FREAKS OF LIGHTNING

MANY are the pranks which lightning plays. Some of them are harmless, even taking the appearance of practical jokes; on other occasions they seem the swift messengers of Death, who takes his toll in the strangest kind of payments. It is just that dread uncertainty which makes mankind afraid. In every part of the world, when heavy black clouds loom up, and the first flashes and random shots from the small guns begin, mothers gather their children anxiously, keep them away from trees and out of drafts, out of reach of fireplaces and of metals, and wait anxiously for the storm to pass.

Away from metals! There is a suggestion. Many old fashioned people in the country even go so far as to put the scissors carefully away, and nobody is allowed in the kitchen near the stove. This seems irrational to many persons, but ages ago the Greek philosopher Seneca remarked on the strange power of lightning to fuse metal substances. "Silver," said Seneca, "is melted in a leather purse, without injury to the purse; the sword is fused in the scabbard, and the scabbard is left unhurt; the iron of the javelin flows down the wooden stock, which does not take fire." The elder Pliny claimed to have seen gold, silver, and copper fused by lightning in a leather bag, upon which the waxen seal had not been softened. That was long ago.

Coming down to our own day, the experience of a carpenter in Paterson, New Jersey, may be quoted. He had finished work and was gathering up his tools during a storm. There was a flash, and the carpenter was sent sprawling. When he recovered he had only the handle of a big saw in his hand. In a steel brace and bit there were holes showing where the lightning had pierced them. Yet the workman was unhurt. At Seaham Harbor, England, a pin in a woman's hair was fused, without even singeing her hair.

Forked lightning, though beautiful to look at, can be terribly destructive. An extreme case was at Freiburg, Germany, in 1794, when a flash with three prongs reached a mark with each prong. One struck a house near a cathedral in town, and the other two struck houses several miles distant to the north and south.

Sometimes lightning strikes up, instead of down, if we are to believe a story told many years ago of a party of men standing on the porch of a church far up on the side of a lofty mountain in Styria. They were looking down into the valley below, where a great electrical storm was raging, and, with the sun shining upon them at their altitude, were enrapt by the strange sensation. Suddenly a bolt came up from the valley and killed seven of the party.

Cities are much freer from damage by lightning than country places, because of the arresting and conducting power of the high buildings and quantity of metallic substances. A skyscraper, for instance, is a comparatively safe place, when the humble farm house is greatly in danger. Eiffel Tower, in Paris, is the greatest tender of lightning in the world. So powerful is it, that a storm passing near it will almost subside, so far as can be discerned, to resume again when some distance beyond.

Many of the queerest pranks of lightning are played in out of the way places. At a farm in Winsted, Connecticut, a bolt made a long furrow in a row of potatoes, thus actually digging them for the owner. After a long ride through a storm near Denver, a woman placed her infant, which she had carried with her, in bed. Soon afterward she discovered that it had been killed by lightning, by a bolt that she herself had not felt. A bolt of lightning was attracted by the steel rod of an umbrella carried by a man in Adams, Massachusetts, and besides severely burning him on the right side, it tore off his shoes and flung them twenty feet or more away.

This prank of tearing shoes from the feet of victims is a favorite one with lightning. In one case, however, it went farther. A man struck while walking in an English town was entirely stripped of clothing, and his boots were torn to leather ribbons. His watch was fused too; but the man, except for a severe shock, was unhurt.

There is something pathetic about the vindictiveness which lightning seems to show toward trees. Great giants of the forests are uprooted, their bark stripped off or splintered into fragments. One reason, it is said, for the splintering of trees is that the sudden heating of the sap turns it to steam, and the steam, exploding, tears the wood.

In Boydton, Virginia, a horse was tied to a tree to which a wire clothesline, extending to a house, was fastened. The house was struck by lightning, and the bolt, running along the clothesline to the halter and then to the horse, killed the poor beast. At Escanaba, Michigan, in a house almost torn to pieces by lightning, the nails were somehow actually drawn from the woodwork, and scorched holes in the carpet where they fell. Doors were pulled from their hinges, and twenty holes, about the size that would be made by a thirty-two caliber revolver, were found in woodwork in different parts of the house.

