

time. I sat there a few seconds feebly wondering which room the tiger was in. Then I got up with a sudden alacrity, took from his case a large revolver, and turned into the passage again. In a minute or so I was in Godfrey's room. He was addressed. "What's the matter?" he demanded, with startled eyes. When I had told him he took my hand and wrung it. "You may thank God that you are alive, old fellow. Then he dressed hurriedly, took a heavy rifle from a rack, filled his pockets with cartridges. "Come along; stay, let me go first; your nerves are a bit shaky yet."

We crept out and awakened the punkah-wallah, an old and faithful Hindu, whom my brother once nursed during a dangerous illness—a brave, reliable and trustworthy man, who would have laid his life down for Godfrey.

"It is the man-eater!" said the Hindu, after my recital. "Will the sahib let his servant advise him?"

"Yes, Ramee; tell me your plan."

As the Hindu rapidly unfolded it my brother smiled dubiously at the strange idea.

"Cunning must be met with cunning," said the Hindu.

"I'll take three hours to arrange," I remarked.

"Three hours will bring the dawn; now, who can see in the dark; not the sahib, but yes, the tiger."

"Very well," said Godfrey. "Let's set about it at once." From the gardener's outhouse we brought a roll of wire netting that had been put there for fencing in a paddock a few days previously. Together we collected armfuls of shavings the workmen had not cleared away, quantities of dried leaves, rags, every thing we could find soft and pliable, and having cut the wire into three square lengths firmly lashed them together, one over the other. When completed it was the shape, but rather larger than the window in the room in which the tiger lay hidden and the doors of which had been locked. Our operations so far had been conducted upon the verandah outside, near the gardener's room; we then rolled up the wire netting and carried it round the corner of the house to within a few yards of the big window; here it was unrolled again and flattened out, then upon its surface we poured all the shavings, rags, leaves and the refuse we had collected, and upon this mass smeared and spread a quantity of lime left by the workmen for the morrow. This we smoothed down as well as we were able till the whole mass assumed some consistency and clung to the interspaces of the netting.

Ramee next took some stout twine and improvised a rough kind of needle from a bamboo cane. With this implement he sewed all over the mass of stuff, thus making a string netting that helped to keep the composition in its place. So far, so good; the most difficult operation yet remained.

"Take my gun," said Godfrey to me, "and give me the revolver."

He pushed the revolver in his belt, laid hold of one end of the netting, and threw off his shoes. With slow and noiseless step the netting, looking very like a large mattress, was carried exactly opposite the window and laid gently down; then both retired as silently as they had advanced.

Ramee then brought from the outhouse a ladder, and with a gesture of entreaty signed to my brother to stand aside and take his rifle in his hand. With bare feet the Hindu crept up to the window again and raised the ladder against the wall.

Taking a coil of rope from his neck, he deftly fastened it to the highest wall staple of the outside shutter. Descending, he quickly unrolled the short strand in the netting, placed the ladder on the other side, and ran the thing through the other staple. For the first time he made a noise, but it was unavoidable, and was caused by the netting being drawn upward till it hung like a great curtain covering the shutter and hid the window from us.

Godfrey and I stood ready to fire.

The Hindu, perching at every pore, descended the ladder, which he lowered and placed horizontally on the window sill, and lashed it to the bottom of the netting, and again fastened that to the two lower staples on either side.

The thing was done; far away in the east the dawn was breaking, above which the morning star was slowly paling his silver fire.

"But, Ramee, the shutters are still fastened!"

"Sahib, I unfastened them; they are open as the breath of a man's hand; presently the light will stream through."

"Quick! fetch another rifle!"

When he returned I took the gun and gave him my revolver.

A light breath of wind passed murmuring through the feathery crowns of the slender cocoa palms, two great spears of light shot up to the sky, somewhere in the garden a bird sang, the sun had risen. "Wait the signal," whispered my brother; "now, Ramee." The Hindu knelt down and imitated the bleating of a kid that had lost its mother. At the instant Ramee sprang to his feet the silence was rent by a sundering crash and a sudden terrific roar; the shutters were torn from their sockets; a great mass hurled itself precipitately through the window, and the tiger with its head and shoulders buried in the lime-covered debris, was grappling in maddened fury with an enemy he could not see nor make much impression upon.

Our guns were at our shoulders.

The animal was twenty feet from us, tearing up the gravelled path and coiling itself in inextricable confusion in the broken netting and splintered ladder. Ramee uttered a loud cry. The animal had freed its head, and stood with its bleeding mouth in an enforced and listening attitude. It was the moment Godfrey had waited for, and he fired. The tiger, evidently not seeing him, sprang at the window again, but missed the opening, hurling himself against the wall and falling on the broken shutters. At the minute it alighted I aimed at the spot behind the shoulder and fired; it gave a convulsive leap and turned its bloodshot eyes in our direction. Then Godfrey fired again and told me to do the same.

"Back! back!" cried Ramee.

The animal had gathered itself together and snarled forward with one mighty bound, and rolled over with a scream of dying rage.

When we came to measure the brute afterward we found it was fifteen feet from the nose to the tip of the tail.—Charles Lillie, in Pall Mall Gazette.

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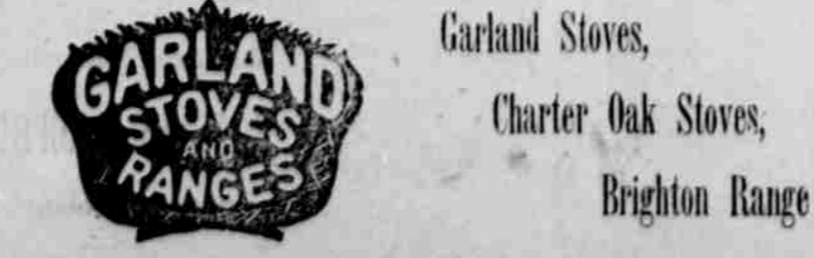
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