ELEPHANT HUNT IN SIAM.

A NEW YORKER TELLS HOW HE TOOK A HERD OF FIFTEEN.

It Was a Business Venture and the Nephew of the Sultan of Tringganu Helped Him—The Trap and How the Big Beasts Were Driven In and Tamed—He Broke the Record.

Charles Mayer, a New Yorker born and bred, has been engaged for the last few years in hunting, trapping, and collecting wild animals, snakes, and birds in the outlying parts of the world for zoölogical gardens and circuses. He has been in Siam and the Straits Settlements for two and a half years now, working in connection with R. Lambert, dealer in such wares at Singapore. Last year he distinguished himself by capturing a herd of fifteen elephants and breaking and taming them in what he thinks was record-breaking time. He considers his achievement especially noteworthy, as he worked on foot with no trained elephants, and as it was a private enterprise. The catch included two baby elephants, 3½ and 4 feet high, two bulls, one 8½ feet high with tusks 2 feet 6 inches long, and the other 9 feet high with tusks 3 feet 2 inches long, and eleven other beasts from 5 to 9 feet tall. He has sent to THE SUN this account of his hunt:

Any person wishing to travel in the interior of Siam, whether for pleasure, hunting, or trading, must obtain a passport from the Minister of the Interior of Siam, for protection's sake and also to enable him to pass through the tributary States. Without a passport such a journey is dangerous to attempt, but a passport insures respect, assistance, and hospitality from the native Sultans. Having obtained my passport to travel through Siam for the purpose of hunting, trapping, and trading in wild animals, I left Singapore about the middle of May, 1897, for a State called Tringganu, in Lower Siam, 350 miles northeast of Singapore and 900 from Bangkok, the capital of Siam. Tringganu, being a tributary of Siam, must pay every three years a peculiar tribute. This consists of two small trees, one of solid gold and one of solid silver—no plated ware, but the real metal. Each stands about three feet high, with its branches and leaves. It takes the native workmen nearly three years to complete the task, so that as soon as they finish two trees they must start afresh on two more. I was fortunate enough to be present as the guest of the Sultan of Tringganu at the time when the ceremony was performed by the priests of blessing the tribute, and when it was sent under escort through the town to be taken to Bangkok.

The natives of Tringganu are half Malay and half Siamese, and the language is very difficult to understand naturally, being half and half. They are in religion Mohammedans and are a very lazy people, not ambitious, easily satisfied, never troubling about the morrow. The average pay for a man for a day is two copans, equal in our country to about six cents. All the money is made by the Sultan and is of lead. The principal occupation of the natives is catching fish and planting and raising rice, which is the mainstay of their lives. Every male from 10 years up always carries a short sword varying in length from ten inches to two feet. Some blades are straight, others have edges crooked or zigzag. They are never brightened, but are allowed to rust, and all are posioned, so that a cut or scratch is fatal. The Sultan is an absolute ruler, having the power of life and death over his subjects.

Having got together and picked out my principal hunters, and this was their first attempt at catching elephants by the herd, as they had always killed them before or caught them in pits, under the protection of the Sultan and the Prime Minister, I started for a place called Marang, forty-five miles further inland, where I was told elephants were wont to travel, and where the lay of the country was favorable for the construction of a corral or trap. I learned later that a herd of elephants had been heard of some thirty or thirty-five miles further inland, and north of the place where I had decided to build a trap. By questioning the natives I discovered further that the herd had been in this neighborhood some four months, and had done considerable damage to the rice fields and sugar plantations. As I had no European with me, and as this was the first time that any of the natives had ever done anything of the kind, I had to direct everything, and could leave nothing to others. The nephew of the Sultan was with me with an order from his uncle to call out and collect as many men as I might require to assist me in the enterprise. As we passed through each village each chief, or, as he is called, pougala, had to receive us, pay his respects, &c., and see to our comfort, and send on to Marang ten more men to help to give their time and work to us for three weeks. They were then allowed to go back to their village, after the chief had sent ten more men in their place. In this way I had no trouble as far as men were concerned. Being the first white man that had ever been seen in that part of the country, I was looked upon as a person of great importance, and also being in the country of the sacred white elephant, I was supposed to be sacred also.

I started fifty men out to locate and track the elephants, with strict orders not to lose sight of them, and to send me daily reports as to their movements. When the elephants had been located I sent up 100 more men to surround them. The herd was reported to be thirty strong, including eight tuskers or bulls, and some small ones. Then came the construction of the trap. Those who have never seen one can form but little idea of the labor involved in setting up a trap to withstand not the impact of one or two of these huge animals, but the shock of thirty at once, if necessary. Trees varying from a foot to thirty inches in diameter have to be cut down to supply logs eighteen or twenty feet long. These are sunk into the ground five to six feet deep and at intervals of a foot apart. The logs at the top, centre, and bottom are braced together, and the fence is buttressed from the outside. A platform is built all around the trap proper, upon which men can run and with long poles having sharp spikes at the end can frustrate any attempt of the animals to crash or pull down the fence. It took me nearly one month to get the trap constructed. The trap was circular in shape, with a single entrance, and from each side of the entrance a wing 1,200 feet long extended. Every post of the wings and the inside of the trap had to be covered with leaves and foliage so as to give it as natural an appearance as possible, and every trace of man had to be removed and the spaces left by the cutting down of the trees filled in.