Another freak of lightning was shown at Centralia, Pennsylvania. Running along a steel rail at the top of a colliery, the bolt traveled a mile under ground, and finally exploded a case of dynamite, killing several men.

In Sea Bright, New Jersey, a man and his little son went out in the yard during a storm, to see how a flagpole, which they had raised that day, was standing the heavy wind. Lightning struck them both, and the boy was killed. In a Jersey City house a bed quilt was set afire, and nothing else was harmed.

So varied is the work of lightning that it is not safe to point to any particular incident as the work of Providence. For instance, in Greensboro, North Carolina, a fork of the same bolt that destroyed a whisky distillery, likewise struck a church and burned it to the ground. No morals can be pointed with this strange agency. We can only conclude that, following the example of the wind, lightning "striketh where it listeth."

ROMANCES OF ANIMALS

Continued from page 8

again to the forest, tied to a tree, and there left to starve or be devoured by the wild animals. The cruel command was obeyed, and Maldonada, bound and helpless, was left to her fate. At the end of two days the Governor with an escort went out to see what the result might be. He found the maid alive and uninjured, and listened in awe to a tale she told. An enormous puma, she said, had appeared soon after sunset, and during the whole of that night and the following had fought at her feet against every animal which approached. The tale seemed to be borne out by the signs of struggle in the grass. So the cry went up, "He was from God!" and the maid was given her freedom.

The rearing of Romulus and Remus by a wolf has generally been considered to be nothing but a pretty story. Yet Selous, having seen similar cases, is inclined to think it may have been a fact. In speaking of wolves he says:

"It would seem—that is, there is evidence which makes it difficult not to believe, and I for my part do believe—that every now and then a child who has been carried off by a wolf is not eaten, but grows up with the young wolves in the den to which it is brought, being suckled there by the dam. The evidence of which I speak comes from various witnesses, both native and European, and the different stories confirm one another. Several 'wolf boys,' as they are called, have been brought up in orphanages in Oude. Here they have been received, being actually found in wolves' dens crawling on all fours. These boys when first caught were just like animals in all their ways and habits, ate only raw meat, and though they got a little less wolflike, can hardly be said to have ever become human beings, and never learn to speak."

Professor Ball, in his "Jungle Life in India," tells this story of wolf boys: "Sometime ago two of the King of Oude's sawars, riding along the banks of the Gumti, saw three animals come down to drink. Two were evidently young wolves, but the third was as evidently some other animal. The sawars rushed in upon them and captured all three, and to their great surprise found that one of them was a small naked boy. He was on all fours, like his companions, had callosities on his knees and elbows, evidently caused by his attitude in moving about, and in resisting his capture bit and scratched violently. The boy was brought up in Lucknow, where he lived sometime, and may, for aught I know, be living still. He was quite unable to articulate words, but had a doglike intellect quick at understanding signs and so on.

"There was another more wonderful, but hardly so well authenticated, story of a boy who could never get rid of a strong wolfish smell, and who was seen not long after his capture to be visited by three wolves, which came evidently with hostile intentions, but which, after closely examining him, he seeming not to be in the least alarmed, played with him, and some nights afterwards brought their relations, making the number of visitors amount to five, the number in the litter of cubs from which he had been taken."

The larger species of monkeys, such as the gorilla, are as a rule inimicable to man, mistaking him, as some naturalists think, for a rival. But the smaller animals exhibit many human traits, and at times a strong affection for men. Professor Romanes, in "Animal Intelligence," quotes some striking examples.

"I was once," says Captain Johnson, "one of a party of Jeekary in the Babor district. Our tents were pitched in a large mango garden, and our horses were picketed in the same garden, a little distance off. When we were at dinner a Syer came to us, complaining that some of the horses were broken loose, in consequence of being frightened by monkeys on the trees. As soon as dinner was over I went out with my gun to drive them off, and fired with small shot at one of them, which instantly ran down to the lowest branch of the tree, as if he were going to fly at me, stopped suddenly, and coolly put his paw to the part wounded with blood and held it out for me to see. I was so much hurt that it has left an impression never to be effaced, and I have never since fired a gun at any of the tribe."

