

two sheaves under each arm, when he felt something smooth slipping through his hand, and looking down he saw, to his horror, that it was a rattlesnake that he had picked up with one of the sheaves. Another farmer told me, by way of illustration of the fewness of these reptiles in the neighborhood where he lived, that he had not killed more than four or five rattlesnakes on his farm that season. One of these, he went on to explain, in the most cold-blooded way imaginable, had fallen upon him from a sheaf as he was pitching grain from a wagon either into the mow or on to a stack.

And the rattlesnake, though the commonest of the deadly serpents of the prairie is not by any means the only one. The king snake and the copper-head seem to be no less poisonous. The hoop or horned snake—I believe they are the same—a reptile armed with a horny spike in his tail with which he strikes his victim, inflicts an ugly wound which is not easily healed. The blue racer is one of the commonest of the snakes of this region. But though he is made upon a pretty large scale, carries a high head, and makes a rather formidable and threatening appearance, like many another braggart, his bark, from all that I can learn concerning him, is worse than his bite. The bull snake is another ugly reptile that seems to trade largely upon appearances. The black snake belongs to the order of constrictors. He is one of the commonest of the snakes found here, and he grows to a great size, often attaining to seven or eight feet in length and the thickness of a man's arm. The jointed snake, though harmless, is in some respects one of the most remarkable of the reptiles of the valley of the Mississippi. He seems to be built in sections, and so loosely put together that a very slight tap of a rod or a walking stick is sufficient to separate the compartments of his singular organization.

Some of the natives out there appear to verily believe that these separated segments after the reptile has been dismembered after this fashion, if let alone, come together, reunite, and his snakeship goes on his way as if nothing disastrous had occurred.

Whiskey seems to be the common remedy on the plains for snake-bite: even total abstainers when bitten by a rattler generally take to the bottle. They even sometimes administer it to dumb animals in their extremity as well as to man. A ranchman told me that a valuable dog of his was bitten by a rattlesnake, and that by "filling him up with whisky," as he expressed it, "and making him dead drunk," he managed to save his life.

Another thing that this rancher told me seems worthy of scientific investigation. The dog in question, which, by the way, has a great antipathy to rattlesnakes, and never fails to attack one when he can find it, has several times been bitten since the time referred to, but he has never seemed to mind it, or to suffer very much from it. He thinks that having had the disease, which is set up in the blood by the introduction of this deadly virus, once and recovered from it, the patient enjoys a certain degree of immunity from it ever after. In other words, his theory is that the person once bitten is thenceforth less susceptible of the poison, or—so to speak—if he takes the disease again, it will be in a milder form.

As an exterminator of the rattlesnake the hog seems to bear the palm. One old mother porker with a litter of pigs—the latter should not be too young I suspect—it is said, will do more to rid a lot that has been overgrown with weeds and brushwood, and so become dangerous, of these pests, than a whole battalion of armed men. The senses of the swine are quick to detect the presence of the snake; and his mode of attack, when he has found him, shows more