

**THE NATURAL HISTORY  
STORY BOOK**

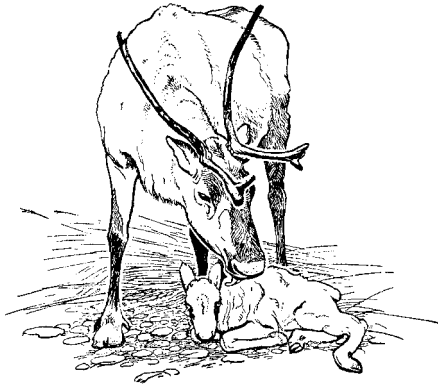


*A chain of which every monkey is a link.*

**THE NATURAL HISTORY  
STORY BOOK**

**BY**

**ETHEL TALBOT**



**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS  
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA**

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ISBN-10: 1-59915-295-9

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-295-0

Yesterday's Classics, LLC  
PO Box 3418  
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

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## AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

How slowly and carefully the huge Elephant in the Zoo moves along! He looks like a great patient nurse as he carries a load of cheering, laughing boys and girls on his back. "Better be careful," he seems to be thinking; "mustn't jog them about too much. Nice to be able to give a treat to the little chaps; and aren't they enjoying it!" But, dear me! what a different way he used to behave in his old home on the wide plains of Africa years and years ago.

For this particular fellow is an African Elephant. He seems much the same to our eyes, perhaps, as his Indian cousin, but there *are* differences, if we know how to look out for them. To begin with, the African Elephant is the larger of the two, and is darker in colour. Then he has larger ears and larger eyes; and while the Indian Elephants are not famous for their tusks, their relations in Africa are very valuable big game indeed, if only for the ivory that their splendid long tusks afford.

The African Elephants are much more dangerous than the Indian Elephants, too, and that may be the reason, partly, why they have never been trained to help in the work of their country as their Indian cousins have. No doubt they would toss up their tails and trumpet at

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the very idea. They love their freedom, and they mean to keep it. They fear man, and they mean to keep away from him. And the few of them that are captured, and shipped away from their land to be shown in Zoos, must have very different memories of the life that they used to lead.

What kind of memories? Oh, jolly, jolly ones. The Baby Elephant in Africa joins with its mother on her journeys only a week or two after it is born, and is a very game little creature indeed, with adventures from the very first. Of course, it has no tusks, this baby—though to call it “little” and “baby” seems rather ridiculous, as it weighs two hundred and forty-five pounds at birth, and is quite as large as a sheep; but its trunk is there all right, groping about and finding out all about the world, like a great big movable finger. It can fan itself with its big ears, too, just as its mother and father do in the hot weather—nobody seems to have to teach it that. It is funny to see the Baby Elephant having its first meals: with its head below its mother’s fore legs, turning back its small trunk, and drinking, drinking, drinking its fill of milk; for little Elephants are six months old before they begin to learn the way to feed themselves with soft grass and leaves by the help of their own waving trunks.

The Elephants choose their homes away deep in the very quietest, stillest part of the forest. There they feed most of the day, and at sundown they make their way to the nearest watering-place. A herd of them goes together at a good swinging pace, very much unlike the steady tread of the tame Elephants at the Zoo. Very

## *AFRICAN ELEPHANTS*

often it is a family herd, with the mothers and babies going in front to set the stride, and the huge father Elephants coming along behind. There is always a leader to every herd, whose commands must be obeyed; and if danger appears, one of his orders will be for the mothers and children to fall behind the stronger members of the company. Danger sometimes means—MAN. Wild Elephants have a terror of man; and I have read that if a child passes at a quarter of a mile to windward of a herd, that is sufficient to put a hundred Elephants to flight.

There is little wonder, really, that African Elephants are afraid of man; they have been hunted to the death for generations and generations. Elephant hunts were the sport of kings very long ago. The ivory from their tusks has always been coveted by traders as well as hunters. The natives find the great beasts useful, too, in many ways. The flesh of the Elephant is used by them as food, its trunk and feet being supposed to be particularly delicious, and its fat is greatly valued. Its hide makes shields for them, water-bags for their journeys, and whips for their steeds; while its ivory will always fetch its price.

But Elephant hunts by the African natives are not only undertaken because of the value of the animal; often these hunts are necessary on account of the dreadful damage that the great wild creatures do. For they have appetites that match their tremendous size, and on their way to the river at night they think nothing of plundering crops; of tearing up whole groups of trees with their trunks, just to chew up the roots and branches and get at the sap. With their sharp tusks,

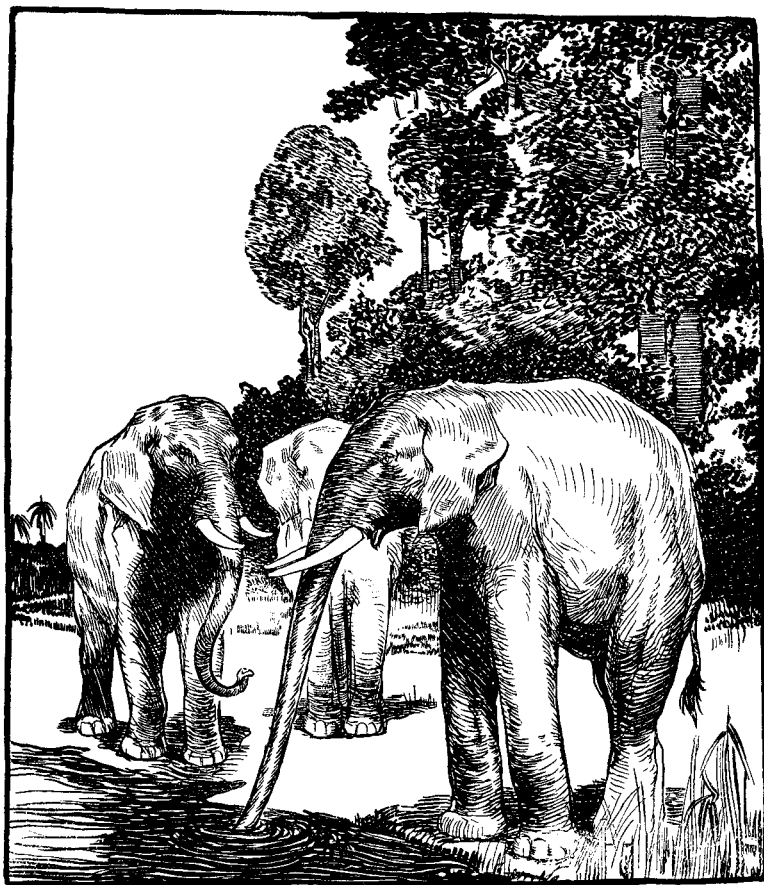
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too, they plough up whole miles of ground in search of bulbs; and over newly sown land whole herds will tramp, making a waste as they go. They are always a little afraid of fences, but they mean to get to the water all the same.

