

HOW HE WON HIS WIFE.

My friend, Professor James Rodman, is a member—active or associate—of a score or more of scientific societies, and is constantly making trips to out-of-the-way parts of the globe to study the characteristics of reptiles and collect fresh specimens of rare species.

About a year ago I parted with him on the wharf as he was sailing for La Guaira, Venezuela.

He was bound on a long trip through the almost impenetrable jungles that line both banks of the Aranca River—one of the western tributaries of the mighty Orinoco—and I received only one letter from him, announcing his safe arrival in La Guaira.

Yesterday, however, when I sauntered into my club for lunch, the porter handed me a note, which he said had been left by a gentleman the night before.

It read as follows, and was signed "James Rodman."

"My Dear Colonel—Arrived home from South America yesterday, and came here at once to hunt you up. Had a very exciting and eventful trip. Drop in when you get this and break food with us. We are stopping at the Metropole, and dine at five.

"P.S.—Mrs. Rodman is very anxious to meet you."

The postscript nearly took my breath away. My friend Professor Rodman married? It could not be possible, and I rubbed my eyes and read the line announcing the fact that there was a Mrs. Rodman two or three times.

Ordinarily the marriage of one of my bachelor friends does not surprise me, but the professor was such an ardent woman-hater—he had had an unfortunate love experience early in life—that I would have staked a generous slice of my modest fortune on his living and dying a single man.

I looked at my watch, found I had barely time to dress, and hurried home with all speed.

I lacked ten minutes of five o'clock when the cab I had engaged set me down at the door of the Metropole.

I sent up my card, and was immediately shown to the professor's apartments.

Our greeting was of the most cordial character, and, in a hasty glance about the room, I noticed abundant evidence of the presence of one of the fairer sex.

"My wife is dressing," said the professor—and I noticed that he blushed when he uttered that endearing title. "I'm sure you'll like her, for she's the most sensible little woman I ever met. But for her bravery, I would not be here talking to you now."

Instantly I scented a romantic story, and was about to put a leading question when the door opened and one of the most entrancing visions of female loveliness that my eyes had ever beheld stepped into the room.

"Paquita," said the professor, when she halted just over the threshold, a trifle embarrassed at sight of a stranger, "let me present my oldest and dearest friend, Colonel Taylor."

Instantly her face lighted up, and she came toward me with outstretched hands.

"I am delighted to meet you, colonel," she said, with the most charming accent imaginable. "We have talked about you so much—so very much—that it really seems like meeting an old friend."

I murmured my pleasure at thus being complimented, and we were chatting together when a servant announced dinner.

It was a splendid meal—the Metropole is noted for its cuisine—and I did it ample justice, for the table is my weak spot, and a good meal, well served, always puts me in the best of humor.

I am rather an abstemious man in the matter of wine, being somewhat of a sufferer from gout, and the professor is a total abstainer.

He and I did not linger long, therefore, after the table was cleared, but joined Mrs. Rodman in the drawing-room.

She was very young—not more than eighteen, I should judge—and it looked to me like a genuine love-match.

"Here are some fine native cigars, colonel," said the professor, "Paquita does not object to smoking."

When I lighted a cigar and leaned back in my chair, Mrs. Rodman drew an ottoman up to her husband, and seated herself at his knee in such a position that she could look up into his face, and at the same time give her guest courteous attention.

The professor glanced down into her upturned face, gently patted her hair, and said:

"I told you before dinner that but for Paquita's bravery I would not be here to-day. With her permission I will tell you why."

She laughed, her face flushed, and she said:

"You have my permission, if you will confine yourself to the facts. My connection with the adventure was a very trivial one, for I was badly frightened, and really would have been able to do anything but for the help of the fire ants."

"That's all nonsense, Paquita," contradicted her husband, good-naturedly. "But the colonel shall judge for himself what measure of credit is your due. I am only sorry that the monster who might have been my death has not yet passed the customs authorities. You shall see him as soon as I get him out and have him properly set up."

Thereupon my friend told me the adventure to which he had reference, and when he had finished I declared that Mrs. Rodman was a together too modest in making light of the great service she had rendered a man whom you will be forced to acknowledge was in as unpleasant and perilous a predicament as can be imagined.

