

BANDON RECORDED THE MEXICAN LIZARD

DELICIOUS EATING, HIS FLESH LIKE THAT OF CHICKEN.

A Tale of the Curious Tails of the Iguana—The Way This Peculiar Creature Can Grow a New Appendage in Place of One Lost or Stolen.

My tale is of the tail of a lizard. We had steamed and landed many hundreds of miles and at the end of civilization had started over a steep and narrow trail with horses and pack mules, finally finding ourselves encamped in a deep canyon or barranca in west central Mexico.

Iguanas, great, black lizards, three feet or more in length, were about in the deep canyon of the cliff, coming out early in the morning to sun themselves and bobbing up and down as an owl ducks his head to get a better look at us as our Mexican cook started the fire or stirred about the camp. We found them delicious eating. Though the Mexican demurred at first, prejudice was soon cast aside. Their limbs might be black and almost black with out, but within all was sweet, white meat, like that of chickens and frogs' legs.

The iguanas, which had their burrows in the ground, would climb up each morning, up to the topmost limbs of some trees, and there bask in the sun. They had a most startling way of descending, a headlong dive to the underbrush or into the water. As twilight fell the sight of these great black apparitions sprawling earthward was most remarkable. If one of them had ever struck us in its descent our interest in this strange habit would suddenly have become lessened. Our usual method of procuring these giant lizards for our larder was to shoot them high above us, when they would tumble headlong to our feet. Sometimes we could approach close to one when it was fast asleep in the scorching heat of midday. Once I seized a big fellow by the tail. I was sorry a moment later, but as I did not want to be beaten by a lizard I held stonily on. Never before had I taken hold of such a steel spring. The creature curled and twisted and snapped its body about, the sharp scales having anything but a pleasant feeling on the palm of my hand. Suddenly something gave way, and I fell on my back, while the iguana shot off in the opposite direction into a deep hollow among the rocks. When I regained my feet I found some nine inches of tail in my hand, almost one-third of the entire animal.

This is not an uncommon occurrence among lizards, and the ability to part with so considerable a portion of their anatomy insures many an escape from what would otherwise be inevitable death. Almost all animals with backbones have a thick, pliable cushion of cartilage between each of the bones in their spinal column, which permits them to bend and twist it with freedom. The backbone of the iguana is at first all cartilage, and when the hard cells of the bone begin to be deposited a deep, narrow wedge or crack is left in each tail bone. This is filled with soft cartilage, so these bones are greatly weakened near their centers. Instead of an accidental defect this is an all wise provision of nature, foreseeing that hawks, vultures, buzzards and other enemies may some day be too quick for the reptile and will seize its tail before it can escape.

When this happens, as in my case, the strain of the struggling creature's body is too great for the weak spots in its tail bones, and one of these gives way, with the result above narrated. The muscles, too, are arranged to all this phenomenon. They are short and thick and conceal instead of running the whole length of the tail, and being only dovetailed together, they readily give way; then a few drops of blood escape; then the stump heals over, and before long a new tail begins to shoot out.

This, of course, contains no bones, but instead a kind of jointed rod of cartilage exactly like the ancestral one which was present in the embryo iguana. Stranger still, the scales on this new tail are unlike those on the rest of the creature's body and actually may be like those of some bygone ancestor. In the smaller lizards, called geckos, this seems always to be the case. When I closely examined the tail which the iguana had left in my hands I saw that it was one of these "fraud" tails and had long ago supplanted the original appendage, with which some other enemy, doubtless a feathered one, had absconded. Two new vertebrae or tail bones had come off with the base of my piece.

But the owner cares nothing for the number or character of his new tails. They serve him well, and he is content. It is a curious fact that the tail making machinery in his backbone is so active that sometimes a double or even a triple tail will push out at the stump, and when the original tail is even only slightly injured at one side a tiny tail will often sprout out where it has no right to be.—C. William Beebe in New York Tribune.

POLLY LARKIN

Don't let the sun go down and leave you embittered and unforgiving toward those you love.

Don't let the sun go down and leave you embittered and unforgiving toward those you love. You may comfort your aching heart and still the little voice of conscience that whispers, "don't delay," by making up your mind that when morning comes you will make atonement for the harsh words and sarcastic remarks that have wounded the sensitive heart far deeper than you will ever know, but when morning comes, you delay a little longer, or possibly by that time you feel that you are the abused party and wait for some advance on the part of those who, in your own heart, you know you have wronged and that you must look for the transgressor at home, you put off the matter until you are ashamed to acknowledge your error; but that is not the end of the matter by any means, for this little thorn will continue to rankle, and there will come a day when you would give a great deal to blot it from your memory. It cannot be—it is there to abide as long as consciousness remains—that is your punishment. There is another reason why you should never put off a duty of this kind, for how do you know but what before another day rolls round, the death angel may have entered your home and placed the seal of silence on the lips that you would give words then to hear them murmur, "I forgive you." Don't delay, have a clear conscience when you lay your head on your pillow at night. Don't be afraid to say all the kind and loving things you can to those who are near and dear to you. If you have their praises to sing, don't wait until the pearl has been taken from the casket and all the kind and loving thoughts fall on deaf ears, and the love-light of appreciation has gone out of their eyes. We are here to-day, but we have no guarantee that we will be here to-morrow. Then don't postpone saying the kind and encouraging words, and doing the gracious thoughtful little acts that make life worth living. Some people will doubtless say you are too gushing and accuse you of flattering people you are thrown with, and yet they are the very parties who withhold all the commendations when it would be worth while to give them and sing their praises loudest over a coffin lid, and tell of the silent sleeper's many lovable traits and good qualities. If anyone has any kind and encouraging thoughts and words for me, I want them now to help lighten my pathway. A handful of violets with the sweet incense of love rising from them is better now than many floral designs with the words "rest" and "gone home," etc., when death has rung down the curtain.