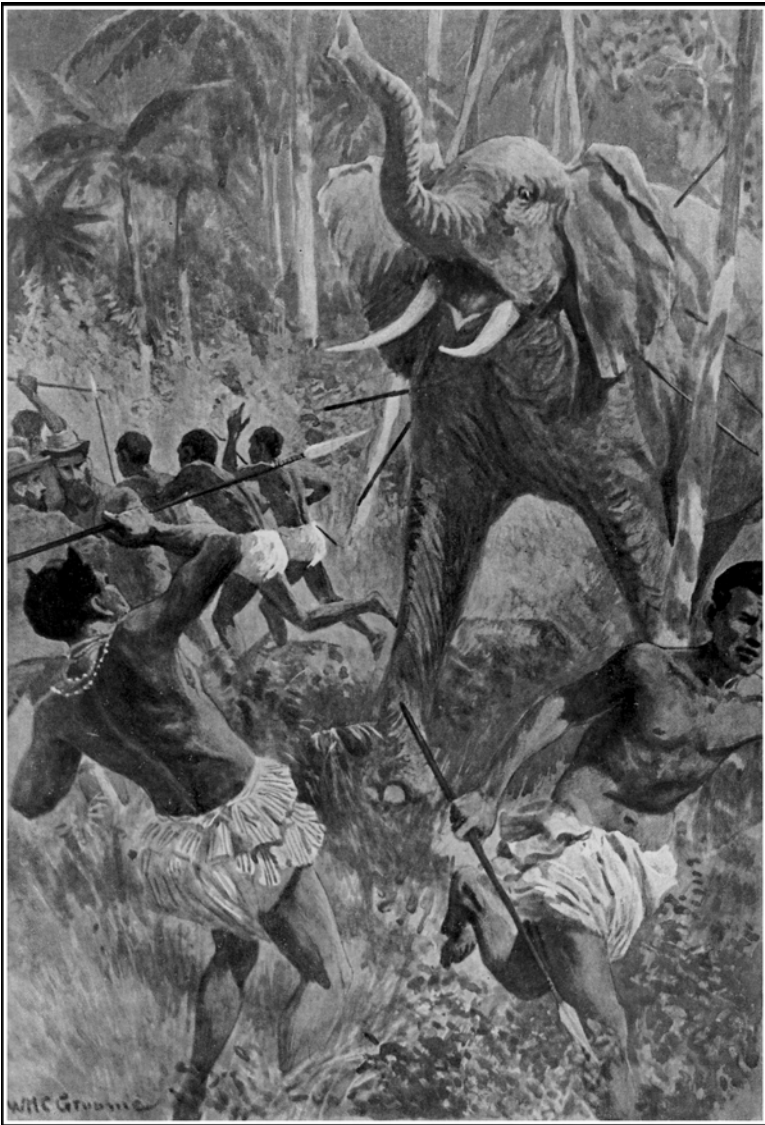
It must be a fine sight to see them drinking and watering themselves after the heat of the day. Without bending its head, the Elephant dips its long trunk into the water, and filling it, puts it to its mouth. A second trunkful is then probably used for bathing purposes; and after that, the whole herd, as likely as not, may go for a swim for a few miles down the stream, the young ones being held up by their mother's trunk as soon as they feel tired, or climbing up to her back and sitting there when they feel inclined to take a rest.

Elephants are very sociable and affectionate with each other. A sportsman was once obliged to leave a wounded Elephant in the South African Bush, while he returned to camp for more ammunition. On his return, many hours afterwards, he saw from some distance that the great beast was standing, unable to move on account of its broken leg, but trumpeting loudly for help. Its calls were answered by another elephant, which came up, gave the sufferer a drink of water from its own trunk, and then did its best to help the wounded friend to escape into the Bush again. This story may seem strange, but there are many other tales told by the natives of the ways in which Elephants help each other from traps or pitfalls, and warn each other of danger.

But Elephants can be fierce enemies for all that.



*After the heat of the day.*



*Javelins filled the air.*

## AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

They do not, as a rule, attack man unless they are provoked; but if they *are*, there is no sport so dangerous in all the world, perhaps, as Elephant hunting. Female Elephants have been known to give chase to well-mounted sportsmen, and to overtake them, killing them with their tusks and feet. They are cunning and clever enemies, too, who will turn suddenly and charge at the unsuspecting hunter, for whom there is little escape. The African natives attack them with javelins and spears; the sportsman follows him either on foot or on horseback, with hopes of placing a bullet behind the great beast's ear; while a particularly fierce and warlike tribe of Arabs is said to face a charging Elephant with no more defence than a sword and shield. Dr. Livingstone gives a very interesting account of an African Elephant hunt which he once had the luck to watch.

He was wandering alone amongst some rocks, some way from the village which he had made his home for the time being, when he noticed a female Elephant and her calf playing at the end of a valley at some distance. The baby was enjoying itself in a mud-bath, and the mother was fanning herself from the heat with her great ears. Both were innocent enough, and had no idea that on the other side of them a whole string of men was approaching. The native hunters gave no sign of their approach until they had come quite close to their quarry, and then they began to call out and sing. "O Chief, Chief! we have come to slay you . . ." they sang, continuing the verses of the natives' killing-song.

This seemed to frighten the Elephants. They stood to attention and listened; and the little one began to run

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up the valley, but it saw the men, and returned to its mother for protection, and she put herself between it and the danger which seemed to be coming upon them. She looked at the men and seemed half inclined to attack them. Then she glanced at her child, and seemed to decide to stay beside it; and all the time the men drew closer and closer, driving the pair a little nearer to the river as they came.

When the hunters had reached a spot which stood about sixty feet from their prey, they began to shoot. Javelins filled the air; several of them glanced off the larger Elephant's back, and some of them remained sticking there. She began to run for her life, with blood pouring from her wounds, while the baby, which seemed to be quite forgotten, took refuge in the river and was drowned. But the large Elephant did not run very far. Suddenly she turned, charged amongst the men with great fury, and raced right through them, as they still threw their spears at her. Then she charged again and again, each time being wounded in fresh places, and losing more blood in the fight. "At last she staggered round, and sank down dead in a kneeling position."



## LIONS

THE Lion is the King of all Beasts. Far away in Africa he is fierce lord of the forests and plains. Deep in the Indian jungle he lurks and prowls; and here at home his blood relations sit quietly at our fireside thinking of *their* hunting too!

For the cat, who stretches her limbs out and rests so dreamlessly before the fire through the daytime, is a prowler, and a hunter when night falls. Tame cats, as we call them, are not always tame by any means; and birds, mice, and small animals which fall victims to their cruel claws must think them very fierce beasts indeed. Yes, if we are anxious to know almost exactly how the Lion waits in ambush for his prey—how he crouches under cover, springs, and seizes it—there is a way of finding out that is far better than just by reading all about his ways in books. Watch Puss as she tip-toes out in search of food; see how noiselessly she treads on her cushioned feet, and notice how she takes care to hide under every single bit of cover that comes in her way; watch her crouch under a bush, perhaps, to see the movements of young birds on a bough close by; then you will see her sudden spring, and the strong, clever blows that she can deal with those “soft” paws of

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hers as soon as the prey is her own. If we study Pussy's hunting carefully, we can get a very good idea indeed of the way that the Lion hunts his prey.

