

DONE BY BLARNEY

THE CAPTURE OF A LIZARD WITH A BRITTLE BLUE TAIL.

The Reptile Was Shy and Difficult to Approach, but It Fell a Victim to the Snake Hunter's Courteous Friend—Capturing a Prize in Trinidad Gardens.

"In all my travels after things that crawl and creep," said G. R. O'Reilly, the snake hunter, "I have never found any reptile as hard to capture as the big Trinidad lizard. He's a prize when you do capture him. Besides being very beautiful he is unique, as far as I know, for I never found any lizard like him anywhere else than on the island of Trinidad. Its length he is about 15 inches and is brown in color, with beautiful leopard spots. But his tail is his chief point of beauty. It is a magnificent iridescent blue, such a hue as you find nowhere else in nature that I know of except in the Brazilian sun butterfly, whose azure wings reflect the light like polished steel. This tail is as brittle as it is beautiful, and when the reptile is dug out of his hole the tail is invariably broken in the capture. Several lizards thus taken were sent to me, but not one of them was intact.

"The first capture I ever made of one of these fellows was achieved by the exercise of the most courteous politeness—not on my part, but on the part of a friend who was my unconscious assistant in the capture. It was in the Royal Botanical gardens of Trinidad, just outside the city. Part of the gardens is quite wild, and in this part several of the big lizards had taken up their abode.

"One fine sunny day Assistant Botanist Broadway and J. H. Hart, fellow of the Innumerable society, and I were out walking, I, as usual, carrying my long snake stick, a 6 foot rod with a lead at one end. In the midst of the least frequented spot in the gardens we saw a splendid big lizard basking in the sun on a big open space. He was probably 20 yards from his hole, and we were farther from him than that. To try to catch him by a dash would be foolish, for he would be at his hole long before the swiftest runner could overtake him. These fellows travel faster than any other creeping or crawling thing I know of. My two companions and I halted and looked at the lizard. He had seen us and turned his head in our direction.

"I'd like to get that fellow," said I. "First catch your lizard," remarked Broadway, making imaginary quotation marks in the air with his forefinger. "Catch the tail, which will do just as well. You won't get them both together."

"Yes, I will," said I, "if you fellows help me," for an idea had struck me, and I determined to put it into execution.

"They agreed to do anything I said, adding some skeptical sarcastic side remarks. All this time the lizard had kept his eyes fixed on us. Apparently he was satisfied that as long as we moved no nearer he was all right. I proceeded to arrange my plan of campaign, giving orders to my two companions. Only one of them was useful to carry out my scheme, so I sent Broadway to climb a tree, where he could be out of the way, and then said to my other companion:

"Now, Hart, you've got a reputation here for being polite to a lizard. I want you to get together all the courtesy there is in you and display it for the benefit of that lizard. Just suppose the animal to be the queen of England and your biggest creditor and the only girl you ever loved all in one and address it accordingly. What I particularly want from you is action, however a scrap of minute performance, bows and serapes and flourishes."

"O'Reilly," said Hart, "I'm not disgruntled, either you're trying to make a fool of me or you're trying to make a fool of that lizard. I don't think I'd do that if I ever took you for, and that's useless."

"You can revile me all you want to," said I, "only be courteous to the gentleman with the sky blue tail over yonder, and now begin."

"Then began the most beautiful exhibition of gallantry that I have ever witnessed. Hart began by taking off his hat and making a low bow to the lizard. He assured the beast that he had no intention of intruding on its alone dinner, (leaves (bow and scrape), but that the fame of the beauty of its iridescent tail (hand on heart and another bow) had drawn him hither to observe a spectacle of magnificence such as never before had gladdened his eyes (three bows), two waves of the hat and profound bows. For two minutes he went on giving the lizard taunts, and I could hear Broadway cackling from his perch in the tree like a whole flock of chickens. But you never saw anything so pious as that lizard. The whole performance just took him by storm. He was immensely interested and amused and dattered. Here was a very large two-legged animal cowering before him in the most entertaining fashion and making queer noises of a not unpleasant nature uttered for his benefit and all the time having the good grace to keep at a proper and respectful distance. What more could a lizard expect than to have amusement furnished him at his own home? He cocked his head first on one side and then on the other. He blinked his eyes and gently waved his tail. He more contented lizard couldn't be found in all Trinidad.

"While the performance was going on I had made a detour and was wearing a spot where I would be between the quarry and his hole. The lizard was too much attracted by Hart's continuous performance to pay any attention to me, and presently I found myself within a few yards of him and just behind him. About this time I noticed that Hart's language had altered for the worse. His stock of compliments had been exhausted, and though his deportment was as courteous as before, his gestures as graceful and his voice as soft as before the language he used comprised all with these manifestations.

"Oh, if I only had you in reach," he said, with a snarl, "I'd wear of the hand and in dialect tones, 'wouldn't I show you a trick in politeness? Yes, wink at me, you miserable, bloated, polka dotted earthworm. Wag your grubby blue tail. In about two seconds there'll be a stick over your neck, you slobbery, slinky, deformed mud grubber. I'll teach you what politeness is when I get you in a cage, but the best will be on the other foot then. There! How'd you like that? Hurrah, we've got him!"

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