FIGHT WITH AN ALLIGATOR

LOOK LIKE A LOG OF GIGANTIC DIMENSIONS.

An African Hunting Adventure in Which the Quarry Did The Hunting.

It was baking hot; the sun shone straight down from a cloudless sky on to the deck of the low-lying, ugly little steamer anchored in midstream, making the ironwork so hot that it scorched your hand when you touched it. Beyond lay the steep banks of the Ancolyte. The steamer belonged to an English trader named Wilson, who had come up country to shoot alligators for business—not for sport.

Every alligator he shot put fifty pounds into his pocket, and he was shooting them at the rate of about ten a day. It was therefore good business but poor sport, for whenever an alligator showed his head above water within two hundred yards of the steamer, it was long odds that he would be shot by the skilful marksman on the deck of the steamer.

IN QUEST OF BIGGER GAME.

I thought it slow work, and said to Wilson junior, the trader's son, who had persuaded me to come on the expedition. The young man inclined his head down-stream.

"There are some big alligators to be had about two miles further down," he said. "The governor doesn't want them, though; they are too big and old and tough for his purpose, but they give good sport. I have heard him talk of them; they are man-eaters and full of fight. Are you game to come and have a look for them?"

I agreed. And accordingly early the next morning before sunrise we departed from the steamer in the ship's boat, a short, narrow little craft, and very light.

As we rowed, Wilson junior explained that he had been able to bring nothing more deadly with him in the way of firearms than a Winchster.

"I couldn't take the rifles," he said, "because the governor wants them; but the Winchester is better than nothing, anyway."

PREPARING FOR THE FRAY.

As we came round a big bend in the river we saw a little island about twenty feet long in the centre of the stream, and right across it lay what at first appeared to be a log of gigantic dimensions, but which my companion declared to be an alligator. We stopped rowing, and drifted slowly down-stream. After we had gone about fifty yards, the log seemed suddenly to split in two; an enormous head reared itself up in the air, and then the log, with an immense splash, disappeared into the water. Wilson gave me the two oars, and got into the bow of the boat.

"Start rowing directly I tell you, and row hard," he said.

We waited for some moments in silent expectancy, and then suddenly a head, longer than our boat, reared itself up from the water within about twenty yards of us Wilson fired. The head still came on. Then another shot, and another. I saw the head spilt open; a horrible wave of hot, musk-sented air seemed to hit us, and then I heard a crash as the great jaws snapped at us, and the giant reptile sank within a few feet of our boat.

"Row for your life!" roared Wilson.

ONE VULNERABLE SPOT.

I pulled half a dozen strokes, nearly tearing my arms out of their sockets. Then the water close to us suddenly leaped into the air in a great cascade. Wilson explained that the alligator had tried to strike us with his tail, but that my vigorous pulling had placed us just beyond his striking distance. The trader's son also explained that he had hit our foe twice, but that he had been unable to hit him in the eye, the only vulnerable part, and the the shots had succeeded merely in irritating the reptile.

For an hour the alligator kept up his attack on us in this fashion, and I kept pulling at the oars, first in one direction and then in another, but always up-stream. At the end of that time I was dead beat. My hands were fearfully blistered, and my arms felt as if they had been thrashed with iron bars.

"Let us try to get on the island," suggested Wilson; "we should have a better chance there. If he strikes the boat we are done for."

The island was now about a quarter of a mile off, for we had been pulling up-stream during our fight. We headed the boat for the island, and had accomplished about half the journey, when I saw Wilson's rifle go up to his shoulder; at the same instant a great gaping pair of jaws appeared within about six feet of the boat's side. Two shots came from the rifle in quick succession, and then one oar was torn out of my hand. Both of us glanced anxiously over the boat's side. The monster had sunk once more; now we were practically helpless to get out of the reach of that tail which with one blow could shatter our boat.

Suddenly Wilson raised his head. "They are coming!" he said.

"Who are?" I asked.

"The steamer," he replied. "Don't you hear the throb of the screw?"

And in a few moments the regular beat of the steamer's screw in the water was plainly to be heard.

THE LAST ATTACK.

I began to breathe more freely, when suddenly, to our horror, the alligator appeared once more close to us. Then he dived. I gave two frantic pulls with the single oar, and then we were hurled upwards amidst a cloud of spray. Something hit me on the head. I fancied I heard a shot, and then I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on my back on the island, and Wilson was pouring some brandy down my throat. Wilson's father stood beside him, and I saw the steamer lying about fifty yards off the island.