Baby Lions are not at all unlike our own kittens; though I have heard people say that in size and colour they are just like little pug dogs. They are sweet little cuddlesome chaps, with such tremendous appetites that their affectionate father and mother must hunt extra hard if the children are to have as much to eat as they want—that is, when they are old enough to ask for meat, of course, for milk at first is the Lion cubs' food, just as it is the food of kittens, young tigers, and many baby beasts.

In colour they are like their parents—tawny; but there are always brown markings on the cubs' coats, which disappear as they grow older. And there is a reason for the tawny colour of the Lion's coat—it is another bit of Mother Nature's camouflage. The King of the Beasts was born to be an animal of the plains; and in Africa, which country is said to be his kingdom, he generally makes his home in great open stretches. In the distance it is difficult to see him there, because the colour of his coat is so much the same as that of the ground over which he passes; and he can follow his prey unnoticed, or he can escape from his enemies without being seen half so soon as he would if he were moving along against a background of bright green grasses or deep blue water. He is helped in the hunt and protected in the chase by the colour of his coat; and even if he be overtaken in a forest, he has learned to hide himself

## LIONS

behind a piece of brown bush, or to watch for his “kill” from under the cover of some brown tree trunk.

The Lion spends most of the daytime in resting, or in lurking beside some river. He is often thirsty after his last night’s supper, so he wants to be able to go down to the water-side to drink. Daytime is not his hunting time—though that does not mean that he will let the chance of a tit-bit pass should a deer, an antelope, or some other prey come near his lurking-place: then out springs the Lion. But it is at night that his hunting time really begins. And he has different ways of tracking and taking his prey; some of them he uses on some nights, and some of them on others.

One of his ways is to go down to the water-side and there to roar and roar and roar his loudest, till the smaller animals are all so terrified at the sound that they race about in fear, unable to think in their terror which is the safest way to take; and so at last they run straight into his great, wide, hungry jaws. Another of the Lion’s ways is to join forces with a partner, with whom he makes his night plans. Soon one of the pair is chasing a herd of frightened deer towards the lair of the other, who springs out as their victims approach, and does the killing for two. Then, on other nights, the King of the Beasts prowls round at his leisure, searching for a particularly fine meal. His great glowing eyes glare like fires as he lies in wait, and his body is very still as he crouches ready to mark and spring. He may choose a bull or even a buffalo for his supper, but he has a wise dread of the weapons of these beasts, and springing on to the back of his prey, he clings there, doing business

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with his great strong claws and his huge jaws, and keeping well out of the way, meanwhile, of the victim's sharp, fierce horns.

Lions, however, are not always satisfied with the prey that the forests and plains afford them; sometimes they make for flocks and herds, and in many districts of Africa the natives suffer dreadful loss. The Arabs often arrange hunts, and a wide ring of men surrounds the Lion's lair—narrowing itself down gradually until at last the prey is brought into view of the hunters. Then they all fire together at a given signal. Sometimes the Lion bursts through the ring and escapes, and sometimes he is brought down by one of the shots and finished off by others. There are great rejoicings, of course, amongst the natives when a Lion is killed. The flesh is eaten by the warriors amidst feasting and merriment. But the Arab women are very particular that the wild beast's heart shall not be eaten by the hunters. It must be cut up and divided amongst the mothers of the tribe, who cook their little portion, and give the tit-bit to their baby boys to eat; for if little Arab boys eat of the flesh of the Lion's heart, they will be certain, so think their mothers, to grow up as brave and courageous as the King of the Beasts himself. The hair of the Lion's mane, too, is twisted into armlets, which are worn as charms, and supposed to bring great good luck.

The Lion has a horror of lights or fire of any kind. Travellers on African plains would never think of lying down at night unless they were surrounded by a ring of flame to keep the prowling beasts at bay; and it is amazing how many Lions there still are in Africa. In

## LIONS

India there are few, but in Africa, the Lion's kingdom, there are still so many, that in some districts they are really masters of men. A traveller in Matabeleland once came upon a whole village of little houses up in the trees, where the natives had encamped, that they might be out of the way of the Lions, who had made their homes in such numbers near by on the plains. Up in the branches the people slept and lived, paying calls on each other by stepping over from bough to bough, and only venturing down to the ground for a little while in the daytime, when the Lions would be resting in their lairs. Another tribe of natives built their houses on tall poles about eight feet from the ground, and the people climbed up and down by the aid of a knobby tree trunk. It must be relief to them to know that Lions, unlike the panthers and leopards, can't climb trees.

A Lion grew a little bit too bold on one occasion. A colonist who had made his home in one of the African states was one day working in his yard mending his wagon and talking to his wife meanwhile, as she sat playing with her little boy and girl in the garden, when a sudden silence from his family made him turn round. There stood the children, spellbound. His wife sat as still as death and as white as a ghost; while close beside her sat a huge Lion, which had suddenly and quite unexpectedly appeared.

It must have been a most terrible moment; but fortunately the father of the family kept his head. He ran like the wind round to the side of the house, for he remembered that his gun was standing on the floor just inside his bedroom window. He seized it, and crept



*There stood the children, spellbound.*

## LIONS

round behind the intruder, who still crouched quite close to the terrified little group. Then came, perhaps, the most awful moment of all, for the beast lay so close to the children that the bullet must brush by the little boy's hair if it was to enter the Lion's skull. The father knew, however, that the shot must be fired, for at any minute the beast might spring; and nerving himself up he pulled the trigger, and the Lion fell dead at the threshold of his home.

Another and quite a different story of an African Lion is strange in its own way. A sportsman, Lion hunting from the back of an elephant, was followed by a great raging, roaring Lion whom he had already wounded. "Good sport!" thought he, and leaned out of his howdah to put the finishing touches to the job. But, horrors! the howdah gave way; over it toppled, and the sportsman fell straight into the Lion's mouth. The elephant, however, came to his rescue. He seized the top of a young tree in his huge trunk, bent it over on to the Lion's back, and the sportsman was released from its jaws. I must confess that when I read that story I said to myself, "I wonder if it's true!"

