

For the Land We Live In.

The Electric Hunter of the Connecticut.

BY CALESTIGAN.

CHAPTER I.

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."—Hicoratio.

The story of Gwal, the Hindu monster and tiger-hunter published in a late number of the Montreal Star, recalled to my mind a similarly endowed personage whom I knew and employed as guide and hunter in the days "Lang Syno." Our names were somewhat similar, the difference like that of our respective hides, consisting only in the filling up.

The name Caliban so nearly resembled Calesligan, both being historical, that my notice was attracted to its quaint owner, for quaint he was, and had the reputation of possessing extraordinary magnetic powers by which in early youth he used to attract numerous colonies of bees with their contributions of delicious honey, afterwards sheep and lambs yielded to his mysterious influence and surrendered their tribute of fleecy garments; later on, as the man increased in stature and strength, he found that the whole brute creation was subject to the weird and uncanny power with which Nature had endowed him.

The *modus operandi*, or in what portion of his being lay the Magnetism, no one ever found out, but the power must have been under his own control for he possessed both the positive and the negative and could attract or repel at will, that is the lower animals, but with men and particularly with women, he could only use the latter power.

This extraordinary creature affected the neighborhood of certain lakes and ponds in the vast forest in which the Connecticut river takes its rise, but his principal locale was a hut he had built for himself at Averil pond, a beautiful sheet of water about three miles from the Grand-Trunk station at the boundary line between Canada and Vermont.

There Caliban eked out a precarious existence as guide and general factotum to fishing and hunting parties, supplementing his wants and requirements by smuggling rot-gut whiskey and tobacco, and when Winter had closed the forest and stream to his nomadic mode of living, he wandered among the farmers selling a variety of light wares such as needles and thread, patent medicines, india rubber notions, questionable literature and pictures, taking the precaution, however, as Pandora did with Hope, to keep the contraband articles at the bottom of the box which invariably displayed on the surface a half-dozen cheap Bibles.

In appearance he was decidedly uncouth, of middle height with strong muscular limbs, broad hairy chest, his arms were long and out of proportion to his body, his legs were short and bandy and when he walked fast he displayed a sort of halt, or dot-and-go-one gait which gave him a very odd appearance. His physiognomy was not remarkable for either intellect or stupidity but rather bore a negative aspect, and his hair was thick, matted and unkempt, as was his beard, which reminded one of a rusty cattle-card; still his appearance was not ferocious, his eyes which wore of a steel gray and overshadowed by heavy eyebrows, were restless, furtive and ever on the move. His voice was remarkably soft and dulcet in its tones and when soliciting people to buy his wares, it became as complaining and piteous as that of a Tipperary mendicant.

What country had the honor of giving Caliban birth nobody knew. Like myself he was known as "Uncle Cal," so to distinguish in my tale between master and man I will indite his name in full.

The first time I saw Caliban was at the boundary line where he met me by appointment as guide and camp-master to our party of three, viz: F. P. Owl and myself. He had with him an old horse as rusty looking as himself, hitched to a long buckboard, on which he packed our tent and belongings.

Having heard so much of our new guides' magnetism I was anxious to witness a display of it, so I gave him a couple of stiff glasses of whiskey to begin with and tried to engage him in conversation during the lunch which we ate at the tavern before taking our final departure for the wilderness, but whether he was on his guard or that he was not sufficiently charged, no display took place farther than a few manifestations of cringing and servility by a mangy cur which had been particularly snappish and disagreeable on our arrival.

To all my questions he gave a curt but civil reply, never looking me strait in the face, but I noticed that his eyes were scanning me whenever he thought I was not looking at him, however I did get a sample of his singular powers that very evening, with a vengeance.

We arrived at Averil pond before noon, making pretty good time over a rough lumber road and bridges of very primitive construction. I shot a brace of partridges on the way, which on account of the hot weather, I picked and dressed ready for our supper. We put up our tent in a shady grove at the lower end of the pond close to a lovely beach the sand of which was of the most dazzling whiteness. The pond is oval in shape and about a mile in length. The inlet a rivulet less than a mile in length connects little with big Averil pond and at certain seasons of the year literally swarms with trout. The waters of these ponds being in a country of granite formation is as clear as the purest crystal, therefore it is quite useless to attempt fishing unless the weather be very dark, rainy or windy. On the present occasion we fished the pond perseveringly and carefully for three days, during which our luck lasted only three hours when it blew hard and the waves ran to a height altogether out of proportion to the size of the pond: our catch was seventy-two pounds, several weighing over three and the largest reached six pounds and four ounces.