What had happened was simply this. The alligator, in his last attack, had struck our boat, and up we went into the air. I had been hit over the head with a piece of the boat's timber, and had lost consciousness; but Wilson managed to pull me out of the water on to the island. The alligator, in the meantime, had turned towards the approaching steamer, and had been shot by Wilson's father.

"It doesn't do to go hunting big alligators in a little boat with a pea-shooter," was the trader's comment on our proceedings.

And I heartily agreed with him. —London Answers.

FOOD AGAIN

A Mighty Important Subject to Everyone.

A Boston lady talks entertainingly of food and the changes that can be made in health by some knowledge on that line. She says:

"An injury to my spine in early womanhood left me subject to severe sick headaches which would last three or four days at a time, and a violent course of drugging brought on constipation with all the ills that follow.

"My appetite was always light and uncertain and many kinds of food distressed me.

"I began to eat Grape-Nuts food two or three years ago, because I liked the taste of it, and I kept on because I soon found it was doing me good.

"I eat it regularly at breakfast, frequently at luncheon, and again before going to bed—and have no trouble in 'sleeping on it.' It has relieved my constipation, my headaches have practically ceased, and I am in better physical condition at the age of 63 than I was at 40.

"I give Grape-Nuts credit for restoring my health, if not saving my life, and you can make no claim for it too strong for me to endorse." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Europe's total area covers 3,870,000 square miles.

It sometimes happens that when a man loses his reputation he is lucky.

"I love her!" cried the magnetic youth. "I tell you, I love her! That is enough for me." "Precisely!" replied the mother. "But are you sure, Richard, you'll both be able to manage on it?"

THREE PRINCES' VACATION

OUTDOOR LIFE AT BALMORAL FOR GEORGE'S SONS.

They Ride Bicycles, Shoot Rabbits, Fish and Only Work One Hour a Day.

There are three small boys in Great Britain who pronounce themselves absolutely satisfied with their summer holidays, writes a London correspondent. They are the Princes Albert, Henry and John, the younger sons of King George. They have been staying at Balmoral Castle for the last six weeks and have had the time of their lives. When Queen Mary decided to go to Windsor for a rest and to take the Princess Mary with her and King George arranged to pay a series of visits to some of his loyal subjects with acres of preserves awaiting his royal pleasure to shoot over them and the Prince of Wales was sent off on the Hindustan on naval duty, there was some indecision in the royal family as to what had better be done with the three little Princes. They settled the matter themselves by pleading singly and in chorus for a holiday at Balmoral with Mr. Hansell, their tutor, to see that all went well.

They really cherished hopes that they might be allowed to camp out on the grounds of the castle and dispense with the score of servants always at beck and call, but Queen Mary, who is rather anxious about Prince Henry's health, did not find this idea feasible, so a compromise was made by having only Mr. Hansell in attendance, and most of the

SERVANTS GOT A VACATION.

A Scottish castle in the midst of thickly wooded estates full of game, lakes teeming with fish, a gun, a rod and a bicycle—what more could any boy want? The Princes ask for nothing more at any rate and they have improved each shining hour and grown hardier and browner for the outdoor life.

Mr. Hansell is very popular with his royal charges. He is not only an excellent teacher, but he is also an athlete and sportsman of no mean calibre, and that always wins an English boy's heart. During the last month lessons have been put in the background, except for an hour's work in the morning, and even this hour has been neglected sometimes when a day's outing is in progress.

The villagers around Balmoral watch every morning now-a-days for Prince Albert and Prince Henry to cycle past their cottages. About 10 o'clock, rain or shine, the royal procession passes. Not a very imposing one, but it goes to loyal Scotch hearts, just

TWO SMALL BOYS IN KILTS

with greenish tartans, who ride by at full speed, racing each other sometimes, or again doing all sorts of tricks on their machines. Mr. Hansell and Prince John do not join these early morning expeditions, as the youngest of the royal children is not yet expert enough to accompany his brothers and practises riding in front of the castle with Mr. Hansell to see that he doesn't fall too hard.

Prince Albert is the mechanic of the family and when anything goes wrong with the bicycles he is off his machine in a moment and down on hands and knees to explore the damage. He acquired his proficiency in the workshops at Dartmouth while he was at school there.

