

Wolves and How to Catch Them

A. C. O. I. Graduate, Now Teaching School in the Northwest, Furnishes Interesting Pointers—A Thrilling Experience with a Tame Ending.

A clever graduate of the C. C. I. is teaching school in the Northwest and writes an entertaining letter to Planet readers. The letter includes chapter six of a very interesting story by the author of the letter. Time hangs heavy on the western prairies, even for school teachers, and the story is a result, not a cause.

Rocanville, Assiniboia, August 22nd, 1903.

Stanley Satellite, Chatham, Ontario, Protector of the Poor:

I should have answered your letter long ago, but my time is so filled that I neglect my correspondence. For one thing, I'm compiling a text-book soon to be authorized by the Education Department of the Northwest. It will be published next year, and familiarity with its contents will thereafter be the basis of matriculation into our universities. The making of such a book is no light task. When done, it will be entitled "Ancient History for Tiny Tots," and will contain chapters as follows:

I. Ninety Years with the Greek Philosophers.

II. Seven Political Reasons why Cleopatra did not Marry Peter the Hermit.

III. Forty Proofs that Humpty Dumpty and William Shakespeare were not the same man as John Bunyan.

IV. Twilight Talks with Jupiter.

V. Effects of the Renaissance upon the Early Environment of Guy Fawkes.

VI. Good Morning! Have you used Pears Soap?

VII. Aphorisms of the Triplets—a synopsis of the after dinner speeches of the famous Hood family, Thomas, Robin and their sister, Little Red Riding.

VIII. Quo Dixit Salazar?—What's the matter with the Colossus of Rhodes?

IX. Ambit Hollock—He's all right.

X. Words in Conclusion—Summary and Epilogue—An account of why I write this book—Everybody's Guide—How to be your own lawyer—Landscape gardening and deep sea fishing taught by mail—Reasons why I wrote the foregoing account of why I wrote this book—Advice to a young son—Seventy causes for spavin—The green man's burden (complete letter writer and compendium of etiquette, all told in verse—What shall we name the baby? (9,000 names alphabetically arranged, selected from kings, bards, martyrs, and our old turf favorites)—Incidents leading up to my previous explanation as to why I gave an earlier account of why I wrote this book—How to dye ostrich feathers—Diagram of the internal structure of the walrus, and how to treat all maladies peculiar to him—Causes of Aurora Borealis—How to galvanize wooden broom-handles to prolong their durability—Statistics on longevity of the brute kingdom—etc., etc., etc. Also a formal valedictory and twelve reasons why we should not marry scions of European nobility.

XI. Appendix—Words in explanation of why I vindicated myself for giving the account of why I explained my motives for giving my reasons for writing this book—The End.

This makes a neat volume of six hundred pages, and every five-year-old child in the Northwest will carry one in his vest pocket to peruse constantly, along with books already authorized by the Education Department at present elaborating the seventh chapter, so you have some idea of the enormous amount of labor still before me—hold on I believe I will write you a copy of Chapter VI, which I finished an hour ago. It won't take long to take to re-write it. I have nothing else to do this afternoon, and he may not go off for hours yet, so I am at school, and it is Saturday, 7 p. m. I have been here since quarter to nine yesterday morning. Schools in the N. W. T. dismiss at 3.30, so yesterday at quarter to four the children were gone, and I was busy hiding away the silverware preparatory to going home, when a low, blood-curdling wail smote upon my ears, and I realized that it was time for a delicious looking fat person to nail up the windows and prepare to sell her life as dearly as possible to that fell monster which so infests our western prairies and holds in check the onward march of civilization—the wolf. My barricades were dexterously completed ere the gaunt fiend encompassed himself upon my threshold. All night long he howled, and scratched the paint off my nice front door. Then he dug up my flower beds, looking for fish-worms, and has wrought fearful havoc among my petunias and mignonette. My windows having been nailed across I cannot see this satanic beast, but I am a disciple of Sherlock Holmes. This wolf wears knickerbockers. Didn't see them, but I know by deductive reasoning—because I hear him breathing in very short pants. And so on, I could accurately describe to you his complete attire, but will not, lest you regret my tedious fondness for details. He has never relaxed his vigilance since this morning, when he slipped away to catch a jack-rabbit for his breakfast. I seized this opportunity and stole out to the well to wash my face, but my implacable foe was soon back and I speedily regained my palisades. An hour ago he seemed discouraged. I thought, so I tossed him a chunk of corned beef, and lo! he came to stay. Honestly, I don't think he's

