

Cuthbert's Rattler

"Cuthbert!"

The droning of the humble bees in the late honeysuckle on the farmhouse porch was the only reply.

"Cuthbert, you answer me!" There was menace in the tones and a boy's muffled voice promptly replied from the loft over the carriage house.

"Yes'm, I'll be there in a minute!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Dilts, "he's always a-biddin' at some patent contraption or other with no partickler results; although I will say his settin' hen breaker, with a little alterin' bids fair to do the trick. Here, you scamp, with your father's second cousin a-comin', you let me call an' call when you're to go to Dodd's grocery for me 'fore you meet the train!"

"I've just invented something," said the boy "would you—"

"You hook up Prince jest as fast as the law'll let you," said the busy woman. "I haven't time to look at inventions now. Here's a list of things I want, an' when the train comes in, you look for a young man named Adolph—that's a good sissy name for you—an'—oh, dear! There's a rattlesnake som'eres close by, an' I'm as 'fraid as death of 'em!"

Sure enough, from near the carriage house was heard the warning "chirr-r-r-r-r" of a big rattlesnake. A smile forced its way over Cuthbert's features at the sound and he turned hastily to hide it.

"Cutty," said his mother, coaxingly, "jest holler to your pappy in the lower cornfield as you go by, an' have him come in an' kill that feller, will ye? I dassen't go in the barnyard till he's been done for, an' I need eggs."

"Yes'm," said Cuthbert obediently, with a strong desire to choke.

At the end of the lane the boy met a wandering dealer in old clothes.

"Young shtentiman," said the merchant, eyeing the long sunny stretch to the house; "do you know if your respected mother would like a bargain in fine tablecloths to-day for some old clo'es of no possible use?"

"Can't say," answered the youth shortly, for he did not fancy the man's looks; "guess you'll have to trudge in and ask her yourself," giving Prince the whip.

Mrs. Dilts and Grandma Amory were hard at work polishing the family silver when the peddler came quietly into the dooryard.

"Good afternoon, ladies," he said, "haf you any old clo'es of no possible use—Cracious!" Then his eye rested on the silver. "What beautiful old-fashion silver dishes you haf—marry a hundred years old."

"Two hundred, more like," said Mrs. Dilts, briskly rubbing away. "They was old when grandma-here was a young woman—no, I hain't got no old clothes to swap for no red tablecloths," she said in changed tones, for she had seen in the man's face a look which alarmed her. "Gilt on, now," she ordered, as the peddler persisted in showing his wares, "or I'll have my husband put you off the place. An' say, there's a rattlesnake close by here, som'eres, too!"

"Rattlesnake!" cried the peddler, and in a jiffy he was off.

The sun was setting when Cuthbert returned from the depot with Cousin Adolph. Cousin Adolph was a lathy young man with a glib tongue who at once made himself quite at home. At the supper table he ate voraciously and discoursed on his life at a distant seminary. He would soon graduate and be an unworthy preacher of the Word, he said, with upturned eyes, at the same time dexterously forking a third piece of cake. The family silver, glittering with much rubbing, attracted his attention.

"Rare old pattern, that, Aunt Kate," he said, familiarly; "worth a mint of money, I dessey?"

"We've bin offered as high as two hundred and fifty dollars for it," said Mrs. Dilts, proudly, "but the money ain't made that could buy it!"

"Quite right, quite right," assented Cousin Adolph, heartily; "sell the stock off the place first? I hope you have a safe place to lock it up, for I can tell you that old silver like that is rare bait for burglars!"

"I generally leave it out, but I guess for to-night I'll put it in the fireproof cubberd," said the good lady, a remembrance of the covetous peddler of the afternoon lingering in her mind.

The family was about to retire when a messenger came in haste from a neighboring farm with word that they had a sick horse, and asked that Mr. Dilts come over. Mr. Dilts had considerable veterinary skill and loved animals, so he went at once.

"If it's colic, I'm good for all night," he said, "but I guess Cousin Adolph and Cuthbert can protect you—and keep an eye on the family plate."

"Lock up good, Cutty," said his mother; "I'm nervous about a peddler that was here to-day." In addition to the simple bolts and bars of a farmhouse Cuthbert arranged a contrivance of his own which he slipped out to the carriage house for; and after seeing Cousin Adolph settled in the guest chamber, he sleepily tumbled into bed.