After the ride comes the hour's study, then lunch and in the afternoon rabbit shooting; fishing or, best of all, deer stalking. Prince Albert is the best shot and has qualified so well that when the King returns to Balmoral and has a shooting party Albert is to be allowed to take his gun and exhibit his skill with the grownups.

At fishing Prince Henry is the most successful. He is willing to sit patiently for hours with his rod in his hand, and his zeal has been rewarded this summer by

A SERIES OF CATCHES.

"Fishing is the only time Henry is quiet," say his brothers and sister, for Prince Henry is by far the most high spirited and mischevious of any of the royal children. Deer stalking fascinates all small boys, and the Princes are no exception and have enthusiastically crawled for miles on their hands and knees in quest of an "eighteen pointer."

Of the three boys Prince John has been the most blissfully happy, for this is the first summer he has joined in his brothers' sports. He has fished and learned to handle a gun, to play tennis and to bicycle, but deer stalking is not for him just yet.

Early to bed and early to rise has been the rule at Balmoral, so the Princes are sound asleep by 9 o'clock, and 7 in the morning sees them out in the clear air of the Highlands.

Most people want to learn a thing by setting out to teach it to others.

HOW FAMOUS LOVERS MEET

ROMANTIC WOOINGS OF SOME GREAT MEN.

How They Conducted Their Courting—Napoleon Woos Brother's Fiancee.

"That man will marry me!"

Two schoolgirls were walking one summer afternoon on the ramparts of Boulogne when there came striding towards them a tall, soldierly man, tanned by suns of the East. As he passed his big black eyes flashed on the elder and more beautiful of the two girls, a quick fiery glance of admiration which seemed to magnetize her, for it was a full minute before she spoke. Then she whispered to her companion in a tone of awe and conviction. "That man will marry me."

On the following day the swarthy stranger of the magnetic eyes again encountered the two girls on the promenade, and taking up a piece of chalk, wrote on the wall, "May I speak to you?" a question to which the elder girl chalked the answer, "No, mother will be angry." But Fate proved stronger than maidenly modesty or a parent's disapproval. A few days later the soldier and the schoolgirl were introduced by a mutual friend, and the following evening they met again at a dance.

"It was a night of nights," wrote the lady in later years when she was the soldier's adoring wife. "I kept the sash where he put his arm round to waltz, and my gloves which his hands had clasped. I never wore them again." Under such strange and romantic conditions opened one of the greatest love-romances of the world—that of Sir Richard Burton, the world famous explorer and author, and of Isabel Arundell—a love which death itself was powerless to dissolve.

When Dante Gabriel Rossetti paid a casual visit one day in the year 1850 to the studio of an acquaintance, Walter Howell Deverell, he little suspected how that chance visit was to revolutionize and transform his life. Mr. Deverell was not alone; a girl model was posing to him, and to her the young poet-artist's eyes were drawn as by a magnet, for she was to him a revelation of the possibilities of human loveliness, "A most beautiful creature, with an air of dignity, modesty, and sweetness; tall, finely formed, with a lofty neck and regular features, greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion and a lavish heavy wealth of coppery golden hair"—such is a description of Elizabeth Eleanor Siddall as Rossetti thus saw her for the first time and at the sight surrendered his heart to her. A few months earlier, Mr. Deverell had seen her serving in a milliner's shop, and, struck by her uncommon beauty, had induced her to sit for him, never dreaming, we may be sure, of all that was to follow this seemingly trivial incident of a shopping excursion with his mother.

How Rossetti immortalized this milliner-model in many an imperishable poem and picture; how she became his idolized wife, and how his heart was buried in her tragically early grave the world knows well; for the story is one of the most beautiful in all the romance of love.

A NAPOLEONIC WOOING.

The great Napoleon's wooing of Desiree Clary was equally romantic and much more rapid. One day (he was an obscure and shabby young soldier of fortune at the time) he was induced to accompany his brother Joseph to the house of M. Clary, a Marseilles silk-merchant, to be introduced to Desiree Clary, Joseph's financee. The bright eyes and vivacious manner of Desiree, contrasted with demure plainness of her sister Julie, made such a speedy conquest of the future Emperor that he determined to win her before he left the house.

