PLANTATION FABLES.

Brother Fox Still in Trouble.

BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

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Uncle Remus sat and smoked his pipe reflectively for some time after the little boy had criticised the heartlessness of the "creeturs." When he spoke he showed that he had been thinking the matter over. He took the pipe from his mouth and blew outa cloud of smoke.

"Uh-uh!" he exclaimed. "taint no use er talkin'. Creeturs is creeturs. You er what you is, en you can't be no is-ser. I'm what I am en I can't be no am-er. It all done been fix, en I ain't see nobody yit what kin onfix it. Creeturs is nachully got ha'sh idees, en you may take notice whenever you see ha'r en bristles right dar you er mo' dan ap' ter fin' claws en tushes. Hit's des like I tell you.

"You flung me off in de track, but I ain't done wid dat fuss 'twix Brer Rabbit en Brer Fox. You sorter flinch'd kaze Brer Rabbit tuck en burnt a blister on Brer Fox back, en it sot me ter studyin', but we ain't come ter de wuss. Ef you er too techy fer ter set dar whiles I runs on you kin dea go up ter de big house en watch Sis Tempy fret over dat churn. I hear her quollin' now."

The only reply the little boy made was to settle himself more firmly in the splint-bottom chair in which he was sitting. Seeing which the old man continued:

"Now, den, what do Brer Rabbit de atter he scorch Brer Fox? Do he go off some'rs en set down en mope kaze Brer Fox rushed out fum under de blazin' stove? Ef you think he gwine do dat away you mighty much mistaken. He dez ez restless ez he yever is been. He move 'bout en he work his min'. He jump 'roun' en study.

"He got 'im a string er red pepper en he stewed it down wid some hog fat en mutton suet. Den he pick out de pepper, en when de fat en de suet git cel' he tuck'n spread de salve on a long piece er rag. He tuck dis rag, he did, en put it in his wallet, en den he got down his walkin' cane, en went down de road to rds de place whar Brer Fox live at. He ain't gone so mighty far 'fo' he see Brer Fox settin' down unasin' hisse'f. Time he see 'im Brer Rabbit 'gun ter holler:

"'N'yam, n'yam! 'Intment fer swellin's! Salve fer burns en blisters! N'yam! N'yam!'

"He keep on hollerin' dis away des loud ez he kin. He hol' his head up like he ain't see Brer Fox, en he wuz gwine on by, but Brer Fox call 'im. Brer Rabbit look at 'im, but he ain't stop. Den Brer Fox call 'im agin. Den Brer Rabbit stop en look mighty mad.

"He holler back: 'What you want long er me? Ef 'twant kaze you got de impidence er de Seratch hisse'f you wouldn't dast ter have de face fer ter hail me whiles I gwine long 'tendin' ter my own business. Talk quick! I ain't got time ter fool wid yo' sort.'

"Den Brer Fox ax 'im what he so mighty mad 'bout, en Brer Rabbit 'low: 'Look how you done me 'bout dat hay! Ain't you say you gwine ter fetch it on top er de hill for me?'

"Brer Fox look stonish. He say: 'Name er goodness, Brer Rabbit! Kin you see wid yo' own yes w'ile de reason I can't fetch it un dat hay? wish you'd look at my back what got a blister on it fum de top er my head plun ter de en' er my tail. I des like ter see de man what kin tote grass when she git dat hot!'

"Brer Rabbit look at Brer Fox back, en he make a great miration. He 'low: 'De sho was hot, Brer Fox, en you wuz de marks un it. I dis tuck a notion you wuz playin' off one er yo' pranks on me, en my feelin' wuz hurted.'

"Brer Fox say: 'I reckon you gittin by hollerin' 'bout some kind er 'intment er nuther what'll pacify burns, en dat what make I holler at you.'

"Wid dat Brer Rabbit went down in his wallet en fetch out de red pepper salve, and say ter Brer Fox dat he mus' git his ole 'oman fer ter spread de plaster on de place des soon ez he kin. Brer Fox tuck it en wabble off home des fas' ez he kin. Brer Rabbit he foller 'long out er sight, en hide in de bushes whar he kin see en hear what gwine on.

"Well, suh, 'twant long 'fo' Brer Rabbit hear Brer Fox fetch a squall, en den he shot out'n de house, en in about sevin jumps he landed in de creek, dough de creek wuz mo' n a mile off. Foxes is skeer'd er water, same ez cats, but dat ar Fox he des roll en waller in de water. Brer Rabbit still foller atter, en when he git whar kin see Brer Fox he des set down en hoh! his hans on his side fer ter keep fum bustin' his buttons off wid laughin'.

"Bimeby he holler out, 'Gracious goodness, Brer Fox! What de matter? Is dat de way you goes afishin'?

"Brer Fox say: 'I'm ruint, Brer Rabbit! You dons ruint me! Dat ar stuff you gi' me is right rank pizen.'