The house sank into silence. Outside, the katydids kept up their unending controversy. An hour—two—three, passed, when Mrs. Dilts suddenly woke oppressed by a feeling that all was not well. Sitting up in bed she listened intently and was sure that she heard footsteps in the dining room below. Silently stepping into the hallway she suppressed a shriek at the sight of a dim figure.

"Hah-h-h! It's me—Cutty," whis-

pered the figure. "Say, ma, it's a burglar, sure 'nuff; shall I wake Cousin Adolph?"

"Yes, yes, do," said the alarmed woman.

Easier said than done. The door of the guest chamber was locked on the inside and they dared not knock.

"It's the peddler a-burgling," whispered Mrs. Dilts, wringing her hands. "Oh, my precious silver! He's found it in the cubberd; oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"Go back to bed, ma," ordered Cuthbert, as silently he stepped to the head of the stairs. In a moment there was a diversion in the dining room. Clear and shrill came the sickening sound, the chirr-r-r-r of an angry rattlesnake before it strikes. A moment of silence and again, "chirr-r-r-r!" There was a frightened exclamation, and throwing prudence to the winds, the burglar let fly an article in the direction of the noise.

At the crash, Mrs. Dilts covered her head with the bed-clothes. Strangely enough, grandma and Cousin Adolph slept on unmindful. Again and again sounded the terrible rattle, and the noise of the hanging lamp as it fell to the floor told the anxious boy in the hall that the intruder had taken to the table top for safety.

"Treed!" exclaimed Cuthbert, with unpeppable satisfaction; "and now to keep him there till pap comes home!"—and the rattler gave out his spiteful challenge again.

Slowly, oh, so slowly, the hours crept on until the noise of wheels in the lane told them that the neighbor was bringing Mr. Dilts home. Springing to the window, Mrs. Dilts called to her husband the astounding news. The two men dashed to the barn and returned, armed for the fray. They paused at the door at the sound of Mrs. Dilts' voice:

"The snake! I forgot the snake!" she wailed; "there's a monster rattler in there with the burglar—"

"Go on, Pap," cut in Cuthbert's clear tones; "that snake's a fake!" Then there was a great crashing of glass as the burglar recklessly threw himself at the nearest window. A short, sharp struggle and he was the panting captive of the two farmers. The precious silver, done up for ready transportation, was evidence of the fellow's guilt.

Tremblingly, Mrs. Dilts dressed and descended to the disordered dining room.

"To think that that peddler would have took my silver two hundred years old, and most prob'ly a-melted it," she said as she descended the stairs—"Goodness sakes! it's Cousin Adolph!"

Sure enough, for the first time the captors noticed that the midnight intruder was none other than the sound-sleeping cousin!

"Sorry to make it unpleasant for kin, I'm sure," said the farmer, grimly; "but we're going to give you a ride over to the county jail, just the same, Cousin Adolph."

Cousin Adolph ground his teeth.

"See here, Cuthbert," said the farmer on his return, "was that rattler out by the carriage house yesterday a fake, too? For if it was I owe you a warning for calling me out of the field on a fool's errand. Let's see your contraption."

Cuthbert brought it. "You see, Pap," he explained, "it's a kind of wire with a wound-up spring and a trigger. You hitch ma's smoothing iron with a string and pull the trigger—"

"Chirr-r-r-r!"

Mr. Dilts jumped. "Gracious! but that's a good imitation! What are you going to do with it, Cutty?"

"Guess I'll patent it as a burglar-catcher," said Cuthbert with a grin—American Boy.

Killing a Man

Here is a brigade of us in battle line across an old meadow; our right and left join other brigades. We have thrown down the rail fence, gathered logs and brush and sod, and erected a breastwork. It is only a slight one, but enough to shelter us while lying down. A division of the enemy breaks cover half a mile away and comes marching down upon us.

They are going to charge us. Orders run along the line, and we are waiting until every bullet, no matter if fired by a soldier with his eyes shut, must hit a foe. I select my man while he is yet beyond range. I have eyes for no other. He is a tall, soldierly fellow, wearing the stripes of a sergeant. As he comes nearer I imagine that he is looking as fixedly at me as I am at him. I admire his coolness. He looks neither to the right nor to the left. The man on his right is hit and goes down, but he does not falter.