But perhaps one of the most interesting of all Lion stories is the true tale that the great explorer Dr. Livingstone told of his own escape from a Lion's jaws. In Mabotsa, an African village where he settled for a time, the natives were dreadfully troubled by Lions, which stole from their flocks and thieved from their herds. Several Lion hunts had been set on foot, but none of the wild beasts had been killed, and Dr. Livingstone made up his mind that he would go himself with the

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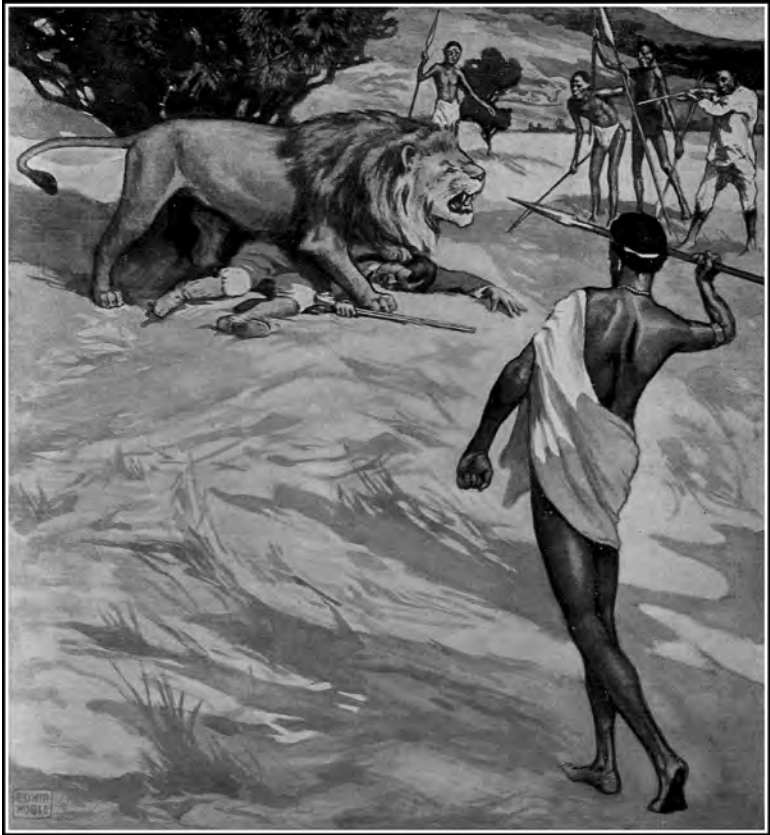
next hunting party, and see whether his presence would help the luck to turn.

So they set out, and when the Lion's lair was discovered they made a ring round it in the way I have described already. Before long, the circle having been narrowed down more and more and more, they came upon a solitary Lion, and fired. With no good result though, for the beast was untouched; he just bounded through the circle of men and went off.

Another ring of men was made. This time two of the great beasts were tracked, and then lost; but as there seemed no likelihood of a "kill" that day, Dr. Livingstone turned towards the village again, followed by the natives. Then the unexpected thing happened. Suddenly, as he rounded a hillock, he came upon one of the beasts taking cover behind a small bush.

C-r-r-r-ack! Livingstone fired both barrels at the bush. It seemed pretty certain that the Lion must be wounded, if not done for; but to make assurance doubly sure, the sportsman thought he would give him another charge, and he began to ram in his bullets. And just at that minute the Lion sprang! Over the bush and on to the mound where Livingstone stood it came. It caught the sportsman's shoulder and brought him down; it growled and shook him, and laid its huge paw on the back of his head. But, strange to say, Dr. Livingstone declared, when he told the story afterwards, that he felt no terror or fear. A kind of dreamy sleepiness seemed to creep over him, and he just lay still and waited and watched.





*It laid its huge paw on the back of his head.*

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And as he watched he saw the huge beast turn his eyes towards one of the natives who was creeping up behind. The native fired; and at that minute the Lion rose in rage and, leaving Livingstone, turned to the second victim. From him, in a worse fury than ever, he turned upon a third native, who had come racing up with a lance to take part in the sport. And then, quite suddenly, with a huge roar of rage and fury and pain, the Lion could fight no more. The bullets had done their work. His last strength was spent, and he fell dead upon the plain.

## BUFFALOES

Is there any animal who is a match for the King of the Beasts?

Is there one with whom the fiercest tiger would rather not fight?

Yes, the Buffalo!

There are Buffaloes to be found in many different parts of the world. Far away in the forests of Central Africa they wander in wild herds. In India they are to be found wallowing in the muddiest of the jungle pools all through the heat of the day, or drifting lazily down stream with the current of some river. But perhaps the best known of all the tribe is the American Buffalo, which, to be quite correct, should be called a Bison and not a Buffalo at all; for with the great hump over its fore-shoulders, and with its rounded horns, it is very different in appearance from its wild relations of the Old World.

It must be an exciting experience to have to deal with one of the wild Buffaloes of Africa. The natives say that they would far rather meet a rhinoceros or a lion; and travellers have told terrible tales of the fierce rage of the bull leaders of the herds. But every one seems

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to agree that to meet a solitary Buffalo is the worst experience of all. For sometimes Buffalo bulls leave their herd to wander alone; and to meet one of these furious creatures is about as risky an experience as the most adventurous hunter could wish for.

A sportsman, who was in search of a herd of Buffaloes, and had had little luck, became separated from his party, and found himself on a wide, open plain. He was just thinking that he was in for a very dull time of it, when he found that the opposite was the case. For towards him, at a tremendous gallop, came a solitary Buffalo. It had hidden itself behind a tree—as these fierce creatures often do—and now it came headlong towards its victim, bellowing horribly, and tearing up the ground with its feet, while it lowered its great sharp horned head. Quick as thought the sportsman looked round for a tree. If he could reach one and climb up, then he knew that he would be safe to shoot the wild beast from its branches; but there was no tree within a hundred yards, and he would not have time to reach it before the Buffalo would be upon him. There seemed no way of escape. There was, however, just one chance in a thousand: if he took careful aim at the approaching monster he might wound it, and thus gain time; so he cocked his rifle.

Bang! he had aimed at the great beast's forehead as it came within a few yards of where he stood; then he fell flat on his face, expecting that his last hunt was over. But his luck had held. With a fearful bellow the beast swerved, and, leaving its victim, made its way towards



*With a fearful bellow the beast swerved.*

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the river beyond, where it fell dead on the bank, with a bullet through its brain.

So much for an adventure with an African Buffalo. In India the Buffaloes are fierce enough, too, in their wild state, but they are capable of being tamed and trained by the native herdsmen for use in all kinds of farm work. It is quite a common sight, indeed, to see a whole herd of these Buffaloes taken down to some jungle stream in the heat of the day by no more powerful driver than a small native boy perched up on the back of the Buffalo leader. No one need be afraid to go into the deepest part of the jungle if he be with the Buffalo herd, for even a fierce tiger will hesitate before he dares to come near to his dreaded enemy of the huge, sharp horns.