"Brer Rabbit open his wallet quick en look in it. Den he 'low, 'Sho' I ain't gun you de wrong physic! Lawsy, yas I is! Siddor de n'yam-n'yam 'intment I done gone en gun you de n'yip-n'yip plaster! I b'lieve 'n my soul I'm a loosin' my sevin senses.

"Den he sorter fell back in de bushes en like ter kill hisse'f laughin'. Ef old Brer Fox could er seed Brer Rabbit rollin' 'bout dis leaves an' makin' de trash fly he'd a made sho dat he done gone en got some er de n'yip-n'yip plaster on hisse'f.'

"What do n'yam-n'yam and n'yip-n'yip mean, Uncle Remus?" inquired the youngster.

"Hit's des de name er de physic, I speck. You know what quare names doctors is got fo' physic. Dara ippygag, en jollup, en boneset en burdock, en one thing en er nudder. De names ez bitter, let 'lone de physic, suh."

"Well, Uncle Remus, what of Brother Fox?"

"Ef you er anyways tetchy, honey, you better put yo' finger in yo' years, kaze de tale gits wuse en wuse. 'Taint nottin' but trouble 'pon top er trouble for Brer Fox. You done got yo' years plugged? Well, den, at's so long a time. Brer Fox got well er de burn en de blister, en he went on 'bout his business same ez say udder creetur. He wuz gwine long by de river bank one day, 'en he hear a mighty hammerin' not fur off, and he say ter hisse'f dat he b'lieve he'll go see what all de fuss wuz 'bout. He went 'long, he did, en, bless gracious! Who should he see but Brer Rabbit wid his coat off en his sleeve rolled up, hammerin' en nailin', en nailin' en hammerin'!

"Brer Fox 'low: 'What you dein' dar, Brer Rabbit?'

"Brer Rabbit say: 'Des makin' a boat, Brer Fox.'

"Brer Fox 'low: 'What you want wid a boat, Brer Rabbit?'

"Brer Rabbit say: 'Ter go ter my fish traps in.'

"Brer Fox look 'roun' en see planks en scantlin's yin' 'roun' en he make up his mins dat he ain't gwine ter go ter all dat trouble ter fer de sake er one little boat. So he set on de bank en fight sau'flies en skeeters, an watch Brer Rabbit make his boat. En he ain't had ter wait long nudder, kaze Brer Rabbit, dough he was light in de body, wuz mighty handy en he got his boat ready in a little er no time. Den he got in it en paddle up de river, en 'twant long 'fo' here he come back wid a long string er fish.

"'Dis make Brer Fox dribble at de mout kaze of dey's any kinder vittles what he like mo' dan any tudder kind its fresh fish. So he make up his min' dat he bleedz ter have a boat. Den he ax Brer Rabbit ef a mud boat won't do des ez good ez any yuther kind, en Brer Rabbit make answer dat mybe mud boats might suit some folks, dey don't suit him.

"Brer Fox ain't got de knack er makin' plank boats, en so he say ter hisse'f dat he gwine ter show Brer Rabbit dat some folks know a thing or two ez well ez yuther folks. Wid dat he whirl in, he did, en make 'im a boat out'n clay, en when it done got dry in de sun, he shove it in de water en jump in wid his paddle.

"Brer Rabbit wuz dar wid his plank boat, fer ter see it well done, en when Brer Fox start he start too. Well, suh, hit's des like I tell you—Brer Fox ain't hit many licks wid his paddle 'fo' de mud 'gun ter melt. De boat went down, en dar wuz ole Brer Fox scuffin' in de water. Atter so long a time de got ex ter git back, but I let you know he ain't make no mo' boats, needer mud boats ner plank boats."

Why Brother Fox's Legs Are Black.

"Honey," said Uncle Remus, shaking the ashes from his pipe by tapping it on the hearthstone, "how long sence you seed a fox?"

"Why, don't you know paps brought two home not very long ago?"

"Dat wuz las' fall," suggested Uncle Remus. "One wuz a red en tudder one wuz a gray. Ain't you notice how der legs look?"

The child thought a moment. "Why yes," he exclaimed, "their legs were black."

"Now, den," said the old man, leaning back in his chair and looking wise, "how come dat? Dar dey wuz, one fox red en tudder one gray, en yit der legs black. I wish you please, suh, be so good en so kind, ef you got de time ter spar', ter tell me how come dey bofe got black legs?" Uncle Remus's tone was that of a humble seeker after knowledge, and his earnestness was comic indeed, though it seemed to the child to be properly serious.

"I never thought of that," said the little boy. "I can ask papa."

Uncle Remus gave a derisive snort, shut his mouth with a snap, and began to hum through his nose. It was a sure sign of displeasure.

"Well, Uncle Remus," said the child in a penitent tone, "I thought you wanted to know sure enough. And, anyhow, if you don't I do."

"Go ax yo' pa!" exclaimed Uncle Remus. "Go ax 'im! Ole nigger man like me don't know nothin'. Go ax yo' pa!"

"You tell me," said the child coaxingly. "If papa knows, he's too busy to tell me right now."