The trap being complete, the ceremony of opening its door was performed by an old Siamese priest. Along the wings leading to the door were ranged fifty men, twenty-five on each side, and each man held in his hand some fruits or flowers. Twenty men were stationed on the running platform holding a rope attached to the door so that at a signal they could pull it open. Another priest, armed with a long sword and shield, then approached the trap with songs and chants, followed by fifteen or twenty men, all singing and chanting. Dancing about and flourishing his sword at each man he came to, he finally reached the door. He danced about for a moment or so, then with a yell from all the men, the door, was pulled open and in they rushed to the far end, where they sprang up against the fence and then fell back as if exhausted. The offerings to the King of the Forests demanded by native custom were then made. The fruits, plants and flowers were buried and a white chicken was killed and the ground was sprinkled with its blood. These ceremonies were to insure a good catch under the favor of the King of the Forests.

The trap was now ready for work. I sent up 100 more men to join the others and slowly drive the elephants toward the trap. I started myself with fifty more men, cutting across the country, and twenty miles from the trap I came upon the rear of the herd. I had fully 300 men under me. They were distributed in the rear of the herd in the shape of the letter "L," the points of which were full half a mile apart. The men were about fifty or seventy-five yards apart from one another and all were directed by signals given on big gongs. Each man had either an old gun or a tom-tom, and when he heard the crashing of the elephants coming in his direction he made all the noise possible. The elephants would then go back. As the driving was all done by night, the elephants being left in peace during the day, it took us two weeks to get them to the trap. No person who has not had the same experience or has not hunted the elephant, not for the purpose of killing, but of taking alive, knows the danger and risk of such an undertaking in the jungle. At any moment the elephants are liable to turn on you and charge—not one, but a herd of wild elephants. One night during the drive we had a severe thunderstorm, and the elephants, getting alarmed at something, charged back in a body. Four men were killed by being trampled on and half the herd got away. We shot and killed two large bulls, or tuskers, one 8 feet, the other 8½ tall, with tusks 2 and 2½ feet long. This incident put us back fully a week, as we had to spread out and take a draw in again.

We now had sixteen elephants in the drive and started to drive them in as fast as possible, driving both day and night. One large bull did considerable damage to the smaller ones, nearly killed a man, and gave us a good deal of trouble, and also threatened to undo all our work. He was therefore promptly shot, on the night of July 12, 1897, we finally got them into the lead of the trap and it was then impossible for them to get away. The shouting, letting off of guns, and firecrackers and beating of tom toms was then deafening, and with a rush the elephants fled before it right into the trap. When the door was closed and made fast fifteen huge animals were found to be inclosed.

Then came a fortnight's feast. Word was sent to the Sultan, and he came with his suite in state to congratulate me on my success, and I was then indeed looked upon as sort of a god by these people of the jungle. People traveled for miles to come and see the inclosed elephants. They laughed, danced, and jumped about and showered all kinds of jests and jeers and abuse upon the poor animals, saying: "You will destroy our sugar, rice, cotton, fruits, and frighten our women and children so more! The Bear Orange Puttah (great white man) drives you in a trap like a rat, and you must kneel to him and do his bidding." In the meantime huts were built for the Sultan and his suite and a large shed was erected where dancing by the court girls, wrestling, sword fighting, spear throwing, cock fighting, and, in fact, all manner of amusement went on for two weeks. There was an incessant beating of drums, tom toms, &c. Presents were distributed among the hunters, such as cloth, rice, money, tobacco, guns, and knives.

The elephants, in the meantime, were being slowly starved. The second day they were in the inclosure there was not a sign of a tree, large or small, as they broke down, trampled, and destroyed everything within the trap in their rage. After three days of starvation a small quantity of food, including banana plants and cocoanut branches, was placed on the high platform where men were stationed with pikes. These men had been kept busy repelling the charges of the elephants after the food had been placed on the platform within reach of the elephant's trunks. The men drew back a little and the elephants were allowed to come close to the fence and reach up and take the food. This was repeated every day until the elephants would approach very slowly and hold up their trunks and beg for food. A large trough was placed on the ground outside of the fence and always kept filled with water. To the smaller elephants food was thrown, but they had a hard time of it, for unless they were very quick the larger ones would snatch the food away, and it would disappear in an instant. There were two baby elephants among the lot, one three and a half feet and the other four feet high. These little fellows were very amusing. I cut an opening in the fence large enough for them to squeeze through and placed food just outside the trap, and after a day or so they would come out with fear and finally would allow me to approach them and would feed from my hand.