Upon his arrival in La Guaira the year previous, Professor Rodman had at once chartered a small launch, with the necessary crew and attendants, and shipped to Urbana, on the Orinoco River, at its confluence with the Aranca River.

At this point he outfitted his little craft with provisions and other necessary supplies, and early one morning started on his long journey into a country but little traversed by civilized man.

To enter into the details of his voyage, or to briefly catalogue his many scientific discoveries would only weary the reader.

He was much surprised one day, after having for several weeks steamed through a primeval wilderness, to suddenly come upon an extensive clearing on the right bank of the river.

The well-built house and other out-buildings, and the carefully cultivated fields surrounding it, were a handsome sight to the professor, and he made a landing.

Great was his surprise to be received at the little wharf fronting the huddle of buildings by a fair-skinned man, who addressed him in English and bade him welcome.

It was the owner of the estate, Absolom Gano, who had emigrated to this wild country.

He had married, in Urbana, the daughter of a wealthy Venezuelan, and his household was now managed by his only daughter, Paquita, his wife having died about three years previous.

A king visiting a brother monarch could not have been more hospitably received and entertained than was Professor Rodman by Planter Gano.

The planter was something of a scientist himself, and told his guest many stories concerning the habits of the countless horde of reptiles that swarmed through that tropical country.

He had a great deal to say about a particularly large and ferocious boa constrictor which infested a deep jungle in the rear of his plantation.

"I've seen him twice," he said, "and he's the biggest snake I ever dreamed of. Once I wounded him, but he escaped. He's a wily old beggar, and all our efforts to trap him have been so far unsuccessful."

The glowing description he gave of the great serpent fired the professor's scientific ardor, and he determined to effect the capture of the monster.

For this purpose he made several trips into the jungle, generally being accompanied by the planter and his daughter, and assisted in his search by a small army of servants who vainly beat the bush in a search for the colossal boa.

They had selected as their base of operations a little, cleared spot in the midst of the jungle, where a gaudy tent was erected, and hammocks were swung between the great trees that walled in the oasis.

One day, with the beaters busy exploring the thicket, the professor's attention was attracted to a new and particularly lively species of lizards.

Seizing a small hand-net, he rushed toward the bright-headed fellow, but it nimbly escaped him, darting down one of the numerous paths that had been cleared through the jungle.

Hatless, and without firearms of any sort, the scientist dashed after the lizard, and the planter, fearing that the unprotected nature of his friend's head and violent exertion might produce sunstroke, called to Paquita to follow the professor and take him a hat.

She laughingly complied with the request, and hurried down the jungle path in the direction taken by the scientist.

He was nowhere in sight, and the girl walked briskly, coming at last to the end of the path.

A wall of thorny undergrowth confronted her, but, undismayed, she pushed her way through the brambles, calling the professor by name.

No answer came back to her, and, halting, she listened for some sound that might guide her to him.

At first she heard nothing, but presently there came to her ears a faint, muffled cry for help and the sound of crashing branches.

"Professor, where are you?" she shouted, and pushed her way through the dense tangle of creeping vines, not minding the wounds inflicted by the sharp thorns.

"Help! help!" was the faint cry that she heard.

And presently, parting, the vines, she saw her father's guest struggling in the coils of a gigantic serpent.

The big reptile was wound about the scientist's body like a cable and was fast crushing him to death.

His face was turned toward her, and she saw with horror that it was purple, and that the imprisoned man's eyes were starting from their sockets.

She realized his awful peril, and knew that unless he was instantly released his life would soon be crushed out.

Pale and trembling, and wringing her bleeding hands despairingly, she looked about for some weapon to give the monster combat.

Hidden among the undergrowth was a tree limb of generous size. Seizing this, she crept cautiously toward the serpent, which, with blazing eyes, was tightening its coils and hissing loudly.

She had to be careful lest a blow intended for the snake should strike the professor, and in moving about for a point of vantage, her foot was plunged to the ankle in a mound of soft earth.

Almost instantly her lower limbs began to smart and sting, as though red-hot needles were being thrust into the flesh.

She realized that she had disturbed a nest of fire ants, and knowing the pugnacious character of these pestiferous insects, she determined to make them her ally in rescuing the professor.

With this idea, she bent forward and struck the snake a sharp blow with the tree limb she had picked up.