"He'll never tell you in de 'roun' wor'l," remarked Uncle Remus emphatically. "He dunner no mo' bout it dan de man in de moon—of days any man dar; en ef dey aint no man dar he dunner no mo' 'bout it dan de man what aint dar."

Then the old negro made a pretence of changing the conversation, but this the little boy wouldn't hear to.

"Well," said Uncle Remus, after a while, "ef I don't tell you, you'll pester me twel I does tell you, en so what de odds? 'Taint no great tale nohow, en so I des might ez well out wid it en git some peace er mind.

"One time Brer Rabbit en Brer Fox went in de woods huntin', en atter so long a time dey 'gun ter git hungry. Leas'aways Brer Fox did, kaze Brer Rabbit had brung a ashcake in his wallet, en ev'ry time he got a chance he'd eat a mouful—ev'ry time Brer Fox 'd turn his back. Brer Rabbit 'd nibble at it. Well, en durin' er de day Brer Fox 'gun ter git mighty hungry. Dey had some game what dey done kill, but dey wuz a fur ways from home, en dey ain't had no fire ter ter cook it.

"Dey ain't know what ter do—Brer Fox so hungry it make his head ache. Bimeby de sun 'gun ter get low en it shine red thoo de trees.

"Brer Rabbit 'low, 'Yonder whar you kin git some fier.'

"Brer Fox say, 'Wharbouts?'

"Brer Rabbit 'low, 'Dar whar de sun is. She'll go in her hole terreckly, en den you kin git a big chunk er fier. Des leave yo game here wid me en go git de fier. You er de biggest en de swiftest, en you kin go quicker.'

"Wid dat Brer Fox put out for whar de sun is. He trot, he lope, en he gallup, en bimeby he git dar. But by dat time de sun done gone down in her hole in de groun' fer ter take a night's rest, en Brer Fox can't git no fier. He holler en holler, but de sun ain't pay no 'tention. Den Brer Fox git mad en say he gwine stay dar twel he git some fier, so he lay down topper de hole, en 'fo' he know it he dras asleep. Dar he wuz, en dar whar he got ketch.

"Now you know mighty well de sun bleedze ter rise. Yo' pa kin tell you dat. En when she start ter rise, dar wuz Brer Fox fas' asleep right 'pon topper de hole whar she got ter rise fum. When dat de case sump'n was bleedze ter happen. De sun rise up, en when she fin' Brer Fox in de war she he't 'im up en scorch his legs twel dey got right black. Dey got black, and dey er black till dis ve'y day."

"What became of Brother Rabbit?" the little boy asked.

Uncle Remus laughed, or pretended to laugh, until he bent double.

"Shoo, honey!" he exclaimed, when he could catch his breath, "time Brer Fox got out'n sight Brer Rabbit tuck all de game an put out for home. En dar whar you better go."

GOOD STORIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Catching a Ferocious Black-Maned Lion in Africa.

Copyright, 1892, by Charles B. Lewis.

M. Clergett, who was an eccentric and a miser, died in Paris in 1869. For the last ten years of his life he visited the Royal Zoölogical Gardens almost daily, and he always took his stand before the cage of a certain lion named Majestic. The beast was a very large and powerful animal, and between him and the miser there came about a friendship which was the talk of all visitors. M. Clergett was the only human being who dared put his hand into the cage and caress the beast, and had it been permitted he would have entered the cage. He had only one fault to find with Majestic. The monarch was not a black-maned lion. A great French hunter who had travelled in Africa had told him of seeing a black-maned lion, which was a far larger beast, and he was never satisfied with his pet after that.

The lion, after a captivity of sixteen years, died in April, 1880. M. Clergett died twenty days later. It is said that he died of grief at the loss of Majestic. Be that as it may, he left a will in which the sum of $15,000 was donated to the zoo "to procure from Africa a full-grown specimen of the black-maned lion, who shall be named after me." It was provided that "on each and every Sabbath day the said lion shall be entitled to five pounds of dressed fowl in addition to his regular diet of fresh meat," and at death he was to have a tombstone setting forth his name and other particulars.

The bequest was accepted, as the old miser turned out to be very well off, and had no relatives to go to law over his will. An order was at once despatched to the great animal dealer at Hamburg, but black-maned lions are like white elephants—few and far between. The house had not had one in five years. The order was placed to be filled, however, and one day, weeks later, while I was in the Buchnana country, and had secured a rhinoceros and two leopards, a letter was received by messenger from the coast which read:

> Drop all other work until you have captured a full grown black-maned lion. Must be a perfect specimen.

