



The Volunteer Review

And Military and Naval Gazette.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of British North America.

VOL. I.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, JULY 8, 1867.

No. 27.

SKIPPER BEN.

Calling away!

Losing the breath of the shores in May—
Dropping down from the beautiful bay,
Over the sea slope vast and gray!
And the Skipper's eyes with a mist are blind;
For thoughts rush up on the rising wind
Of a gentle face that he leaves behind,
And a heart that throbs thro' the fog bank dim,
Thinking of him.

Far into night

He watches the gleam of the lessening light
Fixed on the dangerous island height
That bars the harbor he loves from sight;
And he wishes at dawn he could tell the tale
Of how they had weathered the southward gale,
To brighten the cheek that had grown so pale
With a sleepless night among spectres grim—
Terrors of him.

Yo-heave-yo!

Here's the bank where the fishermen go!
Over the schooner's sides they throw
Tackle and bait to the deeps below,
And Skipper Ben in the water sees,
When its ripples curl to the light land breeze,
Something that stirs like his apple trees,
And two soft eyes that beneath them swim,
Lifted to him.

Hear the wind roar,

And the rain through the slit sails tear and pour!
"Steady! we'll scud by the Cape Ann shore—
Then hark to the Beverly bells once more!"
And each man worked with the will of ten;
While up in the rigging now and then,
The lightning glared in the face of Ben,
Turned to the black horizon's rim,
Scowling to him.

Into his brain

Burned with the iron of hopeless pain,
Into thoughts that grapple and eyes that strain,
Pierces the memory, cruel and vain!
Never again shall he walk at ease
Under his blossoming apple-trees,
That whisper away in the sunset breeze,
While the soft eyes float where the sea gulls skim,
Gazing on him.

How they went down

Never was known in the still old town;
Nobody guessed how the fisherman brown,
With the look of despair, that was half a frown,
Faced his fate in the furious night,
Faced the mad billows with hunger white,
Just within hail of the beacon light,
That shone on a woman sweet and trim,
Waiting for him.

Beverly bells,

Ring to the tide as it ebbs and swells!
His was the anguish a moment tells—
The passionate sorrow Death quickly knells;
But the wearing wash of a lifelong woe
Is left for the desolate heart to know,
Whose tides with the dull years come and go,
Till hope drifts dead to its stagnant brim,
Thinking of him.

THE JAGUAR HUNTER.

THE pioneer settlers in the southern states of America are often exposed to danger from the attacks of wild animals. This is more particularly the case in approaching the tropical regions. The squatters of Texas relate many fearful tales of conflicts with panthers and wolves. In the state of the Mexican union, however, the ferocious jaguar, or South American tiger, is met with, which

commits fearful ravages among the numerous herds of cattle and horses, from the breeding and sale of which many large proprietors derive a princely income. I was once staying for a few weeks at one of these estates, where a jaguar had for some time kept the whole establishment in alarm. At last, on the return of a hunter, who had been absent on a distant expedition, all apprehension as to further annoyance ceased; for such were the courage and skill of the new-comer in attacking these animals, as to have gained for him the name of Bermudes *el Matasiete*, or 'Kille-of-Seven.' On the night following his arrival, he invited me to join him in watching for the intruder, and appointed the rendezvous at the *Ojo de Agua*, a fountain at the foot of a slope stretching gradually away till it met the forest.

Soon after sunset I strolled towards the place agreed on. A tall cedar stood near the fountain, its lower branches dipping into the water as it bubbled away to the bottom of the valley. Behind the cedar rose the knotty trunks of a group of mahogany-trees, interspersed with flowery sumachs. On the opposite side, a little glade was formed by a cluster of ash-trees, at the entrance of which I found the hunter lying at his ease upon the grass, enjoying the coolness after the extreme heat of the day, with his blue-barrelled rifle at his side. I congratulated him on the choice of so picturesque a site for the rendezvous. 'I am delighted,' he replied with a smile, the whole meaning of which I did not at first comprehend, 'that the place is to your taste, but you will see before long that it is better chosen than you think.'

We had not long been seated when a second hunter appeared, a tall Canadian, his rifle in one hand, and leading a lame colt by the other. After exchanging a few words with Bermudes, he tied the limping animal to the stem of the cedar by a long and strong cord, and then came to sit down by our side on the moss. I was at a loss to understand the object of these preparations, and of the fires which had been kindled in various directions. On questioning the Mexican, he rose, and conducting me to the edge of the fountain, showed me several formidable footprints in the damp soil. 'Those marks,' he continued, 'were made yesterday—of that I am certain. The jaguar, therefore, has not drunk for twenty-four hours, and for twenty leagues round there is not a drop of water but what is here on the estate. The fires yonder will scare the animal in that quarter; while thirst and the scent of the colt will certainly bring him here in the course of this night.'

The logic of this reasoning appeared to me irresistible: and I found myself, quite un-

armed, suddenly transformed into a tiger hunter. At first I thought my best course would be to make a quiet retreat; a mixture of curiosity and self-esteem, however, induced me to stay. The Canadian was stretched at full length on the bank, snoring loudly. Bermudes beckoned me to sit down by his side, and to pass away the time, gave me an account of his numerous adventures. As we had yet four hours to wait before the animal could be expected to make his appearance, I sat patiently listening, while the hunter went on with his tale. For an hour no other sound save that of his voice and the loud breathing of the sleeper disturbed the silence. All at once the colt started and reared in alarm, and the dry bushes crackled with so dismal a sound, that I could not repress a shudder. 'Did you not hear a howl?' I inquired of Bermudes, who shook his head and laughed as he answered, 'When you have once, only once, heard a tiger's roar, you will never again be likely to mistake for it the humming of misquitos. In a few hours you will be as well instructed on this point as I am.'

It was a false alarm: all became quiet as before, while the hunter continued the history of his exploits. But a second interruption followed; the colt began to utter a cry between a shriek and a moan. 'Is it misquitos this time,' I asked, 'that so terrifies the poor animal?'

'Probably not,' rejoined Bermudes. 'Listen!'

'Hold—look yonder!' I said, pointing to a young poplar that rose above the surrounding trees; 'it is not the wind which shakes that tree while all the others are motionless.'

'It is the jaguar,' said the hunter after a pause. 'At present he is playing the brave, but his hour is not yet come; and for the moment he is more afraid than you are. Do not think, however,' he pursued, 'that tiger-shooting has no dangers. You will be able to judge how much another hour without drinking will have exasperated the animal. I have seen many a brave man turn pale at their frightful roar.'

Having expressed my uneasiness at being unarmed, my companion promised to furnish me with a weapon when the fitting moment should arrive, and resumed his recital where he had left off. But as the night grew darker, the interruptions became more frequent, and by and by a distant growl was heard, followed by a plaintive and menacing howl. 'I was mistaken,' said the hunter, coming to a pause; 'instead of one tiger there are two. Males never attack in company; and should it be male and female, we shall have a double warning, for Providence,