With an angry hiss, the serpent darted toward her, dragging the body of its victim, who had relapsed into unconsciousness.

The writhings of the serpent further

disturbed and enraged the ants, and they began to swarm over its scaly body, sinking their fiery mandibles into its flesh.

This was a foe that the snake had not bargained to meet. Stung to madness by the ants, the monster began to relax its coils about Professor Rodman's body, and thrash about to rid itself of the swarm of ants.

Although suffering excruciating pains from their fiery stings, Paquita bravely seized the professor by the shoulders, and, exerting all her strength, dragged him to a place of safety.

Then, with a wild cry for help, she fainted dead away.

"If so happened," said the professor, in conclusion, "that several of the bush beaters heard her cry and rushed to the spot. While two or three of them attended to Paquita and myself, the others made haste to noose the struggling serpent. Their shouts and cries brought host Gano and a dozen of his servants to the spot. They carried my brave rescuer and myself to the little tent, and we were brought back to consciousness. Except the bites of the ants, which were very painful, and a few scratches, Paquita had suffered no damage. I was less fortunate, the terrible hugging I had received had so bruised my body that for several weeks I was confined to my bed. Paquita was my nurse, and—"

"She fell in love with you," interposed Mrs. Rodman, "and is to-day the happiest woman in the world."

The following week I had an opportunity of viewing the big boa. It was certainly an ugly-looking monster. I could not help shuddering when I thought of my friend being crushed to death by the great serpent's muscular constrictions.

ORDEAL OF WALKING ON FIRE.

How Our Ancestors Practiced the Great Ordeal.

Faith-urists and others have of late been reviving the old belief that physical forces can be controlled by a direct appeal to Heaven, and much has been written on the subject. This belief was at its height in the Middle Ages. The most famous instance is the ordeal of Barthelemy, which is thus described:

A huge pile of fagots was collected in the middle of the plain. Through the midst was left a path fourteen feet long and barely two feet wide. On each side the wood rose nearly to the height of a man's shoulders. When the mass was fired the flames mounted up in a wavering pyramid thirty feet high, uniting over the passage in a sort of Gothic arch. Around it were assembled more than 40,000 men in a wide circle, for the heat was like that from Nebuchadnezzar's furnace.

Then Barthelemy advanced, barefoot and lightly clad. In his hand he bore the sacred lance, decked with streamers and pointed heavenward. As he paused a high official of the Church proclaimed the ordeal in these words:

"If this man has seen Jesus Christ face to face, and if the Apostle Andrew did reveal the divine lance to him, may he pass safe and sound through the flames; but if he is guilty of falsehood may he be burned in this fire, together with the lance which he bears in his hands."

And all the multitude bowed their heads and cried,

"MAY GOD'S WILL BE DONE!"

For Barthelemy, guilty or innocent, what a moment! He fell on his knees and implored Heaven to bear witness to the truth. Then, springing to his feet, he rushed against the blinding heat, plunged under the vault of flames and was lost from sight.

A shout went up from the army, half grief, half exclamation. It was thought that he had been utterly consumed. But a moment later he appeared on the further side, still holding the lance. Both friends and acquirers thronged toward him with congratulations. The crush was like the tug of battle. Then it was seen that he had fallen prone upon the ground.

He was hurt to the death. In fact the flesh was almost falling from his body. Some claim that he was trampled upon by the mob; others that the fire had done its work. There may be truth in both statements, but the fire was enough. The victim perished and the miracle was discredited. Few will question the justice of the verdict, however, cruel and senseless the manner of obtaining it.

Such was the ordeal by fire as practised by our ancestors. There was no humbug about this. Every detail was carried out with Western thoroughness and honesty, and beside it the Benares performance, though undoubtedly very mysterious, seems a trifle tame. And when we remember that crowds of well-meaning men have been known to testify that they saw witches riding overhead on broomsticks, we feel justified in receiving such reports with a grain of allowance, all these doctors, lawyers and professors to the contrary notwithstanding.

FIJI WEDDING DOWRY.

Whales' teeth form the coinage of the Fiji Islands. They are painted white and red, the red teeth being worth about 20 times as much as the white. The native carries his wealth around his neck, the red and white of his coinage forming a brilliant contrast to his black skin. A common and curious sight in the Fiji Islands is a newly married wife presenting her husband with a dowry of whales' teeth.