To read was to obey. Within half an hour I was sending out couriers to the natives, with the promise of a musket and fifty charges of powder to any one who could furnish the information wanted. The news reached a village fifty miles away before anything came of it. Then an old man sent me word to come and see him, and when I had arrived I found that he had just reached home from a visit to a village nearly fifty miles to the west. There he had beheld a black-maned lion with his own eyes, and had come very near falling a victim to him as well. The beast had just made its appearance in the locality, and was described as the largest lion any of the natives had ever seen. He had an unusually heavy mane, and it was almost jet black, while his color was that of a mouse, instead of tawny. This latter fact, if it was a fact, proved that the animal was not yet more than 10 years old, though full grown. The old man offered to guide us to the village, and after a three-days' march we reached it to find a collection of about fifty huts on the banks of a small river. Stretching away to the north was a sterile plain, and two miles in rear of the village was a range of mountains. Between the stream and the mountains the ground was fertile, and the villagers were living in peace and plenty. At night their cattle were secured in a kraal or pen constructed of logs and thorn bushes, and up to the date of the appearance of the black-maned lion no wild beast had ever entered the pen.

The new arrival had signalized his presence by carrying off one of the herders, and only the night before our arrival he had leaped the barricade, killed a steer about two years old, and removed the body to a mass of rocks fully a mile from the village. The trail was still fresh, and could have been followed to the spot where the lion was sleeping after his meal. The fence was seven or eight feet high, a lion could leap into the pen easy enough, but the fact of this fellow leaving out again with his prey was something to excite wonder.

There was plenty of blood and hair on the thorns and sharpened sticks, but it appeared that he had neatly cleared the fence with his heavy and awkward burden. Indeed, a dozen or more of the villagers who had been turned out by the rumpus in the pen saw the lion as he came out. He also saw them, and roared defiance and waited for them to come forth and give battle. When he went away he had the carcass of a steer by the neck, and he drew the body along the ground.

A lion does not leap into a kraal until he has made the circuit of it two or three times and selected a particular spot. If he comes again he makes use of the same spot, provided it has not meanwhile been repaired. Knowing this to be a fact, the natives seek his destruction by digging a pit inside the fence at a spot where he will alight. This fellow, as was clearly to be seen, had made his bound six feet from the base of the fence and had alighted at about the same distance on the other side. It was not to be expected that he would return that night, but we at once began work on a pit. When completed it was ten feet long, six feet wide, and twelve feet deep, and we cut and drew up a lot of heavy poles to place across it in case we had to keep him prisoner for two or three days. No attempt was made to conceal the pit, as the fence was thick at that point.

It was a full moon that night, and from my post in one of the huts I caught sight of the lion at about 10 o'clock. He did not roar when leaving his lair, but came out of the thicket as silently as a cat moving on its prey. He came down to within 200 feet of the kraal and then stood and listened and sniffed the air as if his suspicions had been aroused. He was a fine target for a rifle, but under the circumstances he was safe from my fire. The cattle soon scented him and crowded to the other side of the pen, and the dogs of the village likewise made a great fuss, but his lordship was not in the least put out. I could not have seen him better by daylight. By the use of my glass I had him within a few feet of me, and I saw that he was a grand specimen. Aside from his mane he had black tufts on his legs, with a black plume at the end of his tail, and I was determined to make him my prize if it took a year of waiting and planning. The natives said that the lion was not hungry, but had come out for exercise and to stretch his legs. He was in full view for more than a quarter of an hour, and what started him off was the distant roar of another lion. He roared in reply, and it seemed as if the sound would shake down the roof of the hut. Half an hour later we heard the sounds of a terrific combat half a mile away, and the natives whispered:

"That is good. Fighting will make him hungry and less cautious, and to-morrow night we shall capture him."

Next morning some of the men scouted around and found the spot where the fight took place. It was on an open spot between thickets, with grass four inches high on the earth. The struggle had been a terrible one. The sod was torn up, the grass covered with spots of blood and tufts of hair, and a trail was found where one of the fighters had dragged himself into the thicket. Two of the men followed it and found a grand old lion lying dead. When he had been pulled out we found him to be above the usual size and about 10 years old. The bones in both fore legs and in one hind leg had been crushed, an ear torn off, his throat dreadfully mangled, and his side so torn that he was near disembowelling. Male lions never meet without a terrific battle, but it seldom occurs that one is killed. The one that gets the worst of it takes to flight, and the victor is satisfied with holding the battlefield.

That night no man in the village went to bed. It was expected that our lion would show up at an early hour, and all were prepared to rush for the kraal as soon as he should leap in. A bit of carelessness on the part of the herders brought about another disappointment. In driving in the cattle they had failed to round up a yearling calf, and we heard nothing from the estray until the lion had shown himself. Just at dusk he roared loudly, and as the moon came up we caught sight of him advancing upon the kraal. The calf was on the other side of the enclosure keeping very quiet, but as the lion stopped and roared again the frightened animal began running around the pen to seek for the gate. As he came around on our side, running blindly and never seeing the lion, the latter crouched and sprang. The distance was about fifty feet. He divided this into three leaps—the first two at fifteen feet each, and the third at twenty. I had a fairly good look at his movements, and I was astonished at his activity. The pause between his bounds was only a breath. As he struck the calf he seized it by the neck and wrenched to right and left, killing it on the instant. He did not offer further violence, probably being satisfied that his victim was dead, but for five minutes he stood facing us, with his paws on the carcass and a growled defiance. Had a man shown himself outside of a hut the lion would have charged right at him. After awhile, finding that his defiance was not accepted, he picked the calf up and trotted away as a dog would with a bone. The wise before he reached the thicket he paused to look back, but we had no thoughts of moving out of our shelter.