The American Bison is not by any means such a fierce beast as the wild Buffalo of the tropics. Years ago, before the railway was carried across the great wild stretches of the New World, whole herds of them wandered in their thousands from east to west, from sea to sea, through the forests, through the prairies; the wide plains were black with moving companies of Bison. But the coming of the railway has meant the disappearance of the American Buffalo. In the olden days it was only the Red Man who hunted him, but with the opening up of the country the White Man has proved his enemy. By the Red Man the Bison was killed for the flesh which gave food; for the fat which gave light by night; for the skin which gave clothing, tent-covering, and moccasins; for the horn which gave spoons and eating vessels. Even the sinews were twisted

## *BUFFALOES*

into bow-strings and thread by the Red Man, who made glue from the Bison's hoofs, and carved his bones into battle-clubs. But it was different with the "pale-face" hunter. Whole herds of Buffaloes were killed by him for the sake of their hides alone, or for "sport." There is even a story of an Irish baronet who camped in the Wild West for two years, and whose "bag" at the end of that time consisted of two thousand five hundred Buffaloes; and there are many other such stories too. So it is not very surprising to know that of the many millions of wild Buffaloes that roamed the plains before the railway came, there now remain only a few thousand.

The Red Man must have had exciting times when he hunted Buffalo in the olden days. His plan sometimes was to pursue his quarry on horseback, armed with nothing more deadly than his bow and quiver of arrows. Sometimes he would drive a whole herd before him into an enclosed pound of tree trunks prepared beforehand, or even over the side of some steep precipice. At other times he would clothe himself in the skin of a white wolf, and, helped by this clever bit of camouflage, would make his way quite close to the herd, when he would select some particularly fine prey and attack it by means of his bow and arrow, finishing up the piece of work with his sharp hunter's knife. Then in winter-time he would follow the Buffalo trail over the snow stretches. In specially made snowshoes he would glide easily along after the huge, floundering Bisons, who found it terribly difficult, on account of their size and bulk, to make their way through the great deep drifts.

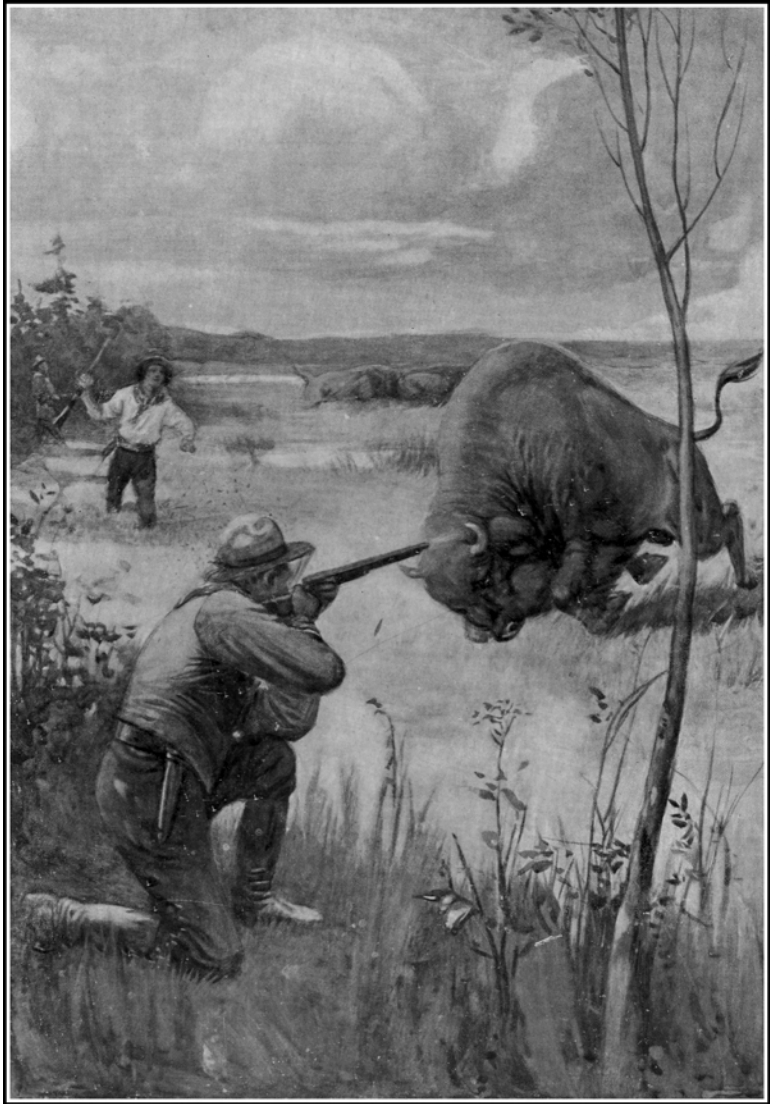
A cowboy had an exciting experience with a fierce

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Bison bull. With a party he had been hunting on foot for Buffalo, and at last they had come to windward of a herd feeding quietly not far away. Making towards the quarry at the signals of his friends, who were nearer the direction than was he, the cowboy did not realize that still closer at hand, under the shelter of some bush, was a young calf hardly able to walk, and protected by a Buffalo bull. A bull will rarely attack a man except when it has been wounded, or when it is acting as protector to a new-born calf. In this case it scented the White Man, and with a roar of rage came forward, apparently meaning to avenge a possible attack on the Baby Bison.

Taken unawares, without cover of any sort, and on the wrong side of the wind, the cowboy had only one course. He went down on one knee and took aim quickly, before the furious beast should be upon him. His bullet entered the beast's chest and brought him down; but he was up again immediately, more furious than ever, tearing up the ground, bellowing and roaring in his rage. A second bullet found its home in his knee joint, however, crippling him; while a third finished him off, and he rolled over, stone dead, just as another of the hunting party ran up to take a part in the sport. By this time the rest of the herd had made off, disturbed by the sound of the shots, and the Baby Bison, left alone, proved an easy spoil. Following its captors home, it was reared without any more difficulty than if it had been a farmyard calf.





*He went down on one knee and took aim quickly.*

## KANGAROOS

ANYBODY who wants to see a Kangaroo at home must go to Australia, or to one of the islands in that part of the world, for absolutely nowhere else on the globe do Kangaroos live. A long journey perhaps, but it will be worth while. Captain Cook and his men were the first Britishers who ever set eyes on one, and they were almost as frightened at the strange new beast as they were interested.

It was in 1770: they had put into Botany Bay with their ship, the *Endeavour*, for some repairs; and several of the men started off on a foraging excursion, to see what this new country would afford them in the way of stores. Back, however, they returned almost at once, with faces full of amazement—one of them declaring that he had met the “Devil,” and others telling how they had discovered a perfectly new animal, which was coloured like a mouse, but which was of the size and quickness of a greyhound. It is only fair to the Kangaroo to add that the “Devil” was one of the large fruit-eating bats that make their home in Australia; but the mouse-coloured find was certainly the Kangaroo, or “Kanguroo” as the natives called it when the sailors pressed them to let them know what might be the strange beast’s name.

## KANGAROOS

They were inclined to consider the creature in the light of a treasure, though, before many hours had passed; for, by Captain Cook's orders, one of the Kangaroos was shot, cut up, cooked, and eaten for Sunday's dinner, proving a most excellent treat.

