

Dog and Lion Fight In African Bush

Story of an Exciting Adventure
Which Baffled a Big Game
Hunter.

Mr. H. Wynne Silva sends The National Mercury the following graphic account of a big game shooting incident on the Pongola River, in the Umtombo district.

Some years ago I sent you an account of the shooting of two lions on the Pongola River by my brother, Mr. B. B. Silva. I am now able to furnish you with the details of another lion hunt, in which I myself had the good fortune to participate, the next I regret to say, as the hero of the occasion, who was undoubtedly "Bill."

This account should be especially interesting to sportsmen for two reasons—first, as evidencing the extraordinary courage of a bull terrier; secondly, as bringing to light what I believe to be a hitherto unknown fact in regard to lions and their habits with the prey they catch. Up to now it has been, I believe, a generally accepted theory that a lion kills its prey before eating it; indeed, I have read as well as heard from old hunters, many tales of the marvellous manner in which a lion kills its prey by breaking its neck, tearing its throat out, or so forth. I am now in a position to state that whatever the general rule may be, it is not always the case.

On the 6th of this month I was down on the Umtombo river with Mr. H. B. Turnley of Umtombo. We were there with the intention of hunting lions solely. The extraordinary drought which has prevailed almost unbrokenly since last May has brought all the big game down to the vicinity of the Pongola River, and the lions have, of course, followed them. We slept out on the night of the 5th, and started out almost before daylight on the morning of the 6th to look for sport. Mr. Turnley, my partner, was a half-bred native, and "Bill," Mr. Turnley's big white bull terrier, as luck would have it, we struck some fresh spoor at sunrise. The trail was burnt almost entirely bare, and the ground is very dry and hard, so that spoor of any kind is very difficult to follow. My own native servant, however, pretty good at this business, and we had managed to hold the spoor for a quarter of a mile or so, when we suddenly heard a wildbeeste bellowing.

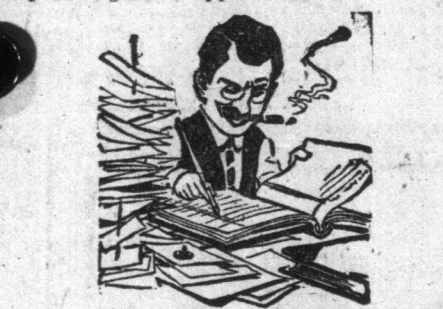
In distress. "What can that wildbeeste be shouting like that for?" "Oh," he answered, "that's nothing; they often do that." Turnley said at once, "That's not that beast in distress—I can hear by its voice."

My own experience, extending over many years now, has taught me that, except in very rare cases, if you want to be misled in hunting matters, ask a native, so I said, "Let's go and see." With that we hurried forward in the direction of the sound. We were approaching a strip of bush, which we afterwards found to be about 200 yards long, by perhaps half a mile wide. As we rounded the corner we saw a wildbeeste lying on its back, with one leg waving in the air. The sun was then about six feet above the horizon, and straight in our eyes. The wildbeeste was about 200 yards in front of us, and about 20 yards from the bush. Right in front and about half-way was an outstanding little clump of thorn, and by creeping close alongside the bush, and keeping this little clump between us and our objective, we were able to advance unseen. We had just reached this, and I had barely poked my head cautiously round to see what was up with the wildbeeste, when Turnley, who was a few paces to my rear and a little to my right (the bush being on our left-hand side), exclaimed: "There's a lion," and fired. As he did so, I saw a curious-looking lump on the wildbeeste's shoulder resolve itself into a big lioness, which sprang

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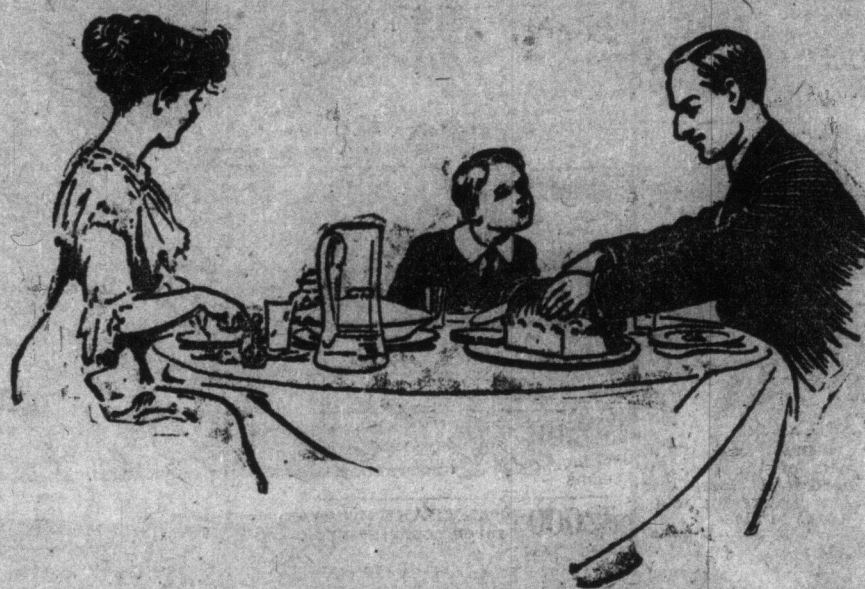
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In thick bush. The two boys—to their credit be it spoken—followed us, and we charged that bush head down. It was just a tangled mass of thorn and prickly cactus. When I mention that afterwards, in cold blood, we had to chop our way out again with a cane knife, that one of the boys fortunately carried, it will give some idea of what it was like.

Dog's Fight With Lion.

But it is marvellous what excitement will do, and with that in mind, I could see what he was thinking, knowing how fond he was of the dog, and hoping to break it to him a bit before coming on his dead body. I said, "Bill's gone in, old man." Turnley didn't answer for a moment. "Ah, well," he said, with what I can only describe as a sporting kind of groan, "it's a—sporting death; I wouldn't wish him a better." All this, the it takes some time to describe, only occupied a few moments, and we had just turned to look round again for the scene of the fight when my boy said, "There's the dog!" and up rolled old "Bill," looking much as usual except that he was blood from head to foot—not his own blood, but the lion's. He was badly scratched in four or five places, but he had only one nasty tear along the groin, probably the one that had him yelp. For the rest he looked just as usual, neither excited nor subdued, nor convinced in any way.

My account, in so far as it has interested sportsmen, is almost completed, except for one incident. We cut our way to the scene of the fight, which resembled a butcher's shambles more than anything. Lion and dog must have been rolling over and over together. How "Bill" got out alive was inexplicable to us at the time, but the mystery explained itself later. We followed the wounded lioness thru that bush and into another. Turnley had just decided to put "Bill" on the lead,

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