I heard a lady say the other day: "I have kept a strict account of all the tramps I have fed within the last few years, and it foots up in the neighborhood of a thousand. I live in a district where they are constantly passing and repassing, and they have me spotted, for I never turn one of them away hungry. I don't give them money, for that I haven't to give, even if I desired to, but they are never refused a cup of coffee and something to eat. I suppose I am foolish and that I am many times sadly duped and imposed upon; but I would rather be mistaken many times over than to let one deserving man go hungry. My neighbors don't like to have me feed the tramps for they claim that it makes it hard for them, for it brings such rafts of tramps through this part of the country. There is one thing I can say for the tramping fraternity, however, they have never been insulting and they have never lost anything by their depredations, while my neighbors, who make a practice of never giving anything to old or young, have lost many articles by their raids. No matter how feeble they are, sick or well, they know better than to ask for a cup of coffee and something to eat at her door. I have never lost a chicken or a turkey and they roost far enough from the house for them to be carried off by the dozen, and we would be none the wiser; my neighbors sometimes have nightly raids made upon their poultry yards. They bought a valuable watchdog and he had a dose of poison administered, and the chickens, ducks and turkeys disappeared like magic. We don't lock our doors at night and never feel the least particle afraid. They put everything under lock and key, but their doors are living in nightly and daily terror for fear of a forbidden guest.

"I will tell you why I have such a sympathy for tramps, and you will not wonder when that I can never turn a deaf ear to their demand for something to eat. We had a son, one of the best boys that ever lived, and the pride of our hearts. When he was about eighteen years of age he went into a decline, and the doctors ordered him out into the open air and advised him to tramp from place to place, living out of doors and never sleeping under a roof if he could avoid it. He expected to find something to do in the towns he would pass through to aid him in money matters. We were not in the comfortable circumstances in those days that we are now, and could not give him the money, although that was one of the laws the doctors laid down, he must not be provided with money for that night mean luxuries, all of which they wanted to deprive him of. Letters encouraging and cheerful came to us at first and we began to build our hopes on Jimmie coming home strong and well and unburdened from his out-door experience. Then they stopped and for

nearly a year we received no word. What a suspense and anxiety we lived through from day to day. Our letters came back to us unopened. We tried in vain to trace our boy and even advertised for news of him, but he had simply dropped out of sight. One night we had retired a little earlier than usual when we were awakened by a knock at the door, and my husband went down stairs to investigate. I heard him faintly taking somebody through the house and I called to see what was the matter. "It's just a tramp, mother. He was hungry and cold and"—"I'll be right down and make him a cup of coffee. Ask him if he knows anything about our Jim." Just then I caught the sound of his voice. It was weak and tremulous, but it was enough for me. I just simply flew down the stairs. "Jimmie, my boy, Jimmie!" and the next moment I was holding the emaciated figure in thin and tattered clothes in my arms. How we laughed and cried over him by turns, and put him to bed in his own cosy room, that was just as he left it months before. He had had a terrible experience. He had been shanghaied and carried off on a foreign vessel, and they had abused him because he was not strong enough to do the work required of him. He deserted the first opportunity and had beaten his way back to his old home, begging for the little to keep him alive until he could reach us. Oh, what a sad experience my boy had! One request he made over and over again, was that I would never refuse a tramp something to eat. "I have been on the verge of starving many times, mother, and I have gone up to the door of a house where I knew they had plenty and to spare, and where the odor from the kitchen of the dinner or breakfast cooking made me all the more ravenous, only to have the door slammed in my face with some insulting remark. One woman threw a pail of water over me. I never thought to have seen the day when I would curse a woman, but I did more than once, and my conscience didn't hurt me one bit afterwards, for they were friends in disguise. You will feed lots of them who are unworthy, mother, but better give to nine undeserving rather than let the tenth suffer. Feed them all—it won't hurt us one bit." I promised, and I have faithfully fulfilled the promise made to my dying boy. He only lived six weeks after he got home."

Open Secrets of Health.
What is the secret of health and old age? Mr. Chamberlain, as chancellor of the University of Birmingham, has just been assuring his medical students that they may take fees, smoke at work and at play and drink with impunity. Students, as a rule, need such assurances, but the experience of four other aged and eminent politicians, published on the same day, somewhat discounts Mr. Chamberlain's belief in fees, smoking and drinking.
Lord Avebury in the Young Man from the Highbury regimen and counsels the open air, with little to eat or drink. Mr. Frederick Harrison says, "Touch not tobacco, spirits nor any unclean thing," and rise from every meal with an appetite. Sir Alcegon West would seem to tolerate tobacco in moderation, but "not on an empty stomach." Mr. Justin McCarthy lays the emphasis on steady and regular work, with plenty of open air and physical exercise. Here again Mr. Chamberlain, "Touch not tobacco, spirits nor any unclean thing," and rise from every meal with an appetite. Sir Alcegon West would seem to tolerate tobacco in moderation, but "not on an empty stomach." Mr. Justin McCarthy lays the emphasis on steady and regular work, with plenty of open air and physical exercise. Here again Mr. Chamberlain, "Touch not tobacco, spirits nor any unclean thing," and rise from every meal with an appetite. Sir Alcegon West would seem to tolerate tobacco in moderation, but "not on an empty stomach." 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