I am going to kill that man! I have a rest for my gun on the breastwork, and when the order comes to fire I cannot miss him. He is living his last minute on earth! We are calmly waiting until our volley shall prove a veritable flame of death. Now they close up the gaps and we can hear the shouts of their officers as they make ready to charge. My man is still opposite me. He still seems to be looking at me and no one else. I know the word is coming in a few seconds more, and I aim at his chest. I could almost be sure of hitting him with a stone when we get the word to fire. There is a billow of flame—a billow of smoke—a fierce crash—and 4,000 bullets are fired into that compact mass of advancing men. Not one volley alone, though that worked horrible destruction, but another, and another, until there was no longer a living man to fire at.

The smoke drifts slowly away—men cheer and yell—we can see the meadow beyond heaped with dead and dying men. We advance our line. As we go forward I look for my victim. He is lying on his back, eyes half shut and fingers clutching at the grass. He gasps, draws up his legs and straightens them out again, and is dead as I pass on. I have killed my man! My bullet struck him, tearing that ghastly wound in his breast, and I am entitled to all the honor. Do I swing my cap and cheer? Do I point him out and expect to be congratulated? No! I have no cheers. I feel no elation. I feel that I murdered him, war or no war, and his agonized face will haunt me through all the years of my life.—Detroit Free Press.

A Struggle to the Death

From the St. Nicholas comes this exciting description of a fight against an American panther:

Frank, accompanied by the three great hands, did not hesitate to charge this formidable and sudden enemy. But the effect was not what he expected. Instead of bounding away, the great cat, looming larger and more terrible the nearer he approached, faced his foes fiercely, crouching above the slain sheep, ready to spring, and yelling screams of demoniac ferocity. The mustang stopped and roared, then stood snorting and trembling, and could not be forced nearer. The great dogs rushed on. And Frank sat in his saddle and watched the fight, unable to assist, too fascinated to fly.

Now he realized the imprudence of leaving his arms, and repented his boyish folly in despising discipline founded upon experience.

"Old Strategy" was the leader of the three great dogs. His wise-brain did the planning for all, and never did soldiers obey a chief with more careful attention to signals of command than the other two great dogs gave to him. He was the fleetest of the three, "Reserve" who ran in the rear, and always waited the proper time to leap and seize, was the most powerful. "Skirmish" the lightest of the trio, made it his business to distract the quarry by flashing feigned and real attacks all over him, here, there, and everywhere, to provoke openings for the other two.

Just as the battle began, the clouds opened wide, and the brightening moon shed a distant glimmer over the scene through the mist that rose from the wet grass, disclosing the huge mountain-lion standing over his prey, with flattened ears, snarling face, teeth gleaming, claws widely spread, mad with hate, menacing the dogs.

And now Old Strategy, warily observant, crept, growling, directly in front of the angry lion, tempting and taunting him to spring. Nearer—a little nearer yet. Several times the lion seemed about to leap, judging by his lashing tail and setting haunches; but Skirmish distracted him with a sudden feint, or Reserve threatened his flank. When each dog had a good position, Old Strategy provoked a leap by a sudden movement. The lion sprang, body, limbs and claws spread to strike. But Old Strategy wasn't there when he alighted; and the lion did not alight where he aimed; for the moment he leaped Reserve and Skirmish dashed in and caught him in the air, one on his flank, one by a hind knee-joint, and held back with such force

An Evening of Handicaps

Exactly as the racer who possesses some slight advantage over his competitors is made to carry weight, so the player in a handicap party who shows a disposition to get ahead is held back by added burden. Herein lies the fun of the affair.

The games are played from table to table. They are described in the Woman's Home Companion as follows: At each table there is a certain amount of work to be done by each player. If a player does successfully the work of the first table to which he is assigned, and is ready to pass to the next in order, he must accept a handicap or a certain amount of work to be done at the second table in addition to the work which belongs there.

For the first table provide a large box of anagram letters. Each player in turn draws one from the box, and ten minutes are allowed in which to form with them twenty good English words. The words are arranged on the table in front of the player, and when the bell rings as a signal for the finish they are examined by the hostess, and pronounced correct or incorrect.

At the second table the players are asked to write the names of one hundred famous men and women.

Button-sewing renders a third table a lively one. Ten must be sewed to strips of cloth. Buttons with four holes are chosen. The thread must pass three times through each hole.