HOUSEHOLD.

GLADIOLUS.

The gladiolus is most effective when planted in clumps. Planted singly, it does not furnish body enough to appear to the best advantage, as each bulb will grow up only two or three flower-stalks. But in groups of a dozen there will be stalks enough to give a strong effect and the mass of color furnished will be all that could be desired.

The flower-stalks will need some kind of support, or they will be broken down by sudden or strong winds. One of the best supports we have ever tried is made by setting four posts in the ground about each clump of plants, about a foot or eighteen inches in height, and nailing strips about them. Across these strips fasten wire or stout strings in such a manner as to make a sort of lattice, with meshes two or three inches square. Through these meshes the stalks will thrust themselves, and get from them all the support they need. This method will be found an easy one to provide, and much more satisfactory than tying each stalk to a stake. This gives the plant a formal primness which robs it of all natural grace, and necessitates a great deal more labor than the method advised.

The gladiolus is one of our best flowers for cutting, as it lasts well if the water in which it is placed is changed daily. It is admirably suited to use in large deep vases for the corners or other prominent places in a room.

EXTERMINATING WEEDS.

Women fond of pretty door yards have observed that when a good, healthy burdock, nettle, teasel, ragweed or pigweed springs up beside a poppy or marigold the weed seemingly thrives just as well, while the desirable plant becomes decidedly "out of place." A vigorous use of the hoe at once upon the appearance of the little weed seedlings, where a hoe can be used, is the quickest and most effective way to dispose of them; but if they are allowed to grow for a few days they may be easily pulled up root and branch. If a weed has attained any size never cut it off with the hoe, but pull it up, or generally new shoots will quickly come up from the old crown. Whatever the way or means, keep the weeds down entirely at all hazards, for they rob the soil and render otherwise fertile places decidedly objectionable. A wise gardener is he who never allows a weed of any kind to go to seed about his place for a considerable distance about the outskirts, thereby saving himself many a backache the following season. When large weeds about to seed are pulled up they should be burned as they might germinate.

DOMESTIC USES OF CORN.

Green Corn in the Ear.—Corn should be cooked as quickly as possible after being picked. It may be either boiled, steamed or roasted. How many times when a child we have roasted it on the stone hearth, thinking all the while we were eating it what good taste the Indians had, and almost wishing we were an Indian or gypsy so we could have it every day. It may be left in the husks and roasted in an open fire outdoors.

Green corn should be thrown into boiling water and need boil only five minutes when the starch will be sufficiently cooked to be digestible. Of course, it remains in the water about twenty minutes, as it takes some time to reach the boiling point after the cold corn is put in. The inner husk may be left on if desirable; many people think it prevents the sweetness of the corn from being boiled out into the water.

Corn Fritters.—To one dozen ears of corn, use one-half pint of milk, one-half teaspoonful of salt, two eggs, one-half pound of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder and a sprinkle of pepper. Score the corn down the centre of each row of grains, then with a blunt knife press out the pulp, leaving the hull on the cob. Never grate corn, as in that way you get all the hull mixed with the pulp. To this pulp add the milk, salt, pepper, yolks of the eggs and the flour. Beat well. Beat the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth, add them to the baking powder, stir carefully until thoroughly mixed. Have ready a pan of deep lard, drop the mixture by spoonfuls into the boiling fat; brown on one side, then turn and brown on the other. Remove each one with a skimmer, drain on brown paper. Serve very hot. Do not pierce the fritters with a fork, as it allows the steam to escape and makes the fritters heavy, canned corn may be used, allowing one pint finely chopped.

Stewed Corn with Tomatoes.—Scald and peel six good-sized tomatoes, cut them in pieces, put them in a porcelain-lined kettle with a tablespoonful of butter and a slice of onion; stew slowly thirty minutes. Husk one dozen ears of corn, score down the centre of each row of grains, press out the pulp, add it to the tomatoes, cook ten minutes. Add another tablespoonful of butter and a palatable seasoning of salt and pepper. After adding the corn, watch carefully or the corn will settle to the bottom of the pan and scorch. Serve very hot.

