

The Electric Hunter of the Connecticut.

By CALESTIGAN.

CHAPTER I.

Continued.

"What are you up-to Caliban? said I; are you afraid of bears? No bears will come near us with such a fire as we have." "You teach your granny, replied he. Do you think that was a bear that scratched up our tracks to Leach Pond?" (We had noticed on our return to camp that some animal had scratched the leaves and moss on our path.) "No, sir; it was an animal of quite another complexion—I guess you had better take that fish and hang it over into the pond, or you'll have more cat in the tent than mine, I reckon. Them paynters ain't nice playfellows, I tell you and they'll carry off more lead than would sink a canoe, and come back for more before the old dose is digested." "But, surely Caliban, you can drive them off as easily as you did the blood-suckers, said I, eyeing him keenly. "May be, may be," muttered he, "if you'll whistle him into being still so that I can put some salt on his tail. But, I tell you, I don't like them big cats, and I'm glad that I loosed the old hoss who's got to the boundary by this time.—I'm blamed sartin the critter will be round before daylight, so you'd better have your guns loaded. That catamount, or his mates attacked our camp on "Hall's Stream" last spring, and came pretty near carrying off one of our party, and would ha' done it too, had'n't it a been for an old hound who jumped on to the critter in time to save his master, but he, hisself was carried off for cat-meat." "But," said I, "why didn't you help by keeping the beast still, or by driving him off by that wonderful power which you have over animals?" "Because," replied he, "looking somewhat confused, the beast never took no notice of me; the eyes of a cat are as roving as his mind, and you can no more catch a steady glance from one than you can hold ground—lightning, nor catch a weasel asleep; them purring cusses have no affinity for man, but they do love fish, so you had better hide them trouts, right off in the pond."

We began to think that Caliban was right, and proceeded at once to sink our fish in the pond; loaded our rifle and a double-barreled gun, into which we put double charges of swan shot, having no bullets to fit; we piled up the fire with dry pine which crackled into a blaze, illuminating the inside of the tent and a considerable radius in the outer darkness.

Our defensive preparations being concluded, we found ourselves cozy and comfortable, yet not one of the party felt sleepy, nor did we indulge in our accustomed night-caps for fear of sleeping too soundly. We lay in our blankets with our guns beside us, and kept our ears cocked ready to catch any suspicious sound.

CHAPTER II.

"Ban, Ban, Ca-Caliban got a new master, find a new-man."

We lay for several hours in a state of tension and anxiety, which as the time advanced towards the mystic hour of mid night brought exhaustion and drowsiness to my two friends who, commencing with a few desultory snorts, soon subsided into a loud and continuous snore, showing a total oblivion of present or foreshadowed events. Not so, however, with myself, for I well knew from past experience that if the disturbance of our tracks, the previous evening had been made by a Catamount, we were pretty sure to receive a visit from him; not that the American Panther is particularly inimical to man, but like certain old women and other felines, he is cursed with an inveterate curiosity, which prompts him to follow up and investigate any new thing which may have come within the range of his prowlings; and knowing, also, from former experience, that such cats have dangerously

sharp claws, I felt far from comfortable, neither was my discomfort diminished by the evident fact that our electric hunter was in a miserable funk. Our fire had got low and the night being dark, I told him to throw on some dry brush, of which we had a large quantity lopped from a dead balsam, which Caliban had felled within twelve feet of the tent, lodging its head in some trees in front, at an angle of forty-five degrees directly over our fire. We had lopped off the branches for about forty feet from the tent to serve us for dry fuel. I am thus precise in my description as the tree in question was soon to become the theatre of a very strange weird performance.

We had got our fire revived, and the blaze lighted up the tent and immediate surroundings; we had looked to our guns and had made up for our want of sleep and the customary "night-caps" by priming the inner man, when the forest rang with a scream, which, old and practiced hunter that I was, sent a cold shiver through my frame, and made my blood run cold. It resembled the scream of a frightened woman, but more prolonged, growing harsher as it cadenced into lower tones, and ended in something between a growl and a gurgle. It was repeated twice, each time nearer the camp. A cracking of the bush, the rattling of some loose stones and gravel, a bound right in the light of our fire and there stood in full view, a magnificent creature as tawny as an African lion. If I were to say that his mouth was stretched wide open displaying a dreadful set of teeth, that his eyes were aflame, and his whole frame quivering with rage, I would be giving our nocturnal visitor a bellicos appearance, which seemingly did not belong to him, for his looks showed nothing more formidable than such curiosity as is displayed by a domestic cat at the sight of some rodent which is new to him, and which his instinct cautions him to beware of least he might prove a dangerous antagonist. But, he loomed large, in the light, and long in proportion to his height.—A pressure of Owl's foot as signal, and my gun was at my shoulder. Bang! bang! both barrels went off at once,—a loud hiss, a tumbling down of some of the blazing brush, and the cat was gone! "You shot high, said Owl. Here! Caliban!—But, where is he? Not in the tent.—Where?"—He was interrupted by a yell very different to the screams first heard; another and another, each ending in a deep prolonged growl indicative now, of anything but peaceful intentions. We could hear, the animal, now really become formidable, hissing and spitting, and tearing the ground with its claws on the outside of the fire. Fred's rifle went twice to his shoulder, as he caught a glimpse of him through the bushes, but, I begged him not to fire unless he got sight at a vital part. In the mean time, I had reloaded my gun with buck-shot, and was on the alert for a favorable shot.—Our fire was burning brightly, illuminating the forest to a considerable distance, and enabled us to catch occasional glimpses of the infuriated beast as he prowled around on the outside. Suddenly, like a flash, he charged right into the former space, between the tent and fire; not at us, for his gaze was steadily fixed aloft to the leaning balsam, and rivetted on Caliban, who stood there looking, as he did when magnetizing the reptiles at Leach Pond, only, that his usually ruddy complexion was now quiet ghastly; his eyes were ablaze, his hair erect and scintillating with sparks like a burning furze bush,—and the Catamount, what of him? He, who had leaped into the light with tail erect and mouth gaping for blood, had crouched to the earth and lay there trembling and whinnying like a whipped hound; his humiliation and subjection were complete, but his misery was of short duration for a bullet from Fred's rifle pierced his heart, and we had the proud distinction, and great satisfaction of securing and carrying home the skin of the last Catamount seen in the Averil woods. CALESTIGAN.

(To be continued.)

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To the Editor of the Land We Live In.

Will you kindly tell me if we have a fishery officer appointed to guard our Eastern Township Lakes from unlawful and predatory fishers. A short time ago I informed you, with rejoicing, that the land-locked salmon placed in the Massawippi Lake were growing in size and number. Now, I am told the greedy poachers who infest the waters of our prettiest and most prolific lake, are netting indiscriminately. Only last week I heard of one of those human otters having caught, in 160 feet of water a sea-salmon, weighing 33 lbs., and another 8 lbs. The fisher showed the marks of the hook, but the buyer detected the mark of the net. "He shone like silver as I pulled him up in the moonlight," said he. A very good tale for the marines, but, sailors and sportsmen know better than to angle for salmon by moonlight.

My name and address are at the disposal of the officers of the law, with a list of names, time and place.

Yours, &c.,

CALESTIGAN.

We believe the Fisheries Officer whose jurisdiction extends over Massawippi Lake, is Parker W. Nagle, Esq., whose address is Sherbrooke, and advise our correspondent to communicate with him, and we guarantee any reliable information will not be disregarded.—[Eds.]

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