

# A HERITAGE OF FEAR

It was the man with the samovar who was talking. There was a general rattling of pipes and a readjustment of feet about the chimney place.

"A fellow named Royal—well, that's enough of his name, I guess—and I were out in West Virginia looking after some timber land for the Susquehanna Lumber Company. It was a glorious October, and many of the summer visitors were still up in the mountains, among them a family Royal had once known in New England. There was a girl named—oh, well, she had other names, but the one I knew her best by was just Sweetheart, so well call her that. Royal managed to see a good deal of her between whiles, and kept lingering on, giving the company one pretext after another, until a sudden change in the weather decided the girl and her mother to start at once for California, where they were to spend the winter. Then all at once it occurred to Royal that it mightn't be quite the square thing to sit there breathing the air and letting the company's money slip through our fingers, so the party of us planned to leave the next day but one.

"That night a wheezy old freight train disgorged Hagenback's whining, growling, roaring troupe at the little station. They were on their way to Wheeling, having had no intention of putting up at our small village, but a variety of complications and cross currents, a broken cage and a sick lion had combined to sidetrack them there for a day or two.

"Royal and I were both down at Sweetheart's that night, and she was teasing Royal to take her to the menagerie. He chaffed her for wanting to see a lot of mangy brutes—it was a poor show, anyway, he declared, and to go would mean a pure waste of good October weather. She suggested, then, that he take her hazel-nutting in the snow—something to mark their last day there on the mountain. He was



HE COOLLY STEPPED BETWEEN THE GIRL AND FURIOUS BEAST.

willing enough to do that, and it was arranged that we should start early in the morning, taking the trail up the mountain on the other side of the railroad.

"The fall of snow was light, but crisp and crusty, crunching under our tread as we made our way up the ribbon of path, 'for all the world like icing on a wedding cake,' laughed Sweetheart. I remember how the girl's cheek glowed in the stinging air, and her merry laugh echoed in the frosty stillness. Royal worshiped her—big, blonde and splendid, tramping there by her side, folding back now and then the overreaching branches, tossing aside a stone or a fallen bough from her way.

"'Is it just your name, I wonder,' laughed the girl, 'or is it a courtly, embroidered way you have of doing even the smallest things that always makes me feel like a princess with you as attendant?'

"Royal laughed, and she went on, mischievously:

"'You see, it's merely as a compliment to myself that I like to have you with me,' with a richly contradictory glance, however, from under the mystery of long dark lashes; 'you have a way of making me feel positively regal, and then, measuring his six feet two with her dancing eye, 'you are so comfortably big and strong you make me brave as well. I wouldn't be afraid of a regiment with you—or a whole menagerie.'

"The man turned deathly pale at the last words, and in a flash I recalled a scene of our childhood, which, though I was much younger than Royal at the time, made a deep impression on me. Royal's mother had been terribly frightened by one of those dancing bears with which men used to tramp through the country a generation ago, and when her small boy opened his eyes on the world at last she determined to make him love all animals as much as she herself feared them. But from babyhood he showed an unmistakable antipathy toward even dogs and cats; a cow would make him howl with terror, and once, when he was 4 or 5, he actually went into spasms at the sight of a monkey. The incident I mentioned, however, occurred several years after that. I was 5 or 6 myself, and had just begun to attend the new school that was built somewhat on the outskirts of the little village, with an eye to civic growth, and which was also attended by rather a rough element from the factory settlements further down the pits. There were great numbers of cattle raised in our part of the country, and it was the custom to brand them and to turn them loose on the common lands, to

on the balls of green fire that flashed from the great, tawny head. It seemed ages—it could scarcely have been seconds—no one of the four of us moved a muscle—till the lion, with a cry that was like a howl and a sob, turned and slunk off into the thick underbrush higher up the mountain.

