
Alas, attack!
Some folks also would like to present
A front and back. —St. Paul Pioneer Press.

The Artist—I saw you gazing at my painting entitled "Rebecca at the Well" for over twenty minutes. Were you admiring the beauty of the subject?
Learned Professor—Eh! No, my friend, I was just thinking what an insanitary age these people must have lived in to drink from a cracked jar and a moss grown well.—Pearson's.

If your neighbors turn you down
Keep a-smiling.
If your mouth tastes dark red brown
Keep a-smiling.
If your friends keep in their blindness,
Back the milk of human kindness.
There is other milk in town—
Keep a cow! —Cleveland Leader.

John Drew tells of a young man, formerly an actor, who married a widow, by whom he was in many ways reformed. Mr. Drew offered him a cigar one day, which he declined, saying, "My wife gave up her weeds for me, and I have given up mine for her."—North Carolina Star.

Full many a gem of bluest glass or green
The big, impenetrable safes of jewelers
Were full many a man is born to cheat unseen
And blow his gleanings on some actress fair. —Judge.

"What has become of your zoological garden?"
"Well, we thought meat was too valuable to have it loafing around in cages to look at."—Meggendorfer Blatter.

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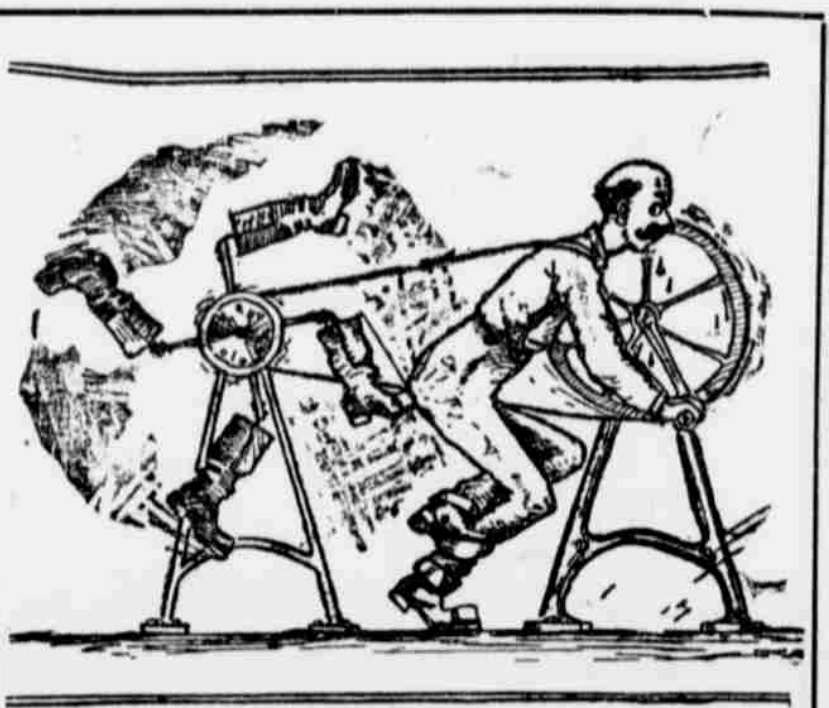
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