To attempt to fish on the day of our arrival was out of the question, for the sky was clear and the sun burning hot, so we took the advice of our guide, tethered Rosinante and started on foot for Little Leech pond, a muddy and weedy sheet of water, a mile or so distant which he said was full of trout of a small size. I said that the sun was hot, it was blazing, scorching hot, there was not a breath of air stirring, the atmosphere was stagnant; the path led through a dense forest over a flat surface. We had not proceeded half way before I felt exhausted, I was suffocating and panting for fresh air and a cold dip in the lake and no sooner did I catch a glimpse of the pond than I made a rush for its margin, threw off my clothes in a trice and plunged into its refreshing waters. Oh! the relief, the delightful sensation of returning vigor to my relaxed limbs. I strike out for deeper water and reach a bed of weeds in which I get entangled, so turning back, I swim towards our guide who is seated on a rock with hands extended, the palms turned towards me. Thinking that he wanted to speak with me, I swam leisurely to him when I perceived that something was the matter with him, his whole countenance was illuminated with a most extraordinary expression of fierceness and exultation, his eyes which, in their normal condition, were cold and fishy, shone with an intense glare, and his matted locks bristled and crackled like burning brush, but what is this? Am I entangled into another bed of weeds? I see none, but what are those things tickling my back, my legs and arms? my very hair is invaded and they leap over my shoulders in hundreds, countless thousands of black reptiles encompass me, a feeling of horror comes over me, a dandy chill, my arms become paralyzed, a sickly sensation pervades me, when suddenly my feet touch the sand. I made a rush for Caliban who extending his right hand, pulled me onto the rock where I lay panting, my whole body literally black with wriggling leeches. I rolled in the coarse sand, scraped the loathsome creatures off with my hands,

still they would return to the charge, but with less vigor when out of their own element. I at last managed to rid myself of the blood-sucking creatures and upon turning towards the pond saw the water boiling with shoals of the reptiles, who were as fierce and as eager as a pack of ravenous wolves. All at once however, the commotion ceased and they disappeared as suddenly as they had come, Caliban had also vanished having gone to a creek near by in search of a boat. I had witnessed his power, of magnetic attraction and felt perfectly content with that one display, but I was doomed to see another of a still more thrilling character before another day had passed.

We got back to camp with a fair catch of trout, had cooked and eaten our partridges and were enjoying a final pipe before turning into our blankets, when our attention was drawn to the strange conduct of our guide. He had seemed preoccupied the whole evening and was now busying himself in barricading the tent, first with boys, then with strong branches and pieces of flood-wood, strengthening the palisade at intervals with strong cedar stakes which he drove firmly into the ground, the whole while muttering to himself in a gibberish unintelligible to us, except such broken sentences as, "No sirree, cat, not if I know it." "Blame that fish! it will be sure to draw the cuss." It was becoming evident to me that notwithstanding those wonderful powers with which he was gifted, our guide Caliban was certainly not blessed with much personal bravery.

TO BE CONTINUED.

'Tis hard on a fellow when the sere and the yellow
Make him wish he had never been born,
But there's something far worse, and it leads him to curse

When he has to acknowledge the Corn.

And when in tight boot he starts in pursuit
Of the worm that gets round in the morn,
That confounded old toe will make him go slow,

And he has to acknowledge the Corn.
More pleasant by far to walk up to the bar,
And toss off an occasional horn,
If he don't take enough of the poisonous stuff

To make him acknowledge the Corn.
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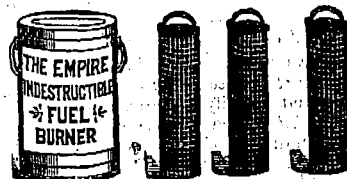
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