As the calf was not in good condition, the natives believed the lion would return next night, but he did not. Orders were issued for the people to keep very quiet during the day, and for the herd to be penned an hour earlier than usual. On the second night, just at dusk, we heard the old fellow roaring good and strong as he left his lair, and the head man said to me:

"We are sure of him this time. Can't you tell by his roar that he is hungry? He will come straight to the kraal."

It is doubtful if the lion ever roars because of hunger. His roar may rather be considered a challenge to his enemies. It is a signal that he has finished his nap and is ready to meet all comers, and all the smaller animals flee in confusion when his tones are heard. The natives insisted, however, and they were right, except that he did not appear so soon as expected. He went off in the other direction, roaring at intervals, and, perhaps, looking for a change of diet. It was close on to 11 o'clock, and we had heard his voice for an hour, when I suddenly heard something walking with a tread as heavy as that of an ox. I thought it was an ox until I saw the lion himself. The moon was now up, and he advanced upon the kraal without even looking our way. His bearing exhibited grim determination. He walked straight to the spot where he had leaped in before, halted for an instant to see if the fence had been strengthened, and, with an angry growl and a switch of his tail, he went over. The cattle bellowed and rushed about, but after a couple of minutes the head man whispered:

"He fell into the pit! See! the cattle have become more quiet. Let us go at once."

At a signal we all rushed for the gate and opened it. A mistake would mean death to two or three, but the native had reasoned correctly. We were not a moment too soon, however, as the fellow was springing up and catching the banks with his paws. We hustled the poles across the excavation, weighted them down, and then everybody in the village began yelling and yell and dance. I had promised the people a keg of rum, ten pounds of powder, and five muskets in case of a capture, and the reward was a big thing to them. The cattle were turned out, fires were lighted, and all spent the night in watching and rejoicing. Ninety-nine times in a hundred a lion is no sooner trapped than he loses all his sand, and will whine and beg like a puppy. This fellow was the exception. He roared, growled, and menaced, and but for the poles we would certainly have got out and wreaked dire revenge.

When morning came we began building a cage and a cart. He must be transported 430 miles before we could get water transportation, and more than 1,000 before we could transship him to a vessel. The cage was made with double bars, each as large as a man's arm, and of hard wood. We had it ready by night, but the lion was by no means ready to enter it. We had to nearly kill him, place the cage over the pit and draw him up into it by main strength. For two whole days he defied every effort, seeming to grow fiercer with every failure on our part, but on the third day we got his cart out. We had his men extended their hands and he struggled to his feet and said:

"Lead me to the rear. I am stone blind."

His eyes were wide open, but sightless. Shell or shot had passed so close to his face that he would never see again.

A Dead Man's Face.

About half an hour before the train reached Baker City I happened to look up from my book and noticed the man on the seat ahead of me, which was turned so that he was riding backward. His face was pale, his teeth clinched, and he had both hands pressed on his heart. I ran for some water, but before I returned he had fallen over. I helped him up, gave him water, and then whiskey, and presently he asked:

"Are we near Baker City?"

"Yes; within a few miles."

"Please raise the window."

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"Something about the heart. Please feel in my hip pocket. Do you find a revolver there?"

"Yes."

"Pull it out and see if it is all right."

"There are six cartridges here, and the weapon seems to be in perfect order."

"Thanks. Turn me to the window—so. Now give me the gun."

"But you can't hold it."

"I've got to. That's the whistle for Baker. Isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better move back a seat or two. A thousand thanks for all your trouble."

I moved back, thinking a little suspicion of trouble ahead, but not seeing how I could interfere. As the train ran slowly into the depot he pulled back the hammer and braced himself. As it stopped he made a move of his wrist and hand, uttered a groan, and just then there were loud cries on the platform. All of us ran out of the car. A man was being held by two others, while a third had taken his pistol and was saying:

"That's all right, Bill. Tom, but it's no use to shoot a dead man!"

I looked up at the car window. There sat my fellow traveller, eyes closed, jaw down, and the mark of death as plain on his face that all could read it. His finger was on the trigger of his pistol, and the barrel of the weapon rested on the window sill. Death had come to him while his finger pulled at the trigger to send some one else into eternity.

JACK FELL'S SLIDE.

The Ingenious Lad's Scheme was Successful in Ridding the County of Snakes.

SIMPSON'S CREEK, N. C., Sept. 1.—A few weeks ago a committee of citizens from Turkey Bend, Nigger Branch, and Snake Ridge called upon old Jim Fell to secure the aid of his ingenious boy, Jack, in ridding their farms and pastures of the pest of rattlesnakes. Everybody in the localities mentioned had sustained heavy losses, and it became necessary for the safety not only of the stock but of the settlers themselves that something be done.