In the meantime I was busy constructing the stocks, a quarter of a mile away from the trap. The elephants had been half starved to make the task of bringing them to the stocks a little lighter. This was no easy or light task, as the elephants were very dangerous, and besides, I had no trained elephants to work with. An opening was made in the side of the trap 4 or 4½ feet wide and on each side a stockade about 10 feet long was built. It was provided with sliding bars at each end. Tempting food was strewn along the ground to the end of the stockade. Once an elephant had been thus lured into it the bars were quickly slid into place. The elephant was then roped well, his feet were hobbled or tied together, his trunk was caught and fastened to one of his forelegs, and a long rope was made fast around his body and neck and to each leg. The hobbles being loosened a little, he was led and dragged to the stocks. These were under a large shed, and consisted of two large uprights sitting closely to the neck and back of the ears of the elephant, two at the hindquarters, two on each side with a bar in front and one in the chest, one across the hindquarters, and one under his body close to his forelegs. The elephant was then in such a posture that it was impossible for him to move forward or backward, or sideways, or to lie down. In this posture he was kept for three weeks or more. Each and every elephant has to go through a certain amount of punishment, and in that posture, being harmless, he can be approached by the men told off to look after him. There are two men to each elephant, and they must never leave him alone. They must feed, pet, and punish him, must talk with him and must get on and off his back, and so accustom him to man. After three weeks in the stocks a rope with a running or slip knot was fastened around his trunk close to his mouth, the hobbles were loosened, a long rope was made fast to each leg, the poles back of his ears and under his body were taken away, and with ten or fifteen men holding each rope he was backed out of the stocks. He was then pulled from right to left and led forward for about two hours, his keepers shouting and beating him all the time. He was then fastened to a tree, and a big meal was given to him. The next day he had to go through the same lesson, and if he took to it and did not give too much trouble (which, by the way, they seldom do after going through what they have) the hobbles were taken from his feet and only shoulder hobbles left on. At this stage the pretty well subdued elephants may be approached, fed, and petted at will, and without fear. Of course, there are some who do not give in so soon, and have to receive longer and severer punishment.

The two babies were never put into stocks. Two and a half weeks after they were caught and weaned from their mothers I shipped them down to Singapore and they were then reshipped to Java to the Barnuton circus. By the middle of October I had sent down to Singapore to be reshipped, perfectly tame and broken, two elephants for Java (the babies), four for Bombay for a native Prince, and four for Madras for Mysore, Mysore, I say with no small pride that I say that from the night of their capture, July 12, to the middle of October, I broke in these elephants so that they could be handled and would get down on all fours to allow a pack saddle to be fastened on their backs.

Of the fifteen that were caught ten were shipped away, two died, and the remaining three I have broken in, as I intend to use them in my next hunt.

BILL THE BUNK'S ERROR.

TWO YEARS OF HONESTY IN HIS LIFE ACCOUNTED FOR.

A Crushing Defeat Inflicted Upon Him by Some Men in Blue and White Suits While He Was Angling with the Pocketbook Game for the Money of Farmers at a County Fair.

"For two mortal years, in the prime of his life, Bill the Bunk was out of the swindling business," said Sidewalk Jack. "He was a disgusted man, and he declared that so long as he lived he'd never follow a circus or a country fair troupe again. He swore that all the suckers he or anybody else had ever worked, put together, wouldn't make half as big a sucker as he was, that he wasn't fit to talk to the humblest capper he had ever employed, that he was the champion all-around idiot of the universe, and that he'd be dinged if he'd ever presume to play horse with a countryman again; no, not if he was starving.

"Did you know Bill the Bunk? No? Well, you wouldn't be apt to by that name. He was a Boston man and his name was Johnson. He used to be called Boston Bill, but he got to be known on the fair circuits as Bill the Bunk. He was a nervous little man, with a jerky way of talking. He had eyes that took in everything and a convincing way with him that used to work havoc in country towns. He was really one of the best sharpers that ever took to swindling as a trade. He piled up a considerable fortune by his operations, and although he was shot at several times and once came near being the central figure in a lynching bee, never quit his hazardous business until he made the mistake that disgusted him and converted him into a private citizen for two whole years.

"I was working for Bill then. He had a contract with a company of fair boomers, allowing him the exclusive privilege for games of chance on fair grounds where they had charge. The company used to arrange with the farmers of places about fifty miles apart for an annual fair. The farmers supplied the grounds and most of the exhibits. The company had a lot of old plug race horses, a portable merry-go-round, a shooting gallery, a glass blowing outfit, a few acrobats and a menagerie of moth-eaten animals. They carried this from place to place, and everywhere we went, we were the event of the year.

"Bill the Bunk had shell men, three-card-monte men, and pocketbook men out all over the grounds working the farmers for all they were worth. In the larger places we struck the shell and card men were the best sources of revenue, but in the small places the pocketbook game was the winner. The countrymen were gluttons for the pocketbooks, and I have taken in over $200 in an afternoon at the game.

