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With Edged Tools

By **HENRY SETON MERRIMAN** Author of "The Sowers," "Roderic's Corner," "From the Convent to the Sea," etc. Copyright, 1894, by Harper & Brothers

"I hoped," he said, "when I ran against you in the woods that that was why you had come back. Nothing could have given me greater happiness. Hang it, I am glad, old chap!" They sat far into the night arranging their lives. Jack was nervously anxious to get back to England. He could not rid his mind of the picture he had seen as he left his father's presence to go and take his passage to Africa—the picture of an old man sitting in a stiff backed chair before a dying fire. Moreover, he was afraid of Africa. The irritability of Africa had laid its hand upon him almost as soon as he had set his foot upon its torrid strand. He was afraid of the climate for Jocelyn; he was afraid of it for himself. The happiness that comes late must be firmly held to. Nothing must be forgotten to secure it or else it may slip between the fingers at the last moment.

Those who have snatched happiness late in life can tell of a thousand details carefully attended to, a whole existence laid out in preparation for it, of health fostered, small pleasures relinquished, days carefully spent. Jack Meredith was nervously apprehensive that his happiness might even now slip through his fingers. Truly, climatic influence is a strange and wonderful thing. It was Africa that had done this, and he was conscious of it. He remembered Victor Durono's strange outburst on their first meeting a few miles below Msala on the Ogowe river, and the remembrance only made him the more anxious that Jocelyn and he should turn their backs upon the accursed west coast forever. Before they went to bed that night it was all arranged. Jack Meredith had carried his point. Maurice and Jocelyn were to sail with him for England by the first boat. Jocelyn and he compiled a telegram to be sent off first thing by a native boat to St. Paul de Loanda. It was addressed to Sir John Meredith, London, and signed "Meredith, Loango." The text of it was: "I bring Jocelyn home by first boat."

And the last words, like the first, must be of an old man in London. We found him in the midst of a brilliant as-



sembly. We leave him alone. We leave him lying stiffly on his solemn four post bed, with his keen, proud face turned fearfully toward his Maker. His lips are still. They wear a smile which even in death is slightly cynical. On the table at his bedside lies a submarine telegram from Africa. It is unopened.

THE END.

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On Barton's Reef

By **GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH** Copyright, 1907, by George E. Walsh

A DEAD animal ain't githerly 'vux' mo'ra' beca' his pe't will bring in the open market, minus the fees an' commissions of them rascally agents who come down here to swap trade with us an' get the lion's share, an' the jackasses, too—me an' the rest of the hunters down here bein' mostly the 'jackasses'—but a live animal is an osertain commodity that has 'most'ly been called 'possibilities.' 'I'm meanin' by that that an old diamond back rattler's skin an' teeth an' rattles ain't worth much mo'ra' 's down here, but a live rattler shipped up north in a cage may bring \$25, an', ag'in, it may be knocked down for an even hundred.

So Captain Kennedy ain't never been in the killin' business. An' I was bringin' up by Captain Kennedy's 'Live an' let live,' that's been our motto, an' we've waxed fat—the captain weighs 200, an' I ain't far behind—an' wealthy, not millionaires exactly, but middlin' well to do.

We ain't never regretted bein' kind an' considerate to the animals an' birds—never except once, an' then the captain said 'twas my fault. I ain't disappointed in that, but there is room for a difference of opinion.

We'd been up the Caloosahatchie one winter tryin' to bag snakes, birds an' other creeps, crawlin' an' flyin' critters when we got wind of a mighty big, assy mountain lion randoovolin' up near Wadin' Landin'. The captain decided at once that we'd bag the critter. Mountain lions was bringin' pretty handsome prices then—'mostly variety bein' a little underpriced, for they ain't no bigger'n a good size dog.

The captain an' I sailed up the Caloosahatchie an' set camp in the big fellow's trail, an' before a fortnight we had him clip an' clean aboard the Marthy Ann, tied toe an' nail an' a-roarin' in a box on deck as though he'd like to eat us alive. We was mighty tickled at our prize, an' we figured on a couple of hundred apiece when we landed him north.