Bill Wheeler was spokesman for the committee that lined up in front of Jim Fell's cabin that morning. Twelve men were there, and every one was armed with a hickory pole.

When old Jim Fell appeared in answer to the knock of the committee, Wheeler said:

"Yer boy Jack's to hum, heint he un?"

"Yas. Kum out yeer, Jack. Thar's a bunch o' fellars wants to see yer!" called old Jim to some one in the house, and Jack Fell, Simpson Creek's prodigy of ingenuity, appeared.

"We uns over to the Bend an' Nigger Branch an' Snake Ridge are 'bout et up an' ruin'd by the tarnal rattlers, an' the folks hev sent wo uns ez a committee to get you to kum over an' hep us out."

Then the Chairman went into a bill of particulars, describing the ruin and devastation committed by the swarms of snakes, and ending in an appeal to Jack to "git rite up and kum along back with the committee."

"What does them snakes stay, mos'ly?" inquired Jack.

"Therse got a den in a big cliff under Smoky Mountain, an' you un ken see a thousan' sunnin' theirselves any bright day."

Jim concluded to go and see for himself, and in the course of a couple of hours was standing at the foot of a tremendous cliff of brown and jagged rocks, more than two hundred feet high, in the side of the mountain. About 100 feet up the side of the mountain a big flat stone, ten feet wide and sixty feet in length, lay, with the upper end against a cliff lined with holes and cracks and crevices, while the lower end reached down within fifty or sixty feet of the bottom of the cliff at an angle of seventy or eighty degrees. On the upper end of this big slab of stone and about it for many yards, hundreds of rattlesnakes, of all sizes, from little ones of a foot in length to old, vicious-looking, dull-colored four-footers, with a dozen or more rattles, lay sunning themselves or wriggling about. To Jack Fell's calculating eye there must have been at least twenty bushels of rattlers in sight. He took mental note of the scene and its surroundings. The big stone especially struck his attention, as he saw that it was moving up and down, with a slow but regular movement, somewhat like the swaying movement of an old-fashioned springboard. The centre of the big stone seemed to rest on a stone a little higher than those about it, and the surplus weight at the top caused it to rise and fall as if upon a pivot.

"Gosh ding, if them snakes beent a-teeterin' themselves," said Jack; and that was a fact.

The snakes certainly appeared to enjoy the fun. Presently a big rattler on a stone closely overlooking the surging mass raised its head and began to rattle. Then the "teetering" snakes wriggled and glided off the stone, while others crept up and took their places. The big snake on the rock was keeping time, and at the expiration of every five minutes a new squad took the place of the old ones on the swinging stone and just laid themselves out for enjoyment.

"Well, that do beat anything I ever seed," said Pole Dillum, and the others coincided with him.

Jack Fell said nothing, but stood by himself and watched the fun. Presently he turned to the committee and said:

"We kin fix them snakes, of you uns 'll do jes' ez I say."

Of course the committee was unanimous on that point.

"Wal, less go to Dillum's house," said Jack, and off they went without asking a question, for although everybody was filled with curiosity to know what Jack was up to, they knew him well enough by reputation to satisfy them that he had a plan of some sort in his head.

When they got into Dillum's yard Jack told him to get two or three gallons of lard; and while he was getting the lard Jack set another of the committee to work hewing a wooden trough out of a small six-inch log about four feet long. Two or three others were put to work getting out strips of timber about twenty-five or thirty feet in length and three inches thick. These pieces were dressed smooth on one side with a spokeshave, and then greased with lard until it was smooth as glass.

"Pole, you bring that lard; an' Bill Wheeler an' Hank Harris kin kerry them poles. Cale, you ken fetch a bucket av pitch; an' you, Tom Billups, kin kerry a kupple of mallets an' stone chisels."

Wondering what in the name of Jim Vance he wanted with all this stuff, the men picked up their loads and started.

When they returned to the cliff Jack sent every man out after pine knots. These were fastened to the end of long poles and then lighted. With the burning pine knots blazing at the ends of the poles the committee ascended the cliff. The rattlesnakes set up a terrific racket, hissing and rattling, and had themselves out for a fight, but the burning torches were too much for them, and they broke for their holes, and in five minutes not a rattler was seen. As soon as the coast was clear a fire was built to keep the rattlers off, and then Jack set the men to work. The broad, flat stone, which was found to be almost smooth, was, as they had supposed, hung upon a stone near the centre which acted like a pivot, allowing the stone to rise and fall nearly three feet at a time. The long strips of timber were plastered on one edge with pitch, and then laid on the face of the stone somewhat in the shape of a V, but with the apex left open to a width of about three feet at the lower edge. The upper ends were ten feet apart. The face of the stone and the smooth inner surfaces of the strips were then coated heavily with lard, which the warmth of the broad surface soon melted sufficiently to cause it to run and fill all of the little irregularities on the stone.