A "cutting-out" contest next taxes the eyes and fingers. Each person is given four pasteboard models, by each of which he must make four copies separately. Folding the paper is illegal.

At a fifth table the players receive skeins of embroidery-silk badly tangled. The two longest pieces of this silk disentangled promotes the two skillful people.

In the sixth heat ask each player to write the letters of the alphabet, and opposite each of them a geographical name of prominence beginning with that particular letter. Thus: A, Asia; B, Baltic; C, China; D, Dahomey.

This completes the series of six tables. Seats are drawn for as in progressive euchre. The two persons who are first to complete the circuit win the prize. In order to progress it is not necessary to have done the exact amount of work prescribed by a table at which one is placed, but to have done more than other people at the same table. It is always the two persons who have been most successful at any stage who progress to the next.

Now for the handicapping! The two players who are entitled to pass from any table on account of superior work each receive a handicap which they will be obliged to assume. At the first table, for example, the two who progress each receive a slip, which requires that the first ten presidents of the United States be written down in the order in which they came. It must be made at the second table in addition to the work of naming famous men and women.

The two players who are most successful in naming the one hundred famous people while at the second table are sent forward to the third. But if either or both of these two were handicapped from the first table they must, in addition, have completed their lists of presidents. All papers are taken away by the hostess at the end of each round, so that any two players who have fallen in a former attempt must begin again on the same ground as the new-comers, except that they are exempt from handicaps.

The handicap taken from the second table requires the players to drive ten nails apiece in a straight line into small pieces of pine board.

From the third table players progress handicapped with an order to string twenty-five beads in addition to the other work.

The burden attached to the fourth stage takes the form of an after-dinner coffee-cup filled with three kinds of grain. The work here consists in separating the grain into three little heaps, each formed of one kind of cereal.

The fifth handicap consists in adding correctly a good column of figures.

The sixth hindrance lies in correcting the orthography of ten English words misspelled.

Each person progressing has a star pasted upon his tally-card. Two stars are always pasted at each table. As soon as there are two persons whose tallies show six stars the game is at an end. Thus, to win the game players must overcome six legitimate tasks and five handicaps. In every case the player who progresses must have completed his handicap work before beginning on the legitimate work of any table.

A Brave Woman

of whom were girls. The mother was an invalid—the father blind and the breadwinner for the family was the only son, Albert Hasser. The fatherland was engaged in war. Albert Hasser was drafted and starvation stared the family in the face, when Kunigunde announced her intention of going into the army in her brother's place. The family wailed, trembling and fearful of discovery, while the brave girl put on her brother's clothes, imitated his appearance in every possible way, and marched away with the others drafted to the war. Patriotism is strong in the German woman, and it gave to the spirit of Kunigunde Hasser a courage fully equal to that of the men in her company. Her letters home were frequent and they were all signed with her brother's name and addressed to herself. Before many weeks of army life were gone by the girl grew desperately homesick, but that made no difference. She proved herself as good a soldier as the brother whose place she filled could possibly have been. Cheering letters addressed to himself came to her from Albert and never once did she think of giving up the desperate role she had assumed.

During her term of service she fought in three battles, but was never once wounded. Twice she was made a prisoner. It took quite as much courage to face the rough treatment of the prison life as it did to stand firm to her purpose on the battlefield. They were subject to the greatest hardships and fed on water and hardtack, with barely enough of that to keep them from starvation. After being a prisoner for six weeks Miss Hasser escaped. She cunningly eluded the guards, and when the prisoners were next counted one was missing. She was recaptured in a week or two, and her second period of imprisonment was three months long. All the suffering that could go with being huddled with a host of other prisoners in a place that was not a decent abode for rats, and never once getting enough of the roughest fare to satisfy hunger, she endured and no one ever suspected her secret.

It was just after her third battle that trouble came in the shape of discovery. There had been great slaughter among the forces. It seemed as if most of the men in her company had been killed. She expected to be killed herself, but a special providence seemed to protect her, for she was not even wounded. The remnant of the company gathered about a campfire, some dropping on the ground, worn out with the strain of the battle, others bathing the grime and perspiration from their faces and hands. The woman was among the latter, and something aroused the suspicions of a fellow soldier. He watched her for a few moments and then went up to where she stood and asked her name. She gave the name of her brother.