Those of us who have seen Kangaroos in the Zoo at one time or another will pretty well understand the surprise of the sailors, for these animals are really so much unlike any others that we know at all. In some ways they seem so awkward and clumsy, with their long hind limbs and their short front legs. When they are resting they sit in very much the same position as a frog does, except, of course, that their backs are held more straight and their fore limbs do not touch the ground. But no one could call the Kangaroo exactly "awkward" who has seen it leaping along the plains with the help of those two long back legs. It is helped, too, by its tail, which seems to give it balance, somehow. I have heard people say that it is of the same use to the Kangaroo as the tripod is to a standing camera.

What a tremendous rate the leaping Kangaroo goes at, too! Our British foxhounds would not stand the ghost of a chance in an Australian Kangaroo hunt. Indeed a special kind of dog is trained to follow them at such times—a "Kangaroo hound" it is called; and it looks very much like a greyhound with a big bushy tail. Kangaroo hunting is common enough in Australia, and for a very good reason—the animal being dreadfully destructive to crops and pasture land. Two kangaroos eat as much grass as three sheep do, so it is no wonder that in some districts where they are common they are

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treated just like vermin, and are hunted, shot, poisoned, or killed in large numbers by mounted horsemen, who chase them into enclosures and kill them there.

Every one who has heard anything at all about Kangaroos knows of the safe pouch in which the mother keeps her young ones. Baby Kangaroos come into the world when they are only an inch long, and such wee Hop-o'-my-Thumbs need a safe place if they are to grow up at all. Mother's pouch is very warm and comfortable, and there the baby lives until it is big enough to feed itself. Sometimes, even after it is old enough to hop along and crop grass like its parent, it can be seen jumping in and out of the pouch for a rest, or riding along in the pouch and putting out its little head now and then, as its mother bends down to take a blade of grass, to follow her example.

Mother Kangaroos are very fond of their little ones; hunters tell stories of the way they look after them. On one occasion a hunter set his dog on a Kangaroo who was cropping grass with her young one beside her. Now this young one was growing up, and was really too heavy for its mother to carry; but into her pouch she popped it, and started off at a great rate, quite outstripping the hunter's dog. But it was quite impossible for her to keep up this pace with the extra weight in her pouch, and the mother thought of a good plan: round a corner she hurried, and dropped the baby into a patch of brush. On she went, then faster and faster, until the dog was weary of chasing her, and set off after another victim; *then* she returned to the spot where she had left her baby, picked it up, and carried it off. This habit of the

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mother Kangaroo is well known to hunters. At first it was thought that the baby was left to take care of itself while the mother hurried on to save her own skin; but every one now agrees that the mother's plan is to hide her baby in a safe place where the dog will not find it, and then to bear the brunt of the danger herself.

But though an animal may be tender and thoughtful for the happiness of its little ones, that does not mean that it will not be very fierce and dangerous with *enemies* who may attack it. The Kangaroo is a very clever fighter, and a Kangaroo hunt may have dire results for some of the dogs that take part in it. Though hunters speak of the Kangaroo as a "stupid" animal, yet it has learned a few pretty good ways of defending itself from its foes. One of these ways is to run towards deep water as soon as the hounds are set on its tracks. With its great leaps it goes over the wide plains at a tremendous pace, and lands splash into a stream. All dogs fight shy of a Kangaroo who does this, for although they can *swim* they are in great danger of being drowned if they follow her.

For her way is to seize with her strong fore feet any dog that comes near enough, and to duck him under the water and hold him there. Struggle he may, but there will be no release if she once seizes him, and many a dog has been drowned in this way. A man was nearly drowned by a Kangaroo too, on one occasion. He was an Irishman who had just settled in Australia, and knowing very little about Kangaroos, he thought one afternoon that he would go out and hunt one. Calling his dog then, he set off, and soon caught sight of a "boomer," or great Kangaroo, about five feet in height.



*It runs towards deep water as soon as the hounds  
are set on its tracks.*

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Having once started him, the hunter began to enjoy the fine sport, and so did his dog; but the Kangaroo, not being as new to the game as his pursuer was, tired of it pretty soon, and arranged to be cornered near a water-hole. "There we've got him," thought the hunter, a little too soon, and sent his dog into the water after the quarry, with a result that you may guess. The dog was held under water, drowned, and never seen alive again. This infuriated poor Pat. Firing first with no luck, he then jumped into the water-hole himself, "just to bate the brains out of the baste," as he thought, and to his amazement he found himself lifted up, plunged into the water, and held under too. In fact, he would have been drowned outright, had not two passers-by seen the way that the "sport" was going and come to his rescue, beating off the Kangaroo and dragging the half-unconscious Irishman to land.

And the Kangaroo has other neat little ways of revenging itself on its hunters. Its hind legs are remarkably strong, and strongest of all its weapons, perhaps, is its fourth toe; this bears a long, pointed claw, that can be brought into use in times of need. Turning upon pursuers it can use its tail, too, as a very powerful aid, and often dogs are seized up in the great creature's fore feet, and beaten hard with the tail of the infuriated Kangaroo. A dog has sometimes been killed, too, with a single blow from one of the hind feet, or even hugged to death when the victim has been driven to bay.

Kangaroos sometimes fight with each other too. In the mating season the males test their strength against each other, and box with their front limbs, or leap at

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each other, biting with their teeth, or scratching at each other with their sharp claws. But it seems to be for the dog pursuers that they keep the most deadly of their weapons—which is sporting enough, when all is said and done.



## WHALE FISHING

WHAT tremendous adventures whale fishers have been through, and what hairbreadth escapes many of them have had! Perils from gales, from mists, from floating icebergs, and from wild island tribes, as well as from the great sea-monster itself!

There used, in the olden days, to be a great deal of whale fishing in the southern waters; but as whales became scarcer, the fishery was carried to other parts of the world. Now the great monsters are met with chiefly in the arctic seas of the very far north, where the valuable Greenland Whale has its home. There it swims about in the icy cold waters, using its great tail as it goes; all the while taking deep draughts of ocean water into its huge mouth—a strange mouth as well as a huge one, by the way, since it is lined with plates of a horny kind of substance instead of teeth.

*Some* whales have teeth, though. There are really two kinds of Whale—“Whaleboned Whales” and “Toothed Whales,” though the Whaleboned Whales are the more prized; for besides their blubber-fat, which is such a valuable part of the great creature, their whalebone is worth a very great deal to the fishers who are fortunate enough to bring home a prize.

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This whalebone is very useful to the Greenland Whale himself, too; indeed, he could not live without it. Born without teeth, as he is, something is needed to help to deal with the food that he takes in, and the flat horny plates that hang down inside his mouth are just the thing. Through them the great mouthfuls of water that the monster is always taking into his huge jaws are strained, and any tiny ocean creatures are allowed through to be swallowed, while the water which has brought them is passed back to the ocean again. It seems very strange to think of such an immense creature feeding on such tiny ocean mites; but, of course, so many gallons of water must be strained by the whalebone plates every minute, that "mony a mickle" no doubt "makes a muckle," and the Whale gets plenty of food in the end. Indeed, there is so much fat or blubber on the body of every Whale, that we can take it for granted that they are not starved.