very fierce. I think he has come only through a sense of duty. You know I was here such a long time before I could attract a wolf at all. There was a wolf in the Northwest somewhere, but not for me. I tried to hood-wink him by wearing a red dress, but even that didn't fool him. Two months of vain waiting on my part, and then I complained to you and the clergy. The latter were sympathetic. The Presbyterian minister offered to call for me the next Friday to take me home with him to stay till Sunday. He said he lived in a dense bluff where the wolves roamed about in great numbers—one time he left a basket of salmon sandwiches out on the woodpile, and in the night a pack of wolves came, and, while devouring the sandwiches, began fighting most fiendishly, wailing the inmates of the house, who trembled for their own safety.

When we reached the minister's house I found that he did indeed live in the woods. His mother-in-law said I'd surely see plenty of wolves there, because, not long before, she had put a basket of salmon sandwiches on the woodpile one evening and, in the night, wolves came and, while eating the sandwiches, snarled and fought till the family were aroused and felt alarmed lest the wolves attack them next.

When the minister's wife appeared she told me a still more remarkable story. From anybody else's lips I should have doubted the narrative, but last year she was teaching school right here where my life hangs in the balance to-day, so her veracity is beyond question. She said I could see plenty of wolves at their place, because, a couple of weeks before, she had left a basket of salmon sandwiches on the woodpile one evening.

About midnight several wolves came. She not only ate the sandwiches but tried to eat one another, howling and snarling so that folks woke up in great anxiety fearing that the wolves would next attempt to break into the house. All these wolf stories impressed me deeply, and I was put upstairs to sleep alone. The folks promised to "wake me, sure, if the wolves came that night. I lay awake a long time, but nothing happened. Any common man would have gone out doors himself and howled some while his wife slipped upstairs to tell me to hark to the wolves in deadly combat without. But I suppose the minister never thought of such a thing. Four years at Knox College doesn't always make a man as bright and amusing as he ought to be. Next day I wanted to take a few salmon sandwiches in my pocket and go wolf-hunting, but the minister said he had to write his sermon, and they would not let me go alone, lest I be torn limb to limb.

Being bashful, I didn't ask questions, so I can't tell you why it should be necessary, or even desirable, to keep a basket of salmon sandwiches in one's woodpile. If you set a great store upon getting a good night's rest, I wouldn't advise you to try it. The wolves will come in the night and kick up such a dust that you can't sleep, and you'll find yourself a suffering aggregation of shattered nerves long before you reach the meridian of your career. I trust, Charles, that your last words may never be a reproach to me for not daring to warn you in time. As you roam about in the gloaming with a basket of salmon sandwiches on your arm, shun the woodpile as you would a nest of horrid vipers. I know your name is not Charles, but I had to call you that for the sake of rhetorical effect. When I was six years old I read an excellent book of short stories written by T. S. Arthur, who also wrote "Ten Nights in a Bar-Room." These stories were neatly printed on good paper, and they exemplified good morals, but there was a sameness about them. The men, and even the boys, were quite unworthy of our nation. They would hang around town till nine o'clock at night, often smoking tobacco and talking politics. They not only wouldn't ask a blessing before they ate dinner, but they wouldn't wipe their feet on a door mat. They were such a bad lot that Mr. Arthur wouldn't have their photo's in his book. The women, on the contrary,