The Marthy Ann wasn't much of a sloop, but she was a lubberin' old craft that did dooty for us for well nigh a dozen years. When we set sail down the Caloosahatchie the captain says:

"Steve, can't you take the Marthy Ann to Charlotte Harbor alone? You can hand the critter over to the railroad people there an' get a receipt for him. I'll be on the Marthy Ann, an' an' run up a spell to see Cousin Obadiah. He's real sick, they say."

I wasn't goin' to stand in the way of the captain's wish, but when I handed him at Fort Myers he sort of supplanted somethin' an' said:

"You think you can manage it Charlotte right, Steve?"

"I'm in this old petstarch in Charlotte Harbor before night or I'll drown him in the gulf tryin' it," I answered promptly.

I didn't know that I was makin' a pretty sure guess what I'd be doin' before sundown. I set hove off from the dock, an' turned the Marthy Ann's nose toward the gulf. I ain't much of a deep water sailor, but I know the coast up to Charlotte Harbor to'rally well an' I didn't have no misgivin's. The lion was mighty like-like at first, but when we got away from the land he began to snuff the salt air of the gulf he sort of got uneasy. He was gettin' out of his element, an' he felt sort of homesick. Maybe it was senseless, I dunno, but when I answered he roared an' whined an' scratched to beat the band. He jest kept me company with his noise, an' I didn't have no time to get homesick. Oct or twice he got so scratchy that I took a look at his cage to see if 'twas all right.

Barton's reef is jest ten miles southwest of Charlotte Harbor—a nasty little, treacherous shoal that sticks out of water at low tide an' keeps out of sight at flood. 'Tain't charted, an' sometimes a ship trips up on it an' jest natchurally rips herself to pieces tryin' to get off ag'in.

I don't know what made me forget Barton's reef, for I'd been round it a dozen times, an', come to think of it now, I'd been nigh wrecked on it once or twice. I ain't got no excuse to make except that lion must have made me forgetful by his everlasting roarin'.

First thing I knowed a puff of wind booted the Marthy Ann over, an' before I could catch her up ag'in we struck somethin'. It was only sand an' mud, but the keel stuck there, an' the next wind slambanged the old lubberin' craft clean over on her side. I wasn't lookin' for the shoek an' pitched head-foremost through the air an' landed 'bout twenty feet away.

When I went down into the water I expected to find bottom somewhere less than a mile or two, but the sudden way in which I stopped showed me that I was on Barton's reef. I was standin' on my head 'bout a foot of water. There was some mud, an' that made sticky standin', but when I finally got my head out of it an' the water cleaned out of nose an' mouth the Marthy Ann had drifted away in deep water.

I ran after her, but she was holdin' her own. I ran that fast that I couldn't gain an' inch. I swam round for some minutes, an' then to save my

life I turned back to the reef. I could see the bare back of it jest shinin' above the gulf 'not mo'ra' ten yards away. I ain't much of a swimmer, but I made double quick time to that reef. I hadn't thought much 'bout that lion 'till this time, so excited was I over the loss of the Marthy Ann, but now I jest gasped for breath an' hove a sigh of relief. If I'd lost the Marthy Ann, I'd saved the lion. There he was crawlin' out of the water upon the reef as limp as a close race for shore with the capsize boat.

I saw how things had happened. The Marthy Ann had dumped the cage an' lion on the reef, an' the blow had just open the slats, an' there you are! The lion was free to go an' come. When I swam to the reef he had full possession, but he was so wet an' frightened that he jest sat there an' shivered an' roared.

"You great, big onery coward," I says, shakin' my fist at him. "You ain't got away yet, an' I'll keep you here until the captain comes for us."

The reef wasn't more than fifty feet long and twenty wide, but there was



"I pitched headforemost through the air, room enough for both of us. I crawled up an' crept toward the lion's corner. He noticed nothin', but roared for help. Then he got a sight of me an' snuck to the other end of the reef.