This blubber is a very important part of the "catch." Blubber as well as whalebone is a treasure which the whale fisher is out to seek; for while hunting in the jungle is often carried out for love of sport alone, it is just as well to remember that whale fishing is undertaken by men as a means of livelihood, and that it means a great deal to their wives and children at home whether the whaling excursions are successful or not.

But all the same, I am certain that not a single whale-fishing company ever sets out to sea without tremendous excitement and eagerness on the part of every single one of the crew. There is an old whaling

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motto, “Dead Whale or Stove Boat;” and every man on board means to see the matter successfully through.

Whale-fishing expeditions of these times are planned rather differently from the way they used to be not so very long ago. Nowadays there are steam whalers, which set out alone, with no need for the line of little open boats that used to accompany the ship, for this new whaler can discharge her own harpoons from a platform on her bows. The harpoon, too, of to-day is often loaded with explosives, and an American inventor has discovered a means of discharging into the body of the Whale, from a double-barrelled gun, both a harpoon and an explosive shell at one and the same time. But before these days of harpoon-guns, bomb-guns, bomb-lances, and other different new inventions, there were, perhaps, even more exciting adventures to be met with—more chances for luck and pluck than the whalers meet with to-day in the far seas; so I will give you an account of a whaling expedition as it might have been carried out some forty or fifty years ago.

The whole company consisted, very likely, of about thirty-five sailors, the “whaler”—a specially strongly made ship of perhaps four hundred tons or so—and four or more light five-oared boats. The last point at which they touched to get supplies of food and water would very likely be on the island of Shetland; then they would make their way off, ever farther north. Generally about the beginning of April they touched land for the last time, and by the time the polar seas were reached it would very likely be about the end of that month; *then* they were really in the haunts of the Whales. Every one

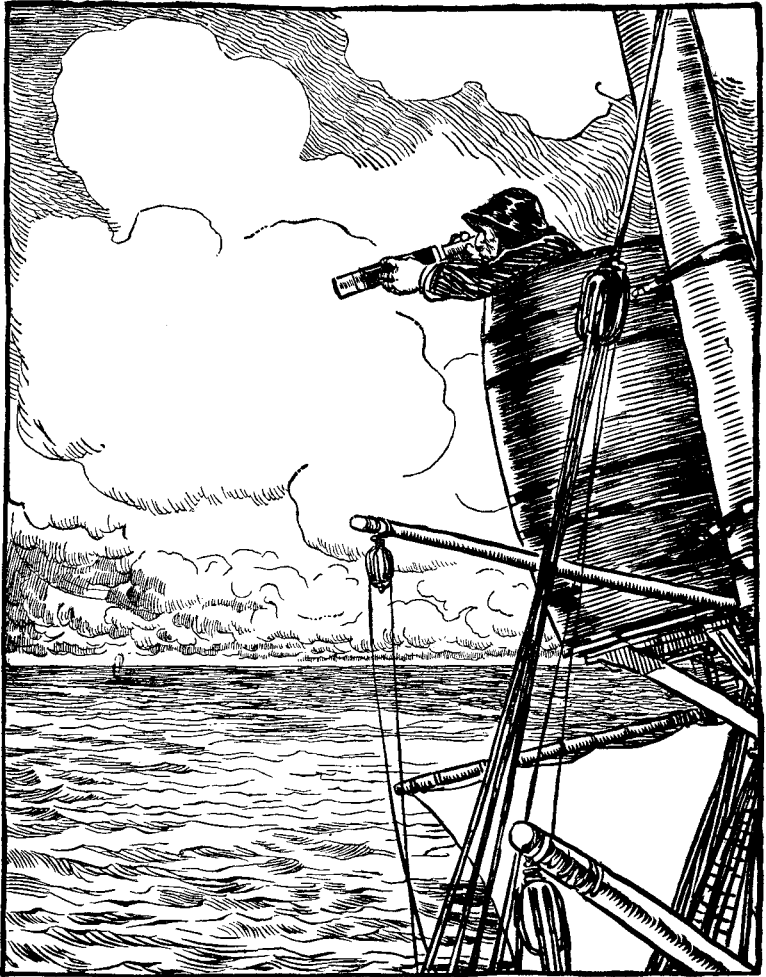
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was keenly alive to the fact, you may be sure, and each one of the crew kept a careful lookout.

Most careful of all, perhaps, was the officer whose position was up in the “crow’s-nest.” This was a kind of watch-house always rigged up on the maintop-mast of every whaler, and here some one was always posted to be on the look-out for the first signs of a Whale. But the captain did not wait until the signal was given before everything was in readiness; all was taut and to hand long before it was needed—harpoons, lances, tremendous lengths of rope very carefully coiled. Even the crew themselves slept with one ear open at night until the signal came, and should the word be given at midnight, it was not an instant before every single man Jack of them was swarming up on deck.

Then, at the order of the captain, the adventure began; each of the small boats was put off to the scene. If it was night time, the men were probably not dressed before they started, but were waiting, even in the freezing atmosphere of the polar seas, to put on their garments in the boats as they went. Each boat had its own harpooner and its sub-officers; each had its own coils of rope—such long coils as can be spliced together to run to a length of perhaps four thousand feet—then, at the end of the rope there was, of course, the harpoon.

The aim of each boat was to get as close as possible to the Whale, and to harpoon it before it dived again into the water. At great speed the boats went, for the monster probably did not mean to stay very long above