were fine, noble characters, usually named Sarah or Abigail. Their pictures appear in the book many times, because they were worthy. In these pictures, Sarah would sit up straight on a horse-hair chair in her parlor, with her hair slicked back so tight she couldn't shut her eyes. She wore dark dresses, plainly made with the shoulder seams extending half way to the elbow, and the collar latched together by means of a cameo brooch the size of a saucer. She had three spoons of thread on the table, and she sewed something half as big as a handkerchief, using neither thimble nor scissors—or rather, shears, as scissors were then called. She kept her feet on an ottoman; and she is all there was about her, but it happened all day every day of her life, and there were fifteen or more of her in the book. In each of these stories she would reason with the men and the boys with the idea of reforming them. Often her arguments only annoyed them and made them more determined than ever. This was especially true if their names were not Charles. If she would close her lecture by saying, "I trust, Charles, that you will not do so any more," why then it was all right, and he never did so any more. If his name wasn't Charles he was always very bad. One of the nineteen stories was like this: Sarah was sitting in her parlor, this I told you, when her grandson, a fine, manly lad of twelve, entered the room. "Charles, how have you employed your time since I gave you permission to amuse yourself?" inquired his grandmother. Charles, after a slight hesitation, replied that he had been weeding the onions. Sarah observed his hesitation, and, knowing that he was attempting to deceive her, said that she knew he had been swimming with Thomas and Godfrey, who were bad boys, the sons of Julia, who was a frivolous young woman, really unfit to be a parent. Charles admitted that he had told a falsehood, and Sarah said, "You are getting to prevaricate like a fox. I shall give you a good licking," and she took her feet off the ottoman and did so. Then she put her feet back on the ottoman and, before resuming her needlework, she said, "I trust, Charles, that you will never deceive me again." And he never did. But when Thomas and Godfrey got home they had no such luck. Julia was in the kitchen boiling some jam. Said she, "My son, how have you employed this afternoon?" I trust you have spent the precious hours profitably as well as pleasantly," and they said yes, they had been hoeing the potatoes to please mamma. Julia knew they lied, but she pretended to believe them, because she was so busy with the jam. However, she promised herself to give them an extra good licking some day when she had lots of time, and wasn't feeling very well herself. Next morning Thomas and Godfrey surreptitiously went swimming again. They called for Charles to come, too, and when he declined they called him names, and went off leaving him a very bad heat. Later on, however, he found out that they were both drowned, and he was more thankful than ever that Sarah had eradicated from him the determination to accompany them. Julia, however, was quite annoyed. I've forgotten her exact words, but their substance was, "Goose that I was to let my noble boy go to perdition in order that the current might do his worst. Next summer I'll lick my other nine boys twice a day even if the currents have to rot on the bushes." All through the book the men or boys named Charles were amenable to reason, and readily absorbed all the good advice the women gave them. Of these nineteen stories you won't care to hear more than one more to-day. Each was written with a distinct moral purpose, and I'll tell you one that was calculated to abolish profanity from the speech of men. The hero we start with was a man named George, and his language was anything but good. If he didn't admire a thing he would say it wasn't worth a darned nickel, and all such talk as that. Sarah, his wife, didn't approve of this, but she was a woman of tact who said little. One day, though, he was hitting some nails, and his thumb nail happened to be one of them. He said it hurt like hell. Then Sarah laid down her sewing and took her feet off the ottoman and said, "I trust, George, that you will never repeat that remark." Then he swore something awful and rushed down town and drank a pint of cider.

Not being accustomed to alcoholic beverages, he becomes very ill. A week later he was loafing around the station, still intoxicated, when the moon train came flying along, and George satired and made a dash at the locomotive, saying, "Hurrah, now, boys, see me milk the cow-catcher!" The crumbs were carried home in an old hat, and Sarah wore deep black for several months. Then she married a retired sea-captain who had been a private in the Malay Peninsula. He could speak in eleven languages, and he usually did though Sarah never knew this until she had married him and brought him home to dwell in George's late residence. He soon began swearing because George's old clothes didn't fit him, and he kept right on till poor Sarah's hair turned first grey and then purple. She was afraid of him and didn't dare say a word for some time. At last he became so intolerable that she took her feet off the ottoman and said, "I trust, Domi-Nero, that I shall not be obliged to endure such language in future." This remark so enraged him that he kicked the ottoman out of the window, and looked at Sarah in the collar while he ran to the drug store to buy vitriol to pour on her. But he never came back. On the street he met a large St. Bernard dog of incipient hydrophobia germs, and he foolishly kicked the poor brute, which retaliated by biting him, and in less than a week Domi-Nero died of the rabies in agony befitting the end of a tyrant who had killed Malay stevedores with a cutlass. Sarah was honestly pleased when she heard of his demise. She fumigated the house and married her pastor, a most devout young man who wouldn't even talk about beaver dams. Sarah never had occasion to rebuke him but once. As her own education had been rather neglected, she constantly sought to improve

herself by conversing with him on scientific subjects. One day she asked him how did the lightning get down from the clouds to the earth, and he said "It is jarred down, by thunder." Sarah took her feet off the ottoman and said "I trust, Charles, that you may never again employ that idiom." And he never did. He said he had no intention of being rude, so they kept on living peacefully in George's old home in Massachusetts. They probably live there yet; Mr. Arthur intimated nothing to the contrary. If you doubt any of this, go ask them.