"Are you sure you're a man?" asked the comrade doubtfully.

"Quite sure," she responded coolly, but with trembling knees.

He went to the captain of the company and told his suspicions. He called the surgeon and then the woman knew the last hope of remaining undiscovered was gone, and she confessed that she had come in her brother's place and told the story of the substitution. She expected to be shot, although the officer assured her that no harm should come to her. On her knees and in tears she begged them to allow her to say a prayer and write a farewell to her mother before they condemned her to death. For some time she could not be made to understand that she was to receive no punishment other than an honorable discharge for the noble part she had played.

The scene around the camp fire was one that will never be forgotten by those who saw it. The heroic and patriotic part she had played touched the hearts of the roughest of the men, and many a soldier who would not have uttered a groan beneath the surgeon's knife brushed away a tear with the soiled, blood-stained sleeve of his uniform.

Her bravery caused Adam Karl, an officer of the company, to fall in love with her. She was sent home at once, and for a long time he lost track of her, but when his term of service in the army expired he sought for her until he found her, but she could not be persuaded to become his wife.

Miss Hasser's fear that when the company discovered her deception her brother would be obliged to go and finish out the term of service, of which several months yet remained, was never realized, and he was not only left at home to take care of his parents and sisters, but the family was placed in a position from which not even a far-off glimpse of poverty could be had. Many years ago Miss Hasser came to this country. Every year since she left the army her lover, Adam Karl, pays her a visit, but she still refuses to change her name. She has in her possession the uniform she wore in the army, her papers of honorable discharge and many other mementos of her service as a soldier.

Elizabeth and Her (Tub) Garden

"All the time we were unpacking and getting settled in the new parsonage I was wondering where I could have my flower garden," writes Elizabeth Steadman to Vick's Magazine. "There wasn't a spot of ground available around the house, and I couldn't possibly be content with a few jars on a plant stand.

"Back of the house there was a little creek with a rustic bridge and on the opposite side a hill, covered with an undergrowth of trees and wild grape vines. Later on, it proved a most effective background for my tub garden. In searching for some sort of a box or keg for my pet Hydrangea I found a lot of kerosene barrels stored in the cellar.

"An idea came to me. I had heard of raising cucumbers in barrels, why not grow plants in them? The parson and I talked it over and decided we would try the experiment.

"Three were sawed in half and the sides of all perforated with holes three inches in diameter, at irregular intervals. Holes were bored in the bottoms, too. This done, we first put in a layer of small stones, then some straw, and on these pieces of sod to prevent the soil from choking the drainage.

"We placed the first lot of plants in the lower holes, filling in with soil until we reached the next row. If the aperture was too large, we blocked it with a little piece of sod. When the barrels were about half full, we placed a four-inch drain pipe in the center, filling in with soil around it. One barrel was used for different varieties of colons. It was a beautiful sight later on.

"We arranged the half barrels between the taller ones, and they were filled with plants of tall growth with trailing vines in the holes on the sides.

"As the barrels were placed along the bank of the creek under the hill, we could easily water them and that was really all the care they needed. How they did grow! The parson was so proud of our success that all his friends, even the presiding elder, had to inspect Elizabeth's tub garden, and I shall hunt for more tubs next summer."

The Game of Fishpond

The New York Herald describes an amusing little parlor game which needs no materials and is warranted to create fun.

The pond is a portion of the table bounded by a slipnose and the fishes are the fingers of the players.

The noose is fastened to a rod held by the fishermen. At an unexpected moment the fisherman cries, "Out of the pond!" and at the same instant raises the rod quickly, thus drawing up the noose and catching such fishes as have not been nimble enough to escape to dry land.

The captured fishes must pay forfeits to be released.

A Natural Supposition.—"What was the first thing the children of Israel did after they came through the Red Sea?" asked a Sunday school teacher.

"I spect they dried themselves," answered a small boy.

Have You Seen My Sheep?

The players form a circle. One player walks around the outside, and touching someone on the back, asks, "Have you seen my sheep?" The one questioned answers, "How was he dressed?" The dress of some player is then described, who, when he recognizes himself, must run around the outside of the circle and try to reach his own place before he is tagged by the questioner. If tagged, he is "it," and the questioner takes his place in the circle.—The American Boy.