"Bill, by the way, was the inventor of the pocketbook swindle. He had a firm in Boston that used to turn out the pocketbooks for ten cents apiece. They were made of paper, but looked like fine leather. They were gaudy affairs with tin trimmings, which were make to look like silver. About fifty of these packed tightly in a box, like a lot of envelopes, would constitute an outfit for one operator. The crowd which congregated around the man with the box would be informed that two-thirds of the pocketbooks contained sums ranging from 50 cents to $20. It was 50 cents or $1 a chance, according to the apparent prosperity of the crowd, and, win or lose, the speculator could keep the pocketbook.

"Now there wasn't a cent in one of these pocketbooks, but Bill had a great scheme for luring the suckers on. At every place we struck he would go out and corral some ten or fifteen of the natives. He would pay them a dollar apiece to keep their mouths shut and do as they were told. When they left Bill each one had one of the pocketbooks, containing a good-sized bill, in his pocket. Their work was to distribute themselves in the crowds around the pocketbook men and boom the business by purchasing chances. After making a purchase they slide the pocketbook into a pocket and a minute later hand out the one that Bill had given them. Then they'd open it in front of the crowd and display the ten or twenty dollars they had apparently won.

"Say, it was a great game, and no one ever tumbled to it because I've always hired men living in the town and well known to their fellow citizens. If Cy Jones won $20 at the game it spread around like wildfire, and in ten minutes a hundred of Cy's friends would be around taking chances. At the close of the show Bill would give the shell men, cappers, get back his money and get out of town as soon as possible, for it wouldn't be comfortable for him if one of his late employees took it into his head to talk.

"Well, it was a bright June morning when the fair outfit deposited itself in the flourishing little village of Cross's Corners. Bill was in great spirits, having mulcted the natives of Mosby Junction in a very considerable sum two days before. We got in the place at 6 in the morning, but there was a crowd on hand to greet us and lend us a hand in arranging things. The farmers had their prize pigs, cows, bulls, and displays of vegetables all ready, and everything looked promising for the mulct-gathering in the town. It was a good thing for us grafters.

"Standing around the fair grounds looking at everything with mouths and eyes wide open, we noticed a number of queer-looking men. They were all dressed alike, with suits of blue and white striped stuff, it looked like bed ticking, and were an amazingly innocent appearing lot.

"'Behold the honest sons of toil,' said Bill; 'they've come to town to see the show. I think we can use a bunch of them in our business.'

"A few minutes later I saw Bill in earnest conversation with a group of the men and knew that he was hiring them to cap our game. We opened up full blast when the people began to come, but business was slow, so I winked to one of the fellows in bed ticking and began to talk in his direction. I wanted him to make a purchase, show the pocketbook Bill had given him, and set the others interested. The fool looked at me with a blank smile on his face, but didn't say a word. I worked at him for several minutes, but never a move did he make. Finally it got so exasperating that I sidled up to him, gave him a kick in the shins, and whispered:

"'Buy, will you?'

"A light broke over his face and he said in loud tones: 'Shall I do it now?'

"'Now's the time, gents,' I said, with a laugh, but I wanted to kill the dour sight there.

"Well, he bought a pocketbook, stuck it in his pocket, and started to walk away.

"'Hold on there,' I exclaimed, 'let's see what luck you've had. Show the people the game's on the level.'

"'Don't you know what I've got?' he said, smilingly pleasantly

"I wanted to assassinate him right there, but there was nothing to do but smile back at him and keep up the bluff.

"'I hope you've made a good selection,' I said. 'Open the pocketbook and show the people what luck you've had.' I thought maybe he had a remnant of sense left and would play out his part after all. But he didn't. He looked puzzled and remarked:

"'But the man said you understood about it. He said that you would know what was in the one he gave me.'

"Say, it began to get uncomfortable. If you've never had experience with a lot of mad Rubes you don't know what they are. They're as meek as lambs normally, and will march to the slaughter without a murmur. But once they get the idea they're being swindled and made fools of, gee whiz! they will come at you like a cyclone, and you want to look out. I didn't know what minute this mob was going to get on to the racket, and I thought I was gone for sure when my capper hauled out the two pocketbooks and said:

"'I forget which one the money's in; they look so much alike.'

"I think the blow would have fallen in a moment if something hadn't happened to distract the attention of the crowd. From the other end of the grounds I heard the sound of men's feet traveling quickly. Then there were shouts of 'Kill him!' 'Lynch the dog!' and I saw Ford, my side partner, running for all he was worth for the woods, followed by about 200 men. The people were firing sticks and stones after him and a couple of excited fellows with revolvers were shooting recklessly at him.

"I was standing like a man in a stupor when some one cracked me in the jaw and remarked:

"'Here's another of the cusses, boys.'

"The next minute a crowd was at me. I dropped my pocketbooks and over $100 in money, which I had in my hand, and ran after Ford. I met two other men who were working for Bill, fleeing for their lives, and joined them. Just as we entered the woods we heard a great shouting behind us and, looking back, saw Bill, himself, fleeing before the wrath of the good citizens of Cross's Corners. His little legs were going like pistons, but he had no chance of escape. Two or three men grab him, and then there was a general mix-up in which we lost sight of Bill.