"In a well-conducted house," he said with startling suddenness, just before leaving, "one must yield to the other. You, Joseph, are of a most undecided character, and Desiree just the same; whereas Julie and I know what we want. Therefore you had much better marry Julie. As to Desiree," he added, "she shall be my wife."

But in spite of this forcible wooing Desiree was not destined to share Napoleon's life and throne. He soon wearied of her rustic beauty and left her to languish while he knelt at the knees of the more splendid Josephine de Beauharnais. It was fated, however, that the silk-mercer's daughter should still wear a crown, and the way to it was opened thus romantically. General Bernadotte was riding into Paris at the head of his troops, when, on glancing up, he saw a fair young face illuminated by a pair of merry eyes, looking down at him. That upward glance was Bernadotte's undoing. He knew no peace until he had made the acquaintance of the young lady of the bright eyes and had made her his own. And thus it was that Desiree, rejected by Napoleon, wore a bridal veil for his greatest rival, and, in later years, shared his throne as Queen of Sweden.

On the Farm

THE FORMATION OF THE SOIL.

Vegetation begins with the very simplest forms of plants, such as lichens and mosses, and is, of course, very scanty at first. These plants on dying become a part of the soil, all of the plant nutrients used by them being thus returned, writes Mr. Alfred Vivian.

Food that has once been used by plants is very readily made available to succeeding crops through the process of decay. The soil is now able to produce a larger crop, as it contains the plant food in the previous growth in addition to that added through the agencies detailed above

In this way the growth gradually becomes more abundant. The plants upon decaying give rise to humus, and this increases the fertility of the land both by being a source of plant food and by increasing the water-retaining power. Humus is a very important factor in fertility. During the decomposition of the plants, acid substances are formed which act upon the rocks in such a way as to make more of the plant food available.

One of the products of decay or fermentation is carbonic acid, and this is dissolved in the soil water, and this gas-containing water is an important help in disintegrating the rocks.

As the nutritive materials increase from these various causes the lower simpler forms of plant life are gradually replaced by those which are more highly organized.

With the advent of plants, like our common crops, which bear roots, other factors in the formation of soils are introduced. The roots secrete an acid substance that has a solvent effect on the mineral matter of the soil, and the roots themselves also assist mechanically in breaking down the rocks.

All are familiar with the tremendous force exerted by plants in breaking apart rocks and stones if once their tender rootlets obtain a foothold in a crevice.

The roots penetrate the soil sometimes to great depths, and as they decay after the death of the plant, they leave little channels in the soil which serve to carry down water laden with carbonic acid, as well as to introduce the oxygen of the air, that, in its turn, is a factor in bringing about chemical changes in the soil, which assist in making plant food available.

Sooner or later in the process of soil formation, plants of the pulse family, (leguminous plants), such as clover, vetches, lupines, etc., are introduced

If you dig up some of these plants you will find little nodules or tubercles on their roots. These nodules are the homes of numerous bacteria, which enable the plants to derive part of their food from the nitrogen of the atmosphere.

This peculiar property of leguminous plants is of great importance, for it is undoubtedly nature's principal method of increasing the supply of nitrogen in the ground.

The nitrogen compounds accumulated by these plants eventually become a part of the soil through their decay, thus adding to its fertility.

It will readily be understood that the various agencies concerned in the formation of the soil do not act separately nor necessarily in any such order as that in which they have been discussed.

As a matter of fact all the processes described take place simultaneously. The lower plants do not wait for the rocks to be pulverized, for we see such organisms as the lichens growing on rocks from which one would think it impossible to obtain food.

If the lichen is removed, grooves or furrows will be found on the surface of the stone, due to the action of the plant.

Nor are all soils formed directly from the original rocks, for one of the effects of weathering, etc., is to separate such rocks as the granite into simpler substances, with the result, for example, that huge deposits of limestone are formed in one place, and in another whole hills of sandstone.

The soil is almost constantly moving, for some of the same agencies which form soils are continually carrying them away. Running water grinds the rocks, but at the same time transports the fine particles to lower levels. It cuts deep valleys in the surface of the earth and carries away the debris, depositing it at various distances from its source.

This study of the formation of the soil then suggests two things that the farmer can do to prevent the exhaustion of the fertility.

The first is to treat the soil as to assist and hasten nature in the process of converting the plant food into available forms by means of good tillage.

The second is to return to the soil by means of manure and fertilizers an amount of plant food equivalent to that removed by the crop.