"Then we both rushed to Royal, who still had not stirred. Sweetheart put her little arms about his neck and said all the things that a woman would say at a time like that. Still he did not move, and there was something in his eyes that chilled my marrow. Sweetheart was frightened, too, when he would not speak to her. After a moment he turned and went with us down the mountain. We two talked at intervals, and Sweetheart spoke to him, but still no word passed his white lips. The girl insisted we should go to her cottage, and there her mother at last persuaded Royal to go to bed, a physician was called, and after days of anxiety and consultation, the poor boy raving in delirium, it was pronounced brain fever. His life and ultimate sanity in any case were despaired of. The California trip, of course, was given up, and Sweetheart's mother nursed the boy as if he had been her own. I told her of his terrible heritage and the gypsy incident—and she understood, as a woman might, what a vital crisis in his life his love for her daughter had proved. Afterward we learned that the illness, which had been almost unmanageable since the death of her old keeper, a giant Swede, of whom she was very fond, had become frantic on the death of one of her whelps and broken from the cage, attacked the new keeper and fled to the woods. She had not eaten during the whelp's illness, and must have been ravenous when she saw Sweetheart. Whether she thought Royal was her old master, or whether his superhuman sang froid cowed the brute in her, or whether, who knows, the love that conquered hunger met the love that could conquer fear—'Jove nodded to Jove' over the shoulder of a man and his brother beast—we speculated endlessly in whispers during those weeks Royal's life hung in the balance.

"One night the doctor had called for a second time. 'I'll stay with him a little while,' he had said. Sweetheart and I sat together before the library fire—her mother and the nurse were resting. There had been something unusual in the doctor's manner. Presently he beckoned to us from the doorway.

"'He is conscious at last,' he said, and tears of relief sprang to Sweetheart's eyes. 'It is a most peculiar case,' he went on. 'I never knew of but one other of the sort.' Then he hesitated. 'He has no fever, but his mind is a blank—it is a question whether it will ever be anything else. Again, it may come back to him slowly, with all the old memories, the old terrors—if he turned to Sweetheart—if there were any great joy in the future for him—anything that would engage and delight every faculty and emotion for a little time—I think we might hope for his complete recovery.'

"The warm, conscious color flooded Sweetheart's face. I stepped back to the hearth and busied myself with the ashing embers. I heard her confused murmur and the doctor's 'if anything will. It's our only hope' and the portieres fell on their retreating footsteps.

"When Royal looked consciously into Sweetheart's eyes for the first time in weeks he fainted. When he recovered the doctor withdrew, and then, though the girl begged him not to talk, he insisted upon telling her the truth—that he had not run to her assistance, as we all believed, but had in his terror utterly forgotten her.

"'I'm a coward,' he protested, in agony, 'and not fit to look in your face!'

"Then Sweetheart, at her wits' end for his safety, said—what had in no wise been in her mind before:

"'Well, I'm going to marry you, anyhow; I've sent for a minister, and we'll be married right here in half an hour. If what you've been telling me now is true, and not some nightmare of a weary brain, you're a hundred times braver than we all believed you—just the telling makes a hero of you.'

"A light seemed to break over the sick man—perhaps, after all, there were different kinds of cowardice. He lay very still for a while, thinking, in his weak, dazed way—and then:

"'Do you know, Sweetheart,' he said, 'I think somehow I'm not afraid of—of animals any more; couldn't we have a—lion at our—wedding?'

"Sweetheart laughed.

"'Wouldn't a dog do—or a cow?'

"'No,' he returned, with the childish persistency of the weak, 'I want a lion!'

"'We'll make a tour of menageries on our wedding trip,' she smiled.

"'No,' he pleaded the had evidently accepted unquestionably her arrangement for immediate nuptials; it will be a long time before we can take a wedding trip—and I want the lion at the wedding—now!'

"Then the doctor came back, and took in the situation, after a word or two. His patient was cured even beyond his hopes, but he clung to the whim, which was, in truth, just the reflex phantom of his madness—he craved childishly now the one thing he had all his life dreaded.