"Suddenly, however, there were three pistol shots, and the boss came tearing out of the crowd, revolver in hand. Two men were lying on the grass, but the rest came after Bill, who was inconsiderate enough to flee in our direction. Well, there's no doubt but what thereof have been a big lynching bee right there if we hadn't discovered a friendly swamp in the woods. By jumping into mire up our waists we threw the countrymen off the track. Bill came plunging in after us and we made our way over to a flat stone in the centre of the swamp and hauled ourselves up on it. You never saw such wrecks in your life. Bill had been shot in the arm and leg, and Ford had a bullet in the fleshy part of his leg. We were all cut and bruised, covered with mud and slime, and badly used up.

"Bill was the first to speak. His language was unintelligible. He uttered every cuss word known to mortal man, and some that he coined for the occasion. When he had sworn for five minutes we joined him, and, I tell you, the atmosphere of that swamp was of a deeper, darker hue than it ever had been before. Finally Ford thought the time had come for explanations.

"'Bill,' he said, 'I ain't kickin' at the bad turns of fortune, because I know what to expect in this business, but I'd like to know where you got them guys that was capping to-day.'

"'Ford,' says Bill, 'the question is a proper one. I got them around the grounds, same as I've been doing for years.'

"'Well, when we came to swap experiences I found that the fellows in the bed ticking suits had acted about the same all around. None of them seemed vicious or anxious to give us away, but they didn't remember their parts, and the first row started over one of them asking for instructions right before everybody. They had made our game apparent to everybody, and, as I said before, a mad Rube thinks long and acts suddenly. When we came to figure up the pecuniary losses we found that in our flight we had thrown away or dropped $700 between us, besides losing our entire stock of pocketbooks. Then there were the fifteen men hired by Bill; they had received from $5 to $20 apiece. Of course we couldn't hope to secure any of that. We would be lucky if we got out of the neighborhood with our lives.

"At dusk we plunged into the mud of the swamp again, and made our way to a road running through the woods. We had travelled it about a hundred yards when we heard the tramping of many feet ahead of us, and coming in our direction.

"'They've got the soldiers out for us!' moaned Bill.

"'All hands look out for themselves.'

"We plunged into the thicket just as a man with a peaked cap and blue suit covered with brass buttons came around a corner in the road. Behind him, marching in pairs and close up to one another, came some fifty men. They wore blue and white striped suits, and in the ranks were Bill's fifteen cappers. A half a dozen men in blue uniforms came up behind. I didn't know what to make of it, but I was soon enlightened. Bill jumped out of the woods into the middle of the road, strode up to the men in the blue uniforms, and said:

"'You can finish the slugging right here if you like, but, by God, I want to know who these men you've got in tow are.'

"The men burst into roars of laughter and Bill hauled out his gun.

"'Hold on,' he said, 'I've had enough monkey business to-day. Out with it, who are they? So help me, I'll send at least one of you to blazes if you don't find your tongues.'

"At this, said one of the men, 'you and your gang are the biggest lot of suckers that ever come to Cross's Corners. The next time you want assistants don't engage lunatics. This lot are harmless and go where they like during the day, but they're unreliable.'

"Bill's gun fell from his hand and his jaw dropped. 'Lunatics,' he muttered. 'I hired lunatics. Me, Bill Johnson of Boston, hired insane men to cap for me. Well by——'

"It's unnecessary to quote Bill further. His peroration in the swamp was mild compared to this outburst. His oaths were terrific, and he wound the whole thing up with the resolution never to do another bit of swindling.

"That was the experience that disgusted Bill the Bunk with life. There's a whole lot of his friends that don't know to this day why he laid off those two years, and I think they'd be a bit surprised to know the true story."

MAHS' M'KEEVER'S MULLET.

A TAR-HEEL TEMPERANCE TALE FROM THE CAPE FEAR COUNTRY.

How Absalom's Rapid Career and End Led the Black Homer of Jimtown to Fight Shy of Persimmon Beer, Peach and Honey, Scuppernong Wine, and White Corn Liquor.

SOUTHERN PINES, N. C., March 2.—"I done have a powuhful temp'unce lectchuh one time, down yon in de Cape Fair kentry," said the Black Homer of Jimtown, "an' I done fight mighty shy o' 'simmon beeuh, an' scup'nong wine, an' peach an' honey, an' w'ite co'n lickuh, suh, ev' sence dat time. Jicketty! Peahs to me lack I nevuh did hear tell o' setch a temp'unce lectchuh lack dat lectchuh done bean! Ef all de cullud folks in de Piney Woods kin have setch a temp'unce lectchuh lack dat, duh done bean a powuhful sight mo' nigguhs in de meetin' house, suh, holluh'n 'Glory!' an' a mighty sight less of 'em snickin' to de cock fight wiv a razuh in dey pocket! Yes, suh! Shu's yo' bo'n!