"You keep there," I says, feelin' better. I didn't partic'lar like the way he did it. It seemed as if he grinned an' then shook his head to show me 'that he wasn't hurt."

Well, I suppose nothin' would have happened if the tide hadn't come up an' made Barton's reef look like a turkie's back. The water jest rose up higher an' higher, an' every minute we had to move closer together.

The lion didn't like gettin' his paws wet an' was for retreatin' toward me, an' I didn't fancy closer quarters with him an' jest stayed as near my edge of the reef as I dared.

Now, as I have remarked, the fiery mountain lion ain't no kind of a fighter, but when he's cornered I've some respect for him. I saw right away that trouble was a-begwin'. When the reef got too small to hold both of us one or fother had to git, an' I didn't fancy 'bein' the one to go a-doin' an' adrift on the gulf in that latitude.

"Now, you great big yellow cuss," said, edgewise, his lionship, partly to keep us my courage, "I ain't huntin' for trouble, but if you seek it I'll do my best to make things mighty unpleasant for you on this little sand speck."

Right then a change come over the critter. He seemed to accept the challenge an' began to growl and crouch. I jest faced him an' got ready for his spring. But the tide comin' up from behind lapped a wave over his tail an' made him turn round like a shot. He cept an' inch closer an' watched for things to develop.

We hadn't mo'ra' five feet between us, an' I was tremblin' most as much as that big brute when somethin' bobbed up near the reef. We both looked at it, an' when I saw it was the lion's old wooden cage floatin' back ag'in I jest made up my mind to jump for it. It was a pretty hefty box an' big enough to carry us.

I edged away toward it, an' when it was as nigh as I thought it would come a grab for it. By 'yin' slantwise on it, with my feet in the water an' my head 'bout three feet above it, I was to'rably comfortable, an' I addressed myself to the marooned critter ag'in.

"Now you kin have the reef an' all that goes with it. I'm off to the Florida coast or a trip to sea. Anythin' better'n 'bein' drowned on that reef or 'bein' chipped up by a cowardly lion."

I guess my words sort of startled him, for he growled an' whined an' seemed anxious to accompany me. He was sort of sorry at my desertin' him. At any rate he crouched down on the reef, his tail in the water an' his head mighty close to the other edge of the reef, an' then I saw him spring an' shoot through the air just like a skyrocket.

There was a crash an' disturbin' us-

derlusion of the gulf. I saw stars an' sharks an' numerous other unpleasant things. When I got a grip on the floatin' box ag'in I was half drowned, an' that old lion was hangin' for dear life on the other side of it. He was 'bout as frightened as I was. His paws was within two feet of my hands, an' I could feel his breath fannin' my cheeks, but he wasn't for fightin' any more.

We hadn't improved our positions much, for that wabby old craft wasn't built for two. Both of us couldn't keep our balance at once. When the lion was up I was down, an' when I bobbed up above the gulf his head went under. We went seasawin' like this for some time, neither one able to catch his breath.

Then it occurred to that tarnaal critter that I was tryin' to duck him, an' he began to hit out at me, snappin' an' snarl'n' fit to give one the shakes. After pawin' some of the hide off my hand he got more brave an' tried to climb over on my side. That was his ondoin', for the box tripped clean over an' landed both of us in the water. The box floated away, an' we had to make a swim for it.

I got there first, for I had begun to scent sharks. I dreaded 'em worse'n all the lions in Florida. I jest yelled an' jumped up on the box an' tried to hold my feet in the air. I kicked an' splashed to frighten the lion away, but he was game. He came on like a paddle wheel, churnin' the water into a terrible foam.

He struck the box ag'in with a bang, an' over we went once more, turnin' a clean somersault in the water. I went down pretty nigh to the bottom of the gulf an' then bumped up ag'in the box so hard that I had a headache for a week after.

The lion was there ahead of me, an' he took a turn at fightin' me off. I say he was gettin' on to the game. The (Continued on page 7.)



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