"'Would a bear do? the old man asked, as if the sick man's desire were the most natural thing conceivable.

"'Yes, a bear will do,' Royal answered, for all the world like a little child deciding upon a new toy.

## Science AND Invention

The electric light bulb at the end of a long wire has been found by Dr. Forrest Willard to be better than the water bag for applying heat to head, chest or abdomen.

In one hundred analyses of the air on Mount Blanc's summit, not a single microbe was found, although they were plentiful in the observatory. The number showed a steady increase in descending the mountain.

"Weather shooting" has assumed such importance in southern Europe that not less than three international congresses to consider it have been held. The latest report shows that experts are mostly convinced that gun firing is useless for influencing rain or hail, although experiments are urged until the possible effects are fully understood.

The mysterious "sleeping sickness" of West Africa, which has been the subject of late scientific investigation, proves to be a form of meningitis, differing from cerebro-spinal meningitis in its chronic and almost invariably fatal character. It is classed with hydrophobia as one of the most deadly diseases known. It is communicated from person to person in some unknown way, beginning with slight listlessness, which passes into coma and then into death, its duration being from one to six months. Thus far it has been known only among negroes. It has depopulated large districts, however, and its spread is feared through the opening of African trade.

The fascinating legend, which has led to many speculative theories and fantastical stories, of the former existence of a great and populous continent in the Atlantic ocean west from the Strait of Gibraltar, occasionally occupies the attention of men of science. Such an occasion took place at a meeting of the Royal Irish Academy in November, when the Atlantis problem was discussed by Dr. R. F. Scharff, who contended that the evidence showed that the fauna of the Atlantic islands was mainly derived from a former land connection with Portugal and Morocco. Dr. Scharff also defended the theory of a land bridge, in the same latitudes, connecting Europe and America, and persisting until Miocene times.

In Austria and Germany an automatic system of stopping fast railroad trains without the co-operation of the engine driver or the brakemen has recently been tried with satisfactory results. The apparatus consists of two parts, one carried by the locomotive close to the rails, and acting directly upon the brakes of the train, and the other attached to the track and connected with all signal points at curves, gates, and so forth. If it becomes necessary suddenly to stop an approaching train, the turning of a lever throws up a connection from the track to the apparatus under the locomotive which governs the brakes. At the same time an automatic signal whistle warns the engineer of what has been done. The brakes can be released in a similar manner. Between Vienna and Kremm the device has worked successfully with trains running 62 miles an hour.

**One on Depew.**

Returning recently from one of his annual trips to Europe, Senator Chauncey M. Depew was, as usual the center and life of the group which had gathered in the steamer's smoking room after dinner, and all of his most ancient stories were brushed up and made to do duty once more. Nearly all of the other passengers volunteered various contributions to the general entertainment, but one old country man sat in a corner every evening smoking his pipe in silence, broker only now and then by a guttural chuckle. As the steamer neared New York Mr. Depew proposed to the others that he should have a little fun with this old hayseed and try to get a rise out of him, and, calling across the room, he said:

"Mr. Jones, all the rest of us have been doing what we could to amuse the company during the voyage, but we have not heard from you. Can you tell us a story?"

Mr. Jones could not think of any story.

"Well, can't you sing us a song?"

Oh, no! Mr. Jones could not sing.

"Well, you certainly ought to do your share; perhaps you can give us a conundrum."

Well, he had been thinking of a conundrum, Mr. Jones finally admitted and it was this:

"What is the difference between Mr. Depew and a wild turkey?"

When no one present could suggest the answer Mr. Jones drew out:

"Well, a wild turkey ain't stuffed with chestnuts till after he's dead."

**American Centenarians.**

Mr. Simon, addressing the Hundred Year Club in New York, cited figures furnished by the United States census bureau recording 3,435 centenarians, including eighty-six of upwards of 120 years old and fifteen upwards of 130. The oldest white American is 129, and there are an Indian of 150 and a negro of 145. The oldest woman is a negro, aged 137.