"Long time sence de wah, Mahs' McKeevuh—co'se he doan' bean Mahs' McKeevuh no mo' den, but we des' natch'ly call him mahsuh 'kaze we cain't get out'n de way o' it, an' he mighty fine man—Mahs' McKeevuh he done t'ink he go up No'th an' see how t'ings lookin' up dah, an' he kim home bahmby tickle mos' to deff evuh a feesh pond w'at he done see on a man's plantation up dah, an' he tu'n to an' meck a feesh pond fo' he ownself right in de do' yahd. An' he'sen' an' he git gold feesh an' silvuh feesh an' red feesh an' streaky feesh an' crawfeesh, heaps an' heaps of 'em, an' tu'n 'em in de pond, an' dey 'peah mighty fine, de way dey scoot and scrummage an' ramificate roun' in dat pond, suh—mighty fine! Den, one day Mahs' McKeevuh he cotch in he net a monst'us big mullet, an' he tu'n de mullet in de pond. De mullet he root an' poke he snoot roun' on de bottom, an' he so desp'ut bad lookin' dat mahsuh he teck a great shine to him an' name him Absalom.

"One day Mahs' McKeevuh he bean watchin' Absalom pokin' he snoot roun' an' roun' an' in an' out, des' lack he bean sahchin' fo' suffin' an' he can't fine it, an' bahmby mahsuh say:

"'Tony,' he say, 'peahs to me dat dah feesh done bean mighty dry. Dat feesh bean lookin' fo' a drink o' suffin, shu's yo' bo'n!' he say.

"'I have to snickuh w'en mahs' he say dat, an' I tink to myseff, 'Guess yo' bean lookin' fo' suffin' to drink yo' ownseff, Mahs' McKeevuh, an' done foun' it, suh!' But I say:

"'Sho, mahsuh!' I say. 'Feesh dey doan' drink suffin'! Ef dey do, ain' day got de hull pond to he'p deyseffs in!'

"'Tony,' Mahs' McKeevuh say, 'dat mullet Absalom he know too much to drink wahtah!' an' mahsuh go to de house. Bahmby he kim back wiv a bottle o' milk, an' he done fit a nozzle on it, suh. Den he shove dat nozzle down in de pond, an' Absalom he cock he eye up at it a spell, an' den he wiggle up an' grab it. He suck he big mouf full o' milk, but peahs he doan' lack it, an' he sput it out an' wiggle back to de bottom an' look up at Mahs' McKeevuh des' lack he done bean 'gusted wiv him. Mahs' he lie back an' snickuh an' chuckle.

"'Absalom he done t'ink I teck him fo' a calf,' mahsuh say, 'an' he doan' lack it! I reckon dat dah feesh know a heap,' mahsuh say, 'an' I des' gwan to see how peeuht he done bean.'

"Den mahs' he ponduh in his mind an' bahmby he say:

"'Tony,' he say, 'I done b'lieve dis hyuh Absalom know so much dat 'simmon beeuh des' gwan to set good on he system!'

"'Now I des' pinin' fo' 'simmon beeuh my ownseff, 'kaze I know de heaps o' joy duh bean in it, an' I cain't satiate myseff to t'ink Mahs' McKeevuh done gwan to cas' he beeuh on de wahtuhs dat a-way, des' fo' dat ol' mud-snoot mullet to poke he nose in, an' me right dah a-quiv'n an' a-shiv'n fo' des' a little sniff of it my ownseff, an' I hollah:

"'Go 'way, Mahs' McKeevuh!' I holluh. 'Dat monst'us foolish, suh! Doan' yo' go squanduh 'simmon beeuh on a clay-rootin' feesh w'at ain' got no lips to smack ovuh it, suh, an' cain't feel it's snap. Dat de mos' onciv'lized pusseedin' I evuh did heah of sence de wah, suh.'

"But mahs' he done gettin' an' say, 'Tony,' he say, 'I done b'lieve dis hyuh Absalom know so much dat 'simmon beeuh des' gwan to set good on he system,' an he skittuh in de house, git a bottle o' 'simmon beeuh, squeeze de nozzle on it, an' p'int it down in de pond. Absalom he cock he eye up at de nozzle, an' bahmby he wiggle he heset down de nozzle lib' in him, suh, dan a Peedee nigguh in Augus'. But I des' weesh yo' kin see dat feesh w'en he poke he nose 'gin dat nozzle an' git one sniff! Jicketty! He cays dey pop open, an' he fins dey rise lack dey done been eahs on a skittish hoss, suh! Den he close he snoot on dat nozzle an' give a suck. Mighty Gab'el! yo' des' wiggle yo' ears, suh! He leggo de nozzle and back off a little bit an' he chaw on dat 'simmon beeuh, an' roll he eyes des lack he done got de powuh dat blessed minute an' gwan to shout 'Hallelooyuh!' Den he swash up'gin dat nozzle agin, shet he snoot on it, an' suck an' suck, an' close he eyes, an' ope he eyes, an' roll he eyes, an' try to bat heself on de belly wiv he tail till duh ain' no mo' 'simmon beeuh lef' in de bottle, suh, an' Mahs' McKeevuh des' swoop back on de groun' an' roll an' holluh an' kick he heels. An' he holluh:

"'Dah, Tony!' he holluh. 'W'at I done tol' yo'! Dat feesh know enough fo' 'simmon beeuh to set good on he system!'