Beginning at the sides of the strips of wood about four or five feet above the lower edge of the rock a shallow groove was cut, terminating at a point at the lower edge of the rock. The wooden trough was placed underneath the lower edge and the work was done. By that time the sun was disappearing.

"We kin all go home, now," said Jack, "an' we'll kum back in the mornin', an' then you all will see fun."

By daylight the next day Turkey Bend, Nigger Branch, Snake Ridge, and Simpson Creek had turned out en masse, filled with curiosity to see what "all them contraptions av Jack Fell's" meant. The crowd assembled about fifty yards from the foot of the cliff, anxious and impatient.

"Wait till the sun gets hot," said Jack, and as it grew hotter and hotter the snakes could be seen collecting at the mouths of their dens and crevices until hundreds of rattlers lay about and glided here and there. Their rattling sounded in the ears of the crowd like the buzzing of a dozen hives of bees. Presently a big rattler coiled to the top of the rock overlooking the swinging stone, and began to rattle. Then a couple of dozen snakes crept out on the upper edge of the stone and began to prepare for fun, but they were mistaken in the sort of fun they were going to have, for no sooner had they struck the greased surface than they shot down one after another over the rock, struck the edges walled up by the wooden strips, shot back toward the centre, and then off the rock, sliding and slipping ten or fifteen feet further on the sandy slope below. The sight so astonished the big snake on the rock above that he inadvertantly began to rattle again, and that sign being understood by the snakes above as a call to crawl up and enjoy themselves, another squad crept up on the rock, and away they went sliding down the incline. The old fellow rattled again and again, and as fast as he gave the call others crept up and took a shoot down the slide. By that time the first bunch of snakes had crawled back to the cliff and onto the stone and down they shot, thus forming a perfect line of snakes from the top of the stone to the bottom of the cliff and back again. By the time the snakes had made two or three round trips over Jack Fell's toboggan slide they had become crazed with the fun of the thing. Down they came and back they went, hissing and rattling. The old fellow at the top had looked on until he, too, became enthused with the fun of the thing, and off he went like the others over the greased incline. In the course of an hour the stone, from the effects of the sun's rays and the friction of the snakes' bodies, became so hot that it smoked as the writhing reptiles slid over its face, while the once rusty-looking bodies of the snakes began to glisten and shine as the fat of their bodies turned into oil and molted out of their bodies. Of course, not one-fourth of the snakes could get a chance at the slide, as those who had tired, I suppose, kept a moving belt four or five feet wide going and coming all the time. While all this was going on the crowd below stood gaping and uttering ejaculations of astonishment. But the sickening smell caused by the presence and excitement of so many snakes soon forced the crowd to retire, which they did to a hillside opposite, where, several hundred yards away and under the shade of the trees, they sat and watched the circus.

About noon it could be seen that the first lot of snakes had given way to a fresh crowd. What had become of them the men and boys could not see. The new ones, however, appeared to enjoy the slide fully as much as the first; but later in the day they, too, began to disappear. Everybody thought those that had disappeared had crawled into their dens to rest, but when after sundown and the disappearance of the snakes Jack, followed by the crowd, approached the foot of the stone, they saw a tremendous pile of snakes, exhausted, dead, and dying, stretched from the foot of the incline over a space of many yards. All of the snakes were so thin that they looked like long strips of loose snake hide not much thicker than a holdback strap of a Nawth Cah'lin' mule. The dead and dying snakes were pitched over a cliff into a deep hollow by the men, who used long, forked sticks for that purpose; then they, led by Jack, went on up to the foot of the inclined stone. When they reached the stone they were astonished to find that the long wooden trough which had been placed under its projecting edges was filled with yellowish, greasy looking stuff, which to their experienced eyes they knew to be the finest of snake oil. That accounted for thin and long drawn out appearance of the snakes found below. The heat of the stone and the friction of their bodies had melted all the fat in their bodies, and it had run down the stone and into the trough, leaving the snakes with just enough tissue to hold them together. The next day the same scene was observed, and the next, until at the end of a week there wouldn't be found a rattler in four counties. All of them had tried Jack's patent toboggan slide and slid themselves out of existence. Every evening Jack Fell emptied four gallons of clarified snake oil into a keg, and when the snakes quit coming he was ready for market with snake oil enough at a dollar an ounce to buy half a dozen farms.

FIVE RATTLERS AND A RAT.

They Hold a Hypnotic Séance, and a Bit of Cheese Broke the Spell.

"Yes, sir," said John Gilbert, the travelling groceryman, "Rattlesnakes can charm, provided you have enough snakes, and put a rat in with them. Then you watch them. They won't charm the rat. No. They will charm you. That is, if you are anything like I am, and you call it being charmed to stand gazing steadily at snakes and rat, with no inclination or desire to take your eyes off and go away. I was under the spell of such a fascination the other night, and I believe I would be there staring at those snakes and that rat yet if something hadn't happened to break the spell.