**Now It's All Out.**

"I thought her marriage was coming off during New Year's week?"

"It was, but her engagement came off during Christmas week."—Brooklyn Eagle.

A man can't marry every woman he falls in love with.

**PRINCE HENRY'S "CONFESSION."**

Lovely Noblewoman, Fishing for a Compliment, Disgusts Him.

A story is now going the rounds of the London clubs concerning Prince Henry of Prussia, who, rumor says, will before long pay another visit to the United States.

A few weeks ago his royal highness paid quite an unofficial visit to England, and during his stay in London was the guest of a certain very wealthy and deservedly popular American millionaire. At dinner one evening Prince Henry happened to sit next to a marvelously beautiful but extremely coquetted English woman, who used all her "dangerously winning ways" to please and captivate the popular German prince.

"Oh! your royal highness," softly remarked the society beauty, "I'm so glad you like dear old England and the English people. Now, will your royal highness tell me quite candidly what has impressed you most forcibly—what has given you the greatest pleasure—during your visit to this country? I'm simply longing to have your 'confession' on this point."

Prince Henry, who was genuinely bored by the "beauty's" silly "gush," looked around his host's hospitable table and then, with apparent deep earnestness, replied: "You ask me, lady—, what has impressed me most forcibly during my short visit to your country. Well, I'll tell you—you shall have my 'confession.'"

The blushing lady—, naturally expecting some sweet compliment, listened eagerly.

"I have been fascinated with many things since I have been in England," continued the prince, dreamily looking down at his plate, "but what has given me greater pleasure than anything else—what has fascinated me most—has been—I think—your glorious roast beef!"

"Oh! your royal highness!" almost shrieked the shocked and bitterly disappointed lady—, at such a prosaic "confession." "Our roast beef! But surely something else besides our roast beef has impressed you—something else, surely?"

"Yes, lady—," tenderly replied Prince Henry, according to the New York Tribune, "yes, indeed. I think, next to your English roast beef, I have been most impressed by your English boiled beef!"

**BOW-FACING ROWING MECHANISM.**

From time to time inventors devote their attention to designing a method of propulsion for rowboats which shall enable the oarsman to face in the direction the boat is being driven, with the purpose of enabling the man handling the oars to steer the boat without the necessity of craning his neck at frequent intervals or taking easily misunderstood orders from another occupant of the boat. The mechanism here illustrated has been designed by Daniel H. Sheen of Peoria, Ill., with the above object in view. The oar itself



SHOWING ONE OAR IN POSITION.

is a straight blade mounted on a curved handle, which, in turn, is pivoted at the end of an arm extending from the horizontal shaft to which the power is applied by means of a short crank at the inner end. In the yoke in which the oar is pivoted is a spring which tends to throw the handle, at right angles to the supporting arm, and in this position it will clear the water in returning after each stroke. In the position of the oar here shown a projection on the handle is engaging a bracket on the side of the boat to bring the oar in position to exert its leverage in the water with the next stroke by throwing the upper end of the handle down against the shafts. To back the boat the end of the handle is clamped fast on the shaft, but normally the spring and bracket alternately exert their influence to throw it into its operative and working positions respectively.

**About the Human Body.**

Some statistician has been contributing his studies of the human body to a French journal. In its normal condition, he says, the human body contains enough iron to make seven large-sized nails, sufficient fat for the supply of 13 pounds of candles, enough carbon to make 65 gross of lead pencils and enough phosphorus for over 8,000 wax vestas. Or, reduced to another state, the same man possesses the possibilities of supply of 90 cubic meters of gas and sufficient hydrogen to inflate a balloon of a carrying power of 150 pounds.

**Population is Declining.**

It is estimated that the Eskimo population of Alaska, Labrador and Greenland has declined from 30,000 in 1880 to 15,000 at the present time, owing to the thinning out of the seal, walrus, polar bear and other sources of food supply.

It should occur to a man often that his friends don't mean all they say, and that his enemies do.