Sir W. Hoste in his memoirs tells a story of a high order of animal confidence in man.

"An officer in coming home after a long day's shooting saw a female monkey running along the rocks, with her young one in her arms. He immediately fired, and the animal fell. On his coming up, she grasped her little one close to her breast, and with the other hand pointed to the wound which the ball had made. Dipping her finger in the blood, and then holding it up, she seemed to reproach him with the cause of her death. Then as she lay dying, she shoved the young one away from her towards the man. She had said as plainly as a dumb brute can, 'You have killed me; now take care of my child.'"

The kangaroo is not thought to be either a particularly intelligent or affectionate animal, but now and then even this he shows up in an unexpected light. A few years ago a number of them were shipped from Australia by way of Liverpool to Philadelphia. They were transhipped in England to two ships. Among them were a pair called Jack and Flora which were unfortunately separated. Flora continually called for her mate, and for some days after sailing could not be induced to take food. On the voyage two little ones were born. The vessel bearing Flora with her offspring was the first to arrive, and they were at once sent on to the Park. The other load did not arrive until a week later. Says an eye witness of what followed:

"Flora seemed to scent the coming of her mate, and when the cage containing him was carried into the museum she called for him. He answered, and Flora's joy knew no bounds. She leaped about her cage in the wildest excitement, ever and anon stopping to peer out through the bars to see if she could catch a glimpse of her mate. The keeper finally, to prevent the animal from injuring herself, was obliged to bring Jack up stairs and put him in the cage. Never was a more impressive scene enacted between two animals. They embraced, licked each other, and rubbed their noses in expression of friendship. Then the father turned to the babes and tenderly licked their faces."

The affection was so genuine that the keeper made a vow never to separate the two.

The accumulation of such evidence as this has given a new field for the scientists, and has set philosophers to wondering whether we have not somewhat underestimated the place in creation of this vast dumb world.

PROBLEM OF CONVICT No. 97

Continued from page 10

complete solution of the problem, although you didn't know it," he added magnanimously. "Everything is there. Let me see the book a moment."

The squint eyes ran rapidly down a page, and stopped at a written entry opposite the pedigree record.

"Sept. 3.—Miss P. Gilfoil, sister, permitted half-hour's conversation with 97 in afternoon. Brought permission from chairman of Prison Commission."

"That's the record of the escape," continued The Thinking Machine. "Philip Gilfoil has no sister, therefore the person who called was the Rev. Dr. Phineas Gilfoil, an only brother, and he wore woman's clothing. He went to that cell willingly and for the specific purpose of changing places with his brother,—the motive doesn't appear,—and was to remain in the cell for a time agreed upon. The necessary changes of clothing were made, instructions which were to enable the minister to impersonate his brother were given,—and they were elaborate,—then Philip Gilfoil, Convict 97, walked out as a woman. I dare say he invited a close scrutiny; it was perfectly safe because of his remarkable resemblance to the man he had left behind."

Amazement in the warden's eyes was giving way to anger at the trick of which he had been the victim. He turned to the guards who had stood by silently.

"Take this man back!" he directed, and indicated Philip Gilfoil. "Put him where he belongs!" Then he turned toward the white faced minister. "I shall deliver you over to the police."

Philip Gilfoil was led away; then the warden reached for the telephone receiver.

"Now, just a moment, please," requested The Thinking Machine, and he sat down. "You have your prisoner now, safely enough, and here you are about to turn over to the police a man whose every act of life has been a good one. Remember that for a moment, please."

