



On a Shelf Opposite Me Sat a Dinosaur.

Odd Agriculture

By James J. Montague

I HAD almost forgotten Emil Lustengarten. Schoolmates, one had not seen or heard from for thirty years, are likely to be like that. He was a pleasant sort—larger than I was, and always somewhere in the offing when the school bullies picked on me. In one way his friendship was a trifle embarrassing. I was the only boy in school whom he appeared to like. His other friends were toads and frogs and snakes and lizards. He had a great collection of them in his father's woodshed, and used to talk to them by the hour, not in the least disturbed if their replies were unintelligible. The other boys always insisted that he would not have made a friend of me if I did not share the nature or natures of one or more of these animal pets. They used to attempt to make the noises that these creatures emitted, or at least imitations of them, to indicate that I resembled them. Not when Emil was around, however.

"I sick me a rattlesnake on you if you bodder my friend," he would say, and for a time I would be left in peace. But the insistence that I was a member of Emil's menagerie got on my nerves after a while. I went less and less to his establishment, and when one day I heard that he and his parents had left town, I was a little ashamed to think that I had shunned him for weeks. I found out at the post office where he and his family had gone—some little town in Arizona, and now and then sent him a post card. Invariably I received a long reply which narrated his adventures in the new country, where he said he and his parents were running a farm. Each letter expressed the earnest hope that I might come out there and visit him some day. And fifteen years later, when it so happened that I was about to make a

THE HABIT



Hubby.—I'm glad you only want five dollars to go shopping with today. What are you going to get with it?

Wifey.—Nothing but luncheon, dear. I'm going to have everything else charged.

western journey, I wrote him that I would try my best to pay him a short visit.

A letter came by return mail. "Come as long as you like for," he said. "Send me a telegram and I will meet you. I think you will like my farm. Maybe you will go in business with me. It is a very interesting farm, and it makes money. It will be good to see you."

He was at the station in a little car when I arrived. He plied me with so many questions about the old town and what was happening there that I could not edge in a question about his farm. When we reached his house it was already dark, and after a cup of coffee and some ham and eggs he politely suggested then it was late and I must be tired. He showed me into an extremely neat little room, and in a few minutes I was lost to the world.

Three or four times in the night I awakened, as one is likely to in strange surroundings. Each time I thought I heard peculiar rustlings and other noises which I tried in vain to identify. They always eluded me, and though once or twice I sat up in bed and listened, drowsiness overcame me and I went to sleep again.

It was already broad daylight when I finally awoke. Opening my eyes to look about me I caught my breath. I must still be asleep and

dreaming. On a shelf behind the little chest of drawers opposite me sat a dinosaur, and not a particularly benign dinosaur. It moved. To make sure that the bracing desert air had not overbalanced me I reached down, picked up one of my shoes, and hid it at the animal. It made a curious squeak, and leaped nimbly from its perch, heading for my bed.

My first instinct was to pull the blankets over my head and try to remember some of the prayers that I had learned at my mother's knee. Then I remembered that a creature such as I had seen would not be held at bay by any blankets. I got up and stood in the exact center of the bed, calling sharply to Emil for help.

He hurried into the room. "So sorry he got away on me last night," he said. "He won't bite unless he get scared, but almost anything will scare him. Coom."

The latter was addressed to the intruder, who "coomed," creeping swiftly to his owner. Emil caught him by the scuff of the neck and tossed him lightly out of the door.

"What was that thing?" I demanded.

"Joost a lizard," said Emil. "He lss called Gila monster. But monster means big. He lss not so big, eh? Leave him alone and he don't bite—but make him mad, trouble maybe. Now let us have breakfast."

That breakfast was not a pleasant meal, despite the appetite the clear desert air had given me.

As it progressed my host kept picking up tit-bits from his plate and tossing them in this or that direction, where they were deftly

caught up by my friend the Gila monster, lizards that looked like him, field mice, rabbits, and several different varieties of snakes. The snakes, however, did not swallow the dainties thrown to them. Apparently they were merely doing a little practice feilding.

"Snakes lss funny," said Emil. "They haf to haf their meals alive. But they lss hogs, and they don't want no other animal to get nothing, so you can't keep them out of the house when meals lss going on. You like to see the biggest rattler in Arizona?"

"Is he alive?" I asked, looking around me anxiously.

"Very much alive. When I caught him he had bit ten greasers already. I had to fight with almost everybody around here to save bliss life yet."

"Where is he?" I demanded.

"You shall see him soon enough. Now maybe we go see the wild cat. He perhaps is more interesting as snakes."

"Emil," I said, "I thought this was a farm."

"Sure, it is a farm. The biggest snake and reptile farm in Arizona. Here I make me more money as any cattle or sheep farmer can do. Come, I show you."

I returned to my sleeping room, walked warily and secured a heavy pair of boots I had brought along. Around these, to make assurance doubly sure, I wrapped some heavy leather puttees.

Emil glanced at my rig contemptuously.

"Nobody need be afraid of snakes," he said "Look!"

Before I could stop him he had

picked up a four foot serpent which sang a merry tune with its tail the while. "By the neck you hold him a while," he said ingratiatingly. "You will soon learn when you and me is partners here." I declined the outstretched offering.

"What the devil do you do with these creatures?" I demanded. "There certainly can't be any demand for snakes and lizards."