"It was up in Punxsutawney, Pa. There have always been a great many rattlesnakes about Punxsutawney, and even the name of the place doesn't scare them away. I was in that town last week, and a guest at the Hotel Pantall intimated that he would like to see a live rattlesnake. The landlord of that hotel is a very accommodating chap, and he at once sent a man out to get a rattler, telling him to hurry up. The man came back in a few minutes. He had five rattlesnakes, all nice, big, bright, sassy fellows, fresh from the freedom of the adjacent hills. The guest who had said he was anxious to see a rattlesnake turned out to be a liar. He didn't want to see a rattler at all, for when the man came in with his choice specimens the guest jumped out of his chair five feet, and grabbed his grip and left. But the landlord took the guest's discourtesy all in good part, and put the five snakes in the bay window in front of the house and shut them in.

"'I'll keep 'em there,' he said, 'so I'll have 'em handy, and won't have to waste any time sending out for one for the next guest who would like to see one.'

"I got through in Punxsutawney, ate my supper, paid my bill, and started to get the first train for the next town, where I had an important engagement. As I was going out the landlord came along. He had a big rat.

"'Going to put him in with the snakes,' said the landlord. 'It'll only last a few seconds, but you'll see some fun.'

"I did plenty of time, so I stopped to see the fun. The rat was dropped in with the snakes. The snakes were lying at one end of the window in a listless sort of way, but the instant the rat dropped in every snake was up in arms. Each one coiled quicker than a flash. Every rattler sounded a loud alarm. Five big and ugly heads were raised from the coils, and five black tongues darted out and quivered with the excitement of their owners. The rat crouched down in one corner and seemed paralyzed with fear. Ten glittering eyes glared at it, and nothing else was done for some time. I forgot all about my train and my engagement in the next town, and gazed at the snakes and the rat spellbound. Presently the rat moved, turned, and faced the snakes, and then made a dash at one, gave it a sharp bite in the neck, and jumped back just in time and far enough to avoid the reptile's vicious and deadly strike. The offensive tactics of the rat enraged the rattlers, and two more succeeded and made a rush for him. The rat showed fight. One of the snakes shoved its face within three inches of the rat, and ran its tongue out and in at him. This made the rat mad, and, watching its chance, he caught the snake's head and tongue off and spit it out on the bottom of the window. A tremor ran through the snake as if the nipping off of his tongue hurt him from snout to rattles, and he quickly retreated to the other end of the corner of the window. The other snake that had moved upon the rat then made a pass for it. The rat sprang up, jumped clear over the rattler, turned, and with a movement so quick that it made me dizzy fastened its teeth in the snake's neck, biting clear through. When the rat released the rattler the reptile keeled over on the floor, and although I could see by his glaring eyes and a convulsive movement along his entire length that he was alive, he didn't get up, and took no part in the subsequent proceedings.

"The success of the rat's manœuvres swelled his head, and he began to tread around in the window as if he owned it. The three snakes that remained defiant had scattered about in their fright, and, as they seemed to make a rush toward one, manage to elude its strike, and then dash at another, and then at the third, going from one to another in succession, worrying the enraged snakes until their fury was terrible to see. I stood there with my nose flattened against the glass, entirely oblivious to everything around me but the snakes and the rat. I have an indistinct impression that I heard my train come and go, and after a time another one, and some time later a third, but I can't say positively. I know that I never took my eyes off of the snakes and the rat.

"The rat had worried and drawn the fire of the three snakes, so to speak, for I don't know how many times, but it never made a straight move of their own. They had evidently found that singly they were no match for the cunning rat, and after a good deal of rattling to and fro, all three of the snakes massed themselves out side of the window. They stood in a row, covering that part of the floor absolutely. The rat was too good a general not to see that it wouldn't do for him to assail that phalanx of angry serpents, for the chances were that if one of them missed him one of the others would very likely hit him. So he rested in a corner for a moment and pondered. The gas pipe ran up that corner to the top of the window, and then across it to the side where the snakes were grouped in defensive front. The result of the rat's pondering was that he scurried up the pipe without stopping until he was directly over the snakes and six feet above them. The rattlers were not long-headed enough to see what this move of the rat meant, and they didn't change their position. The rat eyed them for a few seconds, and then jumped right down upon them, landing on them behind their bristling heads. He nipped one through the neck with his long teeth, and the other two were panic-stricken and glided to the other end of the window. The snake the rat had bitten through the neck lay dead in a paralyzed condition, as the one had done early in the game.

"The rat's ruse had worked so well that the rat seemed gloeful. He frisked around in aggravating proximity to the two remaining active rattlers, until the latter became terrible in their fury, but couldn't manage to get a blow in on the agile rodent. By and by something was dropped in the window upon the snakes. I didn't see what it was, but I saw that it was a piece of cheese. It lay behind the two snakes, and partially on one. The rat soon smelt the cheese, and with a bound went clear over the snakes and seized the savory morsel. He ate it and then went to the other end of the window. There rat nibbled at the cheese until he had eaten it all. Thus refreshed, he turned his attention to the snakes again. His luncheon seemed to have made him quite even than he had been