Scalloped Corn.—Husk one dozen ears of corn, score and press out the

pulp as previously directed. Scald, pare and cut fine six good-sized ripe tomatoes. Measure a half pint of stale bread crumbs. Put a layer of corn in the bottom of a baking dish, then a layer of tomatoes, then a sprinkling of bread crumbs, dust with salt and pepper; another layer of corn then the tomatoes, bread crumbs, and so continue until all the ingredients are used, having the last layer bread crumbs. Put bits of butter over the top and bake in a moderate oven a half hour.

To Hull Corn.—Put one pint of clear, hard wood ashes in two quarts of cold soft water; boil fifteen minutes, stand aside until the water is perfectly clear then drain it off carefully. Dip your finger in the water, rub it against your thumb, and if it feels slippery, add as much cold water as will cover two quarts of white corn. Return the corn and the lye to the porcelain kettle, boil gently until the hulls begin to start; then with a skimmer dip out the corn and throw it into a pan of clear, cold water. When you have it all out rub thoroughly with the hands to remove the hulls and also to cleanse the corn of the lye. It may be necessary to rub it through three or four fresh waters, but this washing must continue until the corn is perfectly free from the taste of lye. Then put it into clear water and boil until tender, about three or four hours. Drain, add a quarter of a pound of butter and a palatable seasoning of salt and pepper. A half pint of cream may also be added, if liked. This corn having been soaked in an alkali, to remove the hull, has, of course, lost a quantity of corn oil, and therefore makes a good summer food.

Corn Griddle Cakes.—For these use one quart of scraped corn, one-half pint of milk, four eggs, one-half pint flour, one tablespoonful melted butter, one-half teaspoonful salt. Scrape the corn and press out as previously directed for corn fritters; add the yolks of the eggs, milk, salt, melted butter and flour. Beat well, then strain carefully the stiffly beaten whites of the eggs and bake at once on a hot griddle. Do not add baking powder or extra flour, if you can possibly handle them.

Salted Corn.—Cut the corn from the cob uncooked. Put a layer in the bottom of a cask, then a layer of salt, another layer of corn, another layer of salt and so continue until the cask is full. Place a board on top of the corn, on which put a heavy stone and keep it below the brine. This cask may be filled at intervals by lifting the board, adding more corn and replacing it. After packing the corn, if you find in two or three days that there is not sufficient moisture to moisten the salt, add about one pint of water. Then as the juice comes from the corn there will be sufficient brine to cover it thoroughly. When the cask is filled, put a few horse-radish tops underneath the board; this will prevent souring and molding. Cover the cask with a cloth, tucking it in closely around the edges. Then put the board over the whole, if properly packed, corn has been known to keep perfectly for two years. In the winter this may be cooked and served the same as fresh corn. Of course it must be soaked over night in water to remove the salt. This is by far a more wholesome way of preserving corn than canning.

Canned Corn and Tomatoes.—By mixing tomatoes with corn very little difficulty will be found in keeping. While corn ferments quickly alone, the acid of the tomatoes seems to assist in its preservation. Stew the tomatoes until a proper thickness, then add a sufficient quantity of corn, boil slowly about half an hour. Fill the jars to overflowing and seal.

HER DRESSMAKERS.

Few persons who have seen the German Empress would believe that she spends money extravagantly on her dress, yet she is said to keep 12 women constantly employed on her wardrobe, under the supervision of a maid of honor. When about to take a journey, that involves some special ceremony, she employs 40 dressmakers, and when she attends a wedding the Empress requires 15 new gowns. For state occasions court gowns are made in Vienna. These are so long that the trains have to be carried to enable the Empress to walk, and are frequently studded with jewels. The rule at the German court makes it impossible for the Empress to appear twice at the state functions in the same costume, and much of the work done by the 12 dressmakers is in making alterations so that the rule may not be broken and the dresses may have a different look, even though they are in reality the same. The Empress, when in full dress, wears many jewels. Some of these are the property of the crown. But she has some beautiful gems, given to her by the Emperor at their marriage, and a beautiful collection of pearls left to her by the late Empress Augusta. Empress Friedrich is most economical in matters of dress, and so are the majority of women who come to the German events. At the so-called "schleppe cour," or "train court," which corresponds to a presentation in England, the costumes are not brilliant. The most necessary thing is a train of satin of a certain length. Some of these trains appear to have been in use for years, and they are fastened on to various dresses, which do duty from time to time at the drawing rooms of the Empress.