"'Peahs lack he do,' I say. 'An' I knows des' as much as dat feesh, I reckon, Mahs' McKeevuh!' I say, but mahs' he so desp'ut boun' up in dat mud-rootin' ol' mullet dat he nevuh did teck de hint, suh. An' w'at yo' tink dat feesh done? He go back to de bottom an' how he do cut up didos! His eyes dev bolge, an' he grin lack he simple. He dive at de goldfeesh, an' de silvuh feesh, an' de streaky feesh, an' he stan' on he haid in de mud, an' wiggle he tail, an' teck on shameful. He swash up to de top an' swish 'way outen de wahtuh, an' tu'n ovuh an' swim, lack he bean a clown in de succuss, suh, an' ope he mouth des' lack he boun' to holluh an' holluh!

"'Jicketty!' Mahs' McKeevuh say, w'en he kin quit chucklin' an' rollin; 'Absalom done try to sing he woan' go home till mo'nin', shu's yo' bo'n!'

"'Mahs' McKeevuh,' I say, 'dat feesh bean shameful drunk, suh!'

"'Shu' fly!' mahs' he say. 'Di'n' I tol' yo' he done know a heap!'

"Den I go way, suh, mighty sad an' pow'ful disapp'inted. Nex' mo'nin' I go ovuh to de pond, an' Mahs' McKeevuh he kim down dah. Absalom he lie humped up 'long a rock, lookin' mighty dumpy, an' lack he feel monst'us bad. He hab he haid 'peah desp'ut heavy, an' ne eyes dey mos' shet.

"'Ho, ho!' mahs' he say. 'Peahs lack Absalom ain' feelin' peeuht dis mo'nin.' I spec' he done need a eye opener, Tony.'

"'An' w'at yo' t'ink Mahs' McKeevuh done do, suh? He mix a pow'ful hoot o' peach an' honey—a pow'ful hoot, suh! Um-m-m-m—um! how it do meck my mouf wahtuh des to catch de scent o' dat hoot! He mix it, an' he put it in de bottle, an' he fit de nozzle on, an' he push it down in de pond fo' dat disgraceful feesh to tampuh wiv, suh! Absalom he stagguh up an' guzzle it lack an ol' topuh, an' he wiggle back an' prance around an' shove he ears back an' swagguh 'mongst d'udduh feesh des' lack he nevuh did feel bad in he life! An' now dat do tickle Mahs' McKeevuh!

"'Yah, yah!' mahsuh chuckle. 'Des' lack a So'th'n gemmun, suh!' he say.

"'I cain't stan' setch a was'e o' soothin' lickuh, suh, 'kaze it shameful, an' I skittuh 'way fum dah. But Mahs' McKeevuh des' spen' mos' he time c'rousin' wiv dat monst'us bad feesh. He fotch out he scup'nong wine, an' Absalom guzzle dat lack he been fotch up to it from de cradle, suh. Mahsuh fotch out de peach an' honey, an' de feesh des' natch'ly at home wiv dat too, 'kaze it grow ovuh to dat pond but dah bean dat mullet stagguh 'mongst dem, an' act' shameful, 'kaze he full o' lickuh de bull time, suh, an' Mahs' McKeevuh tiyin' back an' declah'n to goodness dat feesh know des' as much an any So'th'n gemmun dah is from Cape Fair to ol' Virginny. One day Absalom he done load up on de 'simmon beeuh, an' he hoover an' Scup'nong wine, an' den Mahs' he fotch out he w'ite co'n lickuh, w'at been made back yon in de hills, suh, an' done run de blockade, too, suh, shu's yo' bo'n! Dat feesh nevuh do have none o' dat w'ite co'n yit, an' w'en he suck a snootful froo de nozzle he leggo mighty quick an' look pow'ful s'prise. De wahtuh it stah fum he eyes, an' ne gape like he retchin' fo' wind. But he stone git he breff bahmby, an' he snatch dat nozzle agin an' swamp mo'n five finguhs o' dat w'ite co'n fo' he drap it.

"'Jicketty!' Mahs' McKeevuh say. 'Dat dah feesh done got a soul bigguh'n a beef's baht, suh!'

"'But dat w'ite co'n it done teck to wrickin' on Absalom bahmby, an' sho! doan' he be mussy! He git full o' fight, suh. He swush 'mongst dem gold feesh, an dem silvuh feesh, an' dem streaky feesh, an' he shove 'em, an' he punch 'em, an' he swat 'em. Um-m-m-m-um! how he do swat dem po' feesh! He act desp'ut, suh, an' I declah I spec' ev' minute dat he done pull a razuh! De gold feesh, an' de silvuh feesh, an' de streaky feesh, dey done squiffle away an' hide bes' dey kin, an' den Absalom he tu'n to an' pick a fuss wiv one lack dat big mussy feesh so quick he dunno waffo' he livin', an' he mighty glad to stagguh off an' hide 'hind a rock an' nuss he so' haid.