As I was about to say, I saw no west wind all around the home of the Presbyterian minister. Nor have I ever yet seen or heard one till this one came yesterday. Last Sunday somebody told the Baptist minister that I was disgusted with the Northwest on account of its wolfiness. He was kind, too, and said he would attend to that right away. He must be a person of prompt habits, for here, in less than a week, is the wolf he sent, right at my door, and clamoring for my pound of flesh like any Shylock. As I said before, I think the wolf came only through a sense of duty, but the fact that he has come speaks well for the Baptist minister. I shall recant, and attend Baptist church exclusively after this.

Sunday morning, ten o'clock—I'll finish from the point where I left off last night to copy Chapter VI. Well, I have recanted again and in future shall attend Presbyterian church as formerly. This is Sunday, and I have been so good, as I should have known I would be. Yesterday was Saturday, and I'm no special use to anybody that day, so nobody missed me then, all being busy with their own affairs. This morning, however, I could see in the far distance a number of horsemen coming this way. I at once knew that they must be a light detachment of Strathcona Horse coming to rescue me from the jaws of death. There are a dozen or more Strathcona veterans around here, and, aided by a spy-glass, I could recognize most of them two miles away. Having looked at them, I then looked at myself. I didn't look fit to be rescued far less to be eaten, so decided to dash out past the wolf and run home and put on a clean dress and get back within my palisades before the relief party arrived. And I did try to. I tossed some sea-biscuit out of the back window to engage his attention, and then I flew for home. The wolf didn't pursue me after awhile I turned to have a look at him. He wasn't a wolf at all. He was just a plain hound named Buckeye, an old friend of mine. He sometimes comes half way to school to meet me, but last Friday he came all the way, and how faithful he was to stay after I slammed the door in his face and nailed up the windows. Every night during the siege he would crouch at the door and groan and howl a long time and then stop for a nap. Every time he stopped I would thump on the wall to remind him, and then he would start up raving and barking again as if he would tear the house down. I acted that way because I thought he was a wolf, and he acted that way because he thought I was pounding the wall to let him know I was being slaughtered by brigands. The poor brute was so glad to see me again alive that I had to forgive him for not being a wolf. I didn't remember the fate of Domi-Nero, so didn't attempt to kick him. He was pitifully thirsty, too, so I drew him a pail of water. While he was drinking it I tacked a card on the door telling the Strathcona Horse that they were quite well, thank them, and would be back Monday, 9 a. m. Then we went off for a walk in the woods, bringing our correspondence along with us. We won't bother about going to church to-day. In fact, it's the Baptist minister's turn to preach. He and the Presbyterian minister hold services on alternate Sundays. The latter is growing fast, but the former is not. The congregation grew too large for the school house, so, since May, we have had church, Sunday school and Endeavor in one of the Rocanville stores. But last Sunday our usual store was filled with a load of freight that came in Saturday night, so church was held in the Massey-Harris implement warehouse. I remember the text, and the sermon may have been excellent, but I couldn't give it my undivided attention, because we were having a heavy thunderstorm and I couldn't help watching the lightning playing around the eaves and chains of a Massey-Harris binder near where I sat. I soon listened to the sermon. There was a heavy hail-storm west of here that day, and crops in many places were totally ruined. When the passenger train came in to Rocanville from Moose Jaw on Sunday evening all the windows were smashed by the hail they passed through. Dogs on the streets of Moose Jaw were killed by being pelted with hail-stones the size of a cup. I'm told. The North Star Elevator at Rocanville was struck by lightning, but we had no hail. Western crops are often destroyed by hail, but it is possible to insure against it as you would against fire. Most of the farmers here are insured by the Government, which charges them fifteen cents an acre, and for that loss by hail, refunds them \$1 an acre. The Government will be at a heavy loss after last Sunday's storm. Crops are heavy here, and hired help is hard to get for love or money. There is usually a heavy help at \$30 a month, but this year \$45 and upward are offered.