"My boy. Nothing you know of it. For the poison many scientists will buy them, and from us, for I have already established what you call a reputation. Out in the yard I have hundreds of others. Today I make a shipment to New York. You shall help me. Just for a start, eh?"

"Emil," I said. "I like you, and I admire you. I hope you succeed in this enterprise and make a big reputation for yourself. I know you will. But when I get home I will dream about these brutes, night after night, and wake up yelling for help. And what would happen if I stayed here two days? I would go mad, that is what would happen."

"My friend! I am so sorry. I am so disappointed. In school you were the only one I liked, and I was so looking forward to your coming, and so sure you would like it here. And I know you would luff them if you knew them better. But if you feel—"

"I do, Emil," I said.

"Very well, it is then soon auf wiederseh'n but maybe, when you go home you will think it over, eh?"

"I'll do my best, Emil," I said. And I did. But Emil is still conducting that chamber of horrors by himself.

© Bell Syndicate.—WNU Service.

ASK ANOTHER



"Say, ma."

"What?"

"If ears were supposed to be kept clean, why weren't they made flat like your face is, so you could do it easily?"

Pawnee Death Rate Cut; Births Gain

Hospital Service Responsible for Saving Lives.

Pawnee, Okla.—Through the Pawnee Indian agency here the death rate of the "native Americans" is being lowered and the birth rate being increased.

The picturesque agency administers the affairs of five dwindling tribes—Pawnees, Pancas, Otoes, Kaws, and Tonkawas. One of the oldest tribal rolls of the Pawnees, dated 1881, carries the names of 1,300 members of the tribe. Illustrating the decline of the tribes, the Pawnees now number only 900, while there are only approximately 800 Pancas, 700 Otoes, 400 Kaws, and less than 50 Tonkawas.

Five years ago the government built a hospital with capacity for 47 beds. Expectant Indian mothers learned to take advantage of the services provided by the government, and a lot of lives were saved which would have been lost under previous primitive Indian customs.

Healthy Indian babies came into the world and fewer mothers died in childbirth, thus increasing the birth rate slowly, but steadily, ac-

ording to P. W. Danielson, superintendent.

Of the handful of Tonkawas remaining none are full blood tribesmen. Their numerical weakness is explained by the history of the tribe, which shows it has been persecuted and overrun by other tribes. Some 50 years ago an Indian war gave the tribe its most crushing blow, exterminating virtually all the able-bodied Tonkawas.

Located one-half mile east of Pawnee, the physical equipment of the agency consists of about 30 large buildings made of native sandstone and housing some 500 people. It occupies 900 acres of the most beautiful wooded timber land to be found in the large five-tribes reservation.

More than 200 Indian children is the capacity of the grade school at the agency, where the facilities are capable of taking the students on through high school.

The Department of the Interior hopes to be able to abolish the Indian service within the next 25 years, as intermarriage with the whites is on the increase and most of the 3,000 members of the tribes are self-supporting—with the little government aid provided.

TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

"A CCIDENT is the mother of invention, 99 times out of 100," said Louis Brennan, the torpedo inventor. One day he saw a frayed driving belt on a planing machine acting queerly. He got the idea that it was possible to make a machine travel forward by pulling it backward. He made use of that principle in inventing his engine of death.

Careless workmen in a paper mill forgot, one day, to add sizing to the pulp, and the whole vat had to be thrown away as waste. A short time later the proprietor came by. He saw the discarded rolls and tore off some strips to use for making notes. It absorbed the ink as fast as he wrote on it, so he called it "blotting paper." We've used it ever since.

In another plant a workman playfully tossed a piece of cheese into the plating bath solution, used for producing copper disks for stamping phonograph records. The disks from this particular bath were far superior to any others. The casein in the cheese was the one element that chemists had been looking for.

A French scientist, while experimenting in his laboratory, accidentally opened the wrong valve. Several drops of moisture settled in a glass tube. Horrified at his mistake, the scientist was about to throw the tube away when he realized that he had discovered liquid oxygen.

"UNLESS"

"THE department commander places too much confidence in your zeal, energy and ability to wish to impose on you precise orders which might hamper your action when nearly in contact with the enemy. He will, however, indicate to you his own views of what your action should be, and he desires that you should conform to them, unless you should see sufficient reasons for departing from them."

It was June, 1876, in Montana. Gen. George Armstrong Custer, riding at the head of the Seventh cav-

alry in search of a big village of hostile Indians, pondered over these orders from his commander, Gen. A. H. Terry. He knew the plan of campaign—Terry and Gibbon and he were to strike the enemy at the same time. And that time was June 26.

But Custer was "in bad" with President Grant. If, unaided by the others, he could find the Indians first and get in a smashing victory, he might get back into the good graces of the administration at Washington.

On the morning of June 25 his scouts reported the discovery of the village in the valley just below. True, Custer was 24 hours ahead of the appointed time of the rendezvous with Terry and Gibbon. But here were the Indians.

He remembered Terry's orders . . . "he desires that you should conform to them." And yet—"unless you should see sufficient reasons for departing from them." Wasn't that little word "unless" a good excuse?

So he decided to attack. And on that word "unless" hung his life and the lives of 300 men of the Seventh cavalry. For that many perished, or died later of their wounds, in "Custer's Last Battle" on the Little Big Horn.

© Western Newspaper Union.

IN DARK ALLEYS



He—You used to say I was the light of your life.

She—You were, till you started going out nights.