"'Peahs lack w'ite co'n been a leetle too onsoothin' fo' dat feesh,' Mahs' McKeevuh say. 'He strung a heap too fine fo' w'ite co'n,' he say.

"Absalom he nevuh skittuh out fum dat rock till evenin', suh, an' den Mahs' go down dah an' push down a bottle o' 'simmon beeuh. De feesh swiggle a mouful, but sput it out. Mahs' he t'ink mebbe Absalom's system bean shuck up too much fo' 'simmon beeuh, an' he push down some peach an' honey. Dat feesh sco'n it, suh! Dat feesh sco'n peach an' honey! Den Mahs' he t'ink Absalom pinin' fo' wine, an' he fotch out de Scup'nong. Yo' t'ink dat shameful feesh done look at Scup'nong? No, suh! He tu'n up he snoot at it! An' dah bean me, suh, pinin' an' quiv'n an' shiv'n an' hank'n fo' des' one jaw!

"'I declah!' Mahs' McKeevuh say. 'Peahs lack dis hyuh feesh done tu'n ovuh a new leaf!'

"But Mahs' he fotch out de w'ite co'n lickuh an' try Absalom wiv dat. 'W'at yo' tink, suh? Dat shameful feesh grab dat nozzle, an' he suck an' guzzle an' woan' leggo till Mahs' tap him two free times on he haid wiv he cane! Mighty Gabr'el! how low dat feesh done sink! And attuh dat nuffin' have powuh enough fo' Absalom but w'ite co'n, and' he des' settle squah down an' hang roun' all de time waitin' fo' Mahsuh to task him to have suffin'. He dah so reg'lun, dat one day Mahsuh say:

"'Tony,' he say 'I declah ef it doan' 'peah lack dis hyuh feesh done 'quiah a tase for lickuh!'

"Den Mahs' t'ink he breck Absalom fum it, an' he tempuh he swigs o' w'ite co'n wiv a right mahk o' wahtuh, an' den he sap de lickuh on him squah off. But nex' day he go to de pond, an' he see Absalom wiv he eyes poppin' mos' outen he haid wiv skeeuh, pullin' heseff back in a hole in de bank, des' lack he done tryin' to hide fum suffin' w'at chasin' him. Den he swush out an' skittuh lack ol' Satan done been attuh him, an' hide in de rock, an' peek out to see ef he bean attuh him yit, an' he eyes mos' drappin' on he cheeks, he so skeeuh!

"'Jicketty!' Mahs' McKeevuh say. 'Absalom done see lizzuhds an' snakes an' red devils! He got de tremuhs. I done shet the lickuh off too sudden, suh,' Mahs' say.

"'Den Mahs' he skittuh an' git he w'ite co'n. Absalom scoot up an' grab it. Um-m-m-m-um! How lickin' good 'peahs lack dat do tas'e to him! He done slip free monst'us big hoots o' w'ite co'n inside heseff, an' den he swagguh off peeuht as evuh, suh! But he on de downwud paff! He mus' have mo' an' mo' w'ite co'n ev' day, an' he git swigs up an' scrumpey. He eyes dey tu'n 'aid, an' he doan' keeuh how drunk he get. Mahs' doan' dah shet he lickuh off, kase he get de snakes ag'in, an' Mahs' caint bah to see dat. He swull an' bloat, an' get so shameful dat de gold feesh an' de silvuh feesh an' de streaky fish dey shun him lack he bean d'tson, an' de crawfeesh pitch on him an' frow him out ev' time he no sun' whah decent feesh done stay. Oh, he des' a common bummuh, suh, an' bahmby he 'gin to feel he disgrace. One day he hang roun' an' lay fo' w'ite co'n till 'peahs lack ef he swamp any mo' he boun' to bus', shu's he bo'n. Den he sneak to a rock way to de udduh end de pond, an' he stop lack he ponduh. Den 'pears lack he done meck up he mind, 'kaze he stagguh back two, free feet, an' swush heseff laid fus 'gin dat rock, lack a ram sheep buttin' he very bes'. Absalom he bounce back lack a ball, shivuh a spell, an' tu'n he belly to de sun, dwid as a pisened pup, suh!

"'Dah, Tony!' Mahs' McKeevuh say. 'See w'at de cuss o' lickuh done do! Fight shy of it, Tony!' Mahs' say, an' done mix heseff de stiffes' hoot o' peach an' honey I evuh see him tampuh wiv, suh!

"But dat bean a pow'ful temp'ance lectchuh, sho'ly, suh, an' I done fight mighty shy o'——tank yo', suh! Tank yo', suh!"

The Black Homer took the Northern man's flask, looked up and down and all around, sampled it, and handed it back nearly half full.

"Ah-h-h!" he said. "Ef Mahs' McKeevuh only des' done keep it lack dat, suh, Abs