Yours sincerely,
ED. ROSS.

CHAPTER VI.
Good Morning, Have you Used Pears Soap?

It is Thanksgiving night. Hear the dark wind groan through the trees; the elms, the willows, and the hickory; and it is a dreary night in the snail-catcher's lonely cottage. See him sitting in his ingle-nook on an old box covered with rosy cretonne. On his patched knee sits Grimalkin, and he strokes her silken back with the pads of his horny hands. His faithful old wife sits opposite in a rocking-chair. The back

of the chair is gone, but the good woman rests her feet upon a cozy footstool, an old milk-pail also covered with rosy cretonne. By her side stands Chanticleer, the great ruddy fellow, with his head shielded under his auburn wing. And yet their little home is quite bare and plain—almost meagre, the world might say. How the wind means! Anon the old man takes the pipe from his mouth, and a tear steals down his amber beard. It had done such things before and hadn't been convicted of larceny.

The good wife pauses in her deaf, silent work—for she had laid aside her knitting at sundown and is now feverishly chopping cabbages—and she glances furtively at her husband. He saw her, and pushed the cat wearily off his knee. She saw him see her, and the clock struck nine.

Alone! Yes, all alone, for their son, bright wayward lad, had left their hearth-stone sixty-eight years before. It was in the gilded autumn, when the stately ships sail away beyond the world's cool watery rind to bask away the wintry hours in balmy antipodal waters; it was then that the merry son of the old snail-catcher lit out one dark, drearful Thanksgiving night on a traction-engine. Sixty-eight years. Good heavens.

Sixty-eight years to-night. And the good woman deftly shells another cabbage and, snatching the corpulent worm from the heart of it, she tosses it to Chanticleer, who gurgles for joy. For this is Thanksgiving night, and this night the mother always shells a few of the cabbages that her sturdy son raised in his little garden-plot the summer before he went away. The pussy-cat and the woody old snail-catcher doze off together with their heads against a brick of the chimney; the fire burns low, and the shadow-ghosts of it—great, fantastic black goblins—sneak grotesquely thither and fro, around the cabin. The old wife sighs. You can hear a mouse scratching its toenails against the tin lid of the bread-can under the bed. The clock ticks. What a wild night.

Hark, what is that? A knock at the door. Good heavens. She shakes the old man eagerly, almost roughly. "Rouse up, Mister Jones," she says, "there's a knock at the door." But the old snail-catcher rudely repels her; he grumbles into his whiskers and says oh no, 'tis only the spotted dog nibbling a bone in the attic. He says the old lady is busy, and she, meekly rebuked, stifles down her work once more, apparently soothed and pacified, but—

Thunder and Mars, there it is again. The old snail-catcher now rises and, pinning a towel across his clay-stained kimono, hobbles to the lobby. He flings open the door. There on the black threshold stands a tall, richly dressed stranger, bearded and bronzed, with blue phoenix birds tattooed across either swarthy cheek. The old snail-catcher passes the time of day and says there are tricks in all trades except mine. The stranger laughs at this sally, and, in a rich, clear, mellow, resonant voice, inquires if it is convenient that he may enjoy a night's repose in their humble domicile. The simple old people say why certainly, nothing could tickle them more. So the stranger says that is all hunkie-dorey, and he will be back anon. He gropes his way through the darkness to his automobile and to the massive iron gate which he carries along on purpose. Soon he returns to the cottage, his arms laden with heavy, expensive-looking parcels. Most of these parcels are elegantly concealed by gilt paper, but the old people's unimpaired mouths water as they observe inquires if it is convenient that he may enjoy a night's repose in their humble domicile. The simple old people say why certainly, nothing could tickle them more. So the stranger says that is all hunkie-dorey, and he will be back anon. He gropes his way through the darkness to his automobile and to the massive iron gate which he carries along on purpose. Soon he returns to the cottage, his arms laden with heavy, expensive-looking parcels. Most of these parcels are elegantly concealed by gilt paper, but the old people's unimpaired mouths water as they observe inquires if it is convenient that he may enjoy a night's repose in their humble domicile. The simple old people say why certainly, nothing could tickle them more. So the stranger says that is all hunkie-dorey, and he will be back anon. 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