"But why should he change places with my prisoner?" blazed the warden. "That makes him liable too. The statutes are specific on—"

"The Rev. Dr. Gilfoil has done one of the most amazing, not to say heroic, things that I ever heard of," interrupted the scientist. "Now, wait a minute. He, a man of position, of reputation, of unquestioned morals, a good man, deliberately incarcerates himself for the sake of a criminal brother who, in this man's eyes, must be free for a short time at any rate. The reason of this, the necessity, while urgent, still doesn't appear. Dr. Gilfoil trusted his brother, criminal though he was, to return to his cell in four weeks and finish his sentence. The exchange of prisoners then was to be made in the same manner. That the criminal brother did not return, as he agreed, but that Dr. Gilfoil was loyal to him even then and lived up to the lie, can only reflect credit upon Dr. Gilfoil for a self sacrifice which is almost beyond us prosaic people of this day."

"I did it because—" Dr. Gilfoil began hoarsely, his voice quivering with emotion. It was the first time he had spoken.

"It doesn't matter why you did it," interrupted The Thinking Machine. "You did it for love of a brother, and he betrayed you—betrayed you to the point of taking possession of your house while maudlin from drink, to the point of striking your wife like the coward he is, and of making a temporary prisoner of Mr. Hatch here, who had gone to your home to investigate. It is due to Mr. Hatch's personal courage that your wife is freed from him,—she was practically a prisoner,—and that he is now in his cell again."

Dr. Gilfoil's face went pallid for an instant, and he staggered to his feet, with lips tightly pressed together, fighting back an emotion which nearly overwhelmed him. After a moment came a strange softening of his features, and he stood staring out the window into the prison yard with upraised eyes.

"That's all of it," said the scientist, after a moment. "I don't think, Mr. Warden, that justice would demand the imprisonment of this man. I believe it would be far better to let the matter remain just between ourselves. It will not happen again, and—"

"But it was a crime," interrupted the warden.

"Technically, yes," admitted The Thinking Machine; "but we can overlook even a crime, if it does no harm, and if it is inspired by the motive which prompted this one. Think of it for a moment in that light."

There was a long silence in the little office. The Thinking Machine sat with upturned eyes and fingers pressed tip to tip; Dr. Gilfoil's eyes roved from the drawn, inscrutable face of the scientist to the warden; Hatch's brow was furrowed with wrinkles of perplexity.

"How did you find out about this escape first?" asked the reporter curiously.

"I knew Philip Gilfoil had escaped, because I saw him," replied The Thinking Machine tersely. "He came to my place, evidently to kill me. I was in my laboratory. He came up behind me to strike me down. I glanced into a mirror above my work table, saw him, and tried to avoid the blow. It caught me in the back of the head, and I fell unconscious. Martha made some noise outside which must have frightened Gilfoil, for he fled. The front door locked behind him—it's a spring lock. But I had recognized the escaped prisoner perfectly,—I never forget faces,—and I knew he had the motive to kill me because I had been instrumental in sending him here.

"I told you merely that Gilfoil had escaped and sent you here to inquire. Afterward I came myself, because I knew Philip Gilfoil was not in that cell. I found out many additional facts, among them a sudden change for the better in the prisoner's behavior, which confirmed my knowledge that it was Philip Gilfoil who had attacked me. I sought to surprise Dr. Gilfoil here into a betrayal of identity by a visit to his cell at night. But his loyalty to his brother and his perfect self possession enabled him to play the rôle. He recognized me as he recognized you, Mr. Hatch, because we can imagine that Philip Gilfoil had been careful in his plans and had instructed him to look out for us.

"Everything else came from the record book. This gave Philip Gilfoil's pedigree, mentioned Phineas Gilfoil, without stating his vocation, and gave a clue to his place of residence. You followed up that end, Mr. Hatch, while I called on Dr. Heindell who had treated the prisoner for a bad throat. He informed me that there was nothing at all the matter with the prisoner's throat, so a plain problem in addition brought me a definite knowledge of what had happened. In conclusion, I may say that Dr. Gilfoil planned only a four weeks' stay here. I know that because you told me he had gone on a four weeks' vacation."

The minister's eyes again settled on the face of the warden. That official had been turning the matter over in his mind, evidently at length, as he listened. Finally he spoke.

"You had better go back to the cell, Dr. Gilfoil," he said respectfully, "and change clothing with your brother. You couldn't wear that prison suit in the street safely."