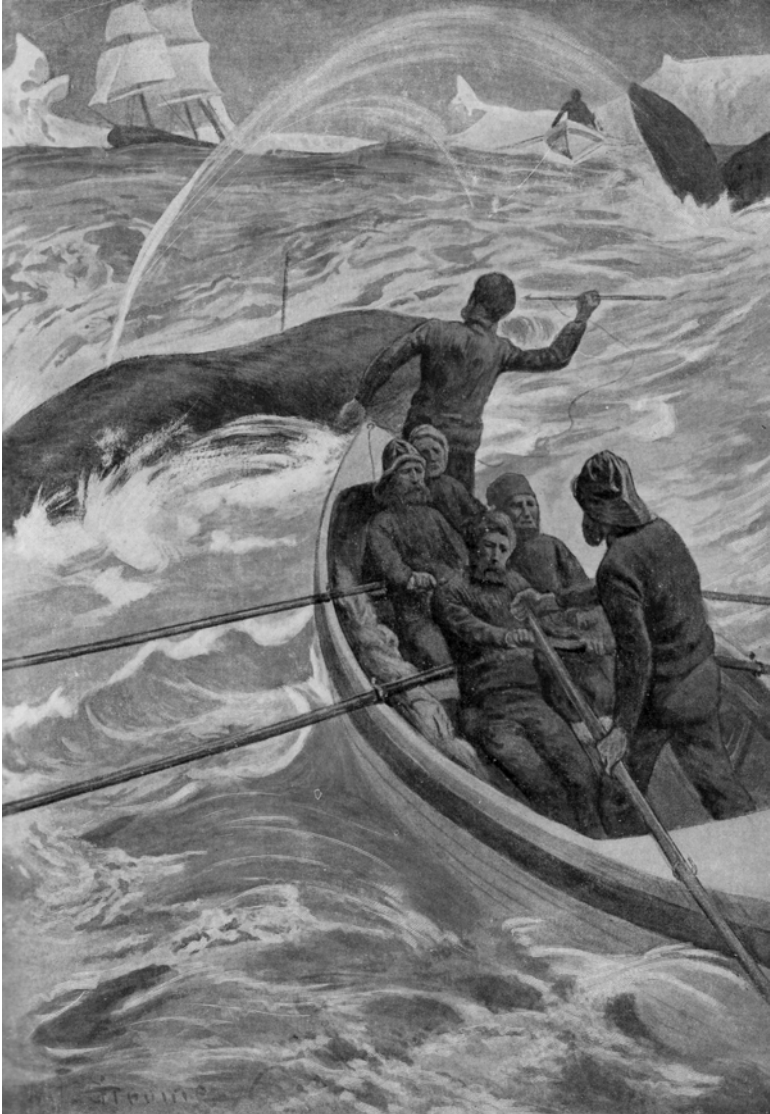
*The officer whose position was up in the "crow's-nest."*

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water, and it might be hours before he was seen again. Off went the boats; if possible, one of them drew up quite close to the victim, and the sharp harpoon was plunged into his back. There might not be time to reach him, however, before he dived, and in such a case the harpoon was thrown by a swift hand. It was pretty sure to find a billet somewhere, for the Whale was a fairly large target.

But it was after the harpoon had entered the body of the monster that the biggest danger began. The Whale, feeling the pain of the wound, turned to get away, and it was a ticklish moment for the boat and the men. They might find themselves in the water, turned over suddenly by a twist of his tail; they might find themselves tossed like feathers into the air, with the chance of finding *terra firma* on his broad back; or it might be that the victim would dive to the bottom of the sea with a rush, and then, if the line to which the harpoon was joined was long enough, all would be so far well, for the men, keeping the line clear, would let it run with him.

But sometimes the rope in one boat was not long enough, and a system of signalling was used between the company when this was the case. *One* oar held up meant, "Another coil is needed—sharp!" *Two* oars held up indicated that two coils of rope were needed, and so on. The waiting boats were all on the lookout for these signals; and they hurried to the spot with as much speed as they could, for they all knew that should the rope run short before it could be spliced on to another length, there would be only one thing to do to save the



*The sharp harpoon was plunged into his back.*

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boat and crew—to cut the line, and let the Whale escape with the harpoon. Naturally no sportsman worth his salt would feel anything but disgust at such an ending to his day.

But even if everything went well—if the line held out, and the Whale dived without working too much mischief with its powerful tail—there were yet plenty of dangers ahead. Sometimes it would stay under water for about an hour; but that it *would* come up again the crew of each boat knew, and they all lay near until the exciting moment arrived. Then, at the appearance of his great black back, every boat made a dash for it; every harpooner plunged his weapon into the huge creature's body, just as soon as he was near enough, and after the harpoons had done their work the sharp lances helped to finish off the job. A dreadful "spouting" from the wounded Whale began. Then the dying creature threw up a crimson stream, jerking its tail and wildly plunging and struggling meanwhile as it died. The noise of its struggles could be heard miles away; the sea was worked into foam by the lashings of its tail. And now was the time for every boat to keep as clear as it could, for accidents often happened at such a moment; and by the time the Whale was really dead, every one of the crew was probably drenched with the blood of the huge victim—the waves being coloured, too, and each boat stained red.

What was to be done next? The work was not over by any means, though the men must have been pretty well worn out with the excitement of their adventure, and with the strain of the perils they had been through.



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Yet the great Whale had still to be towed by the boats to the side of the whaler, where the “flensing” had to take place.

The flensing was a most important part of the work, for the “flensers” had to remove the valuable blubber and whalebone from the prize; and when the monster had been made fast to the ship’s side, they put on spiked boots, and climbed down on to its body to cut it up. The spiked boots were really necessary, for the body of the Whale is dreadfully slippery, and here again accidents might happen. However, the flensers knew their job, and were soon merrily at work, cutting off the strips of whalebone and the lengths of blubber, attaching them to tackle that hung down over the ship’s side, and shouting signals when the loads were ready to be hauled up by the crew on the ship above. When once up on the ship’s side the blubber was cut up small, boiled in huge pots and strained; while, as for the whalebone, that needed no more preparation than a twelve hours’ soaking in boiling water, when it was quite soft and ready to be used.

So much for the adventures that pretty nearly always happened on a whaling expedition; but some very special and terrible experiences have happened from time to time to different whaling companies that have set out to try their fortunes in the arctic seas. A strange story is told by old whalers, which may or may not be true, but which, at any rate, is quite thrilling enough to repeat. In 1775 the captain of a whaling vessel was becalmed in the polar seas. He sighted a strange ship that looked ghastly and deserted, and

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feeling astonished at its appearance, sent out some of his boats. Their crews boarded her to see what they could find, and at first the whole ship seemed desolate; but at last they made their way into one of the cabins, and there, to their horror, they found the skeleton of a man seated at a table, a ship log-book in his hand and a finished entry before him. "Nov. 14, 1762," he had written. "We have been in the ice for seventeen days. Fire out yesterday, and our master has been trying to kindle it, but without success. His wife died yesterday. There is no relief." *And the entry had been made thirteen years before!* There was no trace of any food on the ship, but the remains of skeletons were found down below.

Another story, which is rather more cheery, is told of a whaling vessel that met with rather an amusing adventure off the Pelew Islands. Its boats were off scouting after Whales, and most of its crew were taking an idle afternoon, when suddenly, without warning, a tribe of wild islanders burst upon them from the shore. For a little while, on account of the suddenness of the visitation, the crew lost their heads, and fled up the rigging, where, if it had not been for the quick-wittedness of one of the officers, they might have remained, leaving the natives to work havoc below. This officer, however, instantly gave an order to the crew to come down and open the armour chest, fill their hands and pockets with tin-tacks, and then go up to the rigging again, and throw the tacks down on the intruders.

A shower of tacks followed his command, which not only irritated the invaders' heads and shoulders, of course, as they rained down, but also formed a sharp,

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piercing carpet for their feet as they scampered about on deck trying to shoot the unarmed crew with their arrows; and, terrified at this uncanny sort of weapon, that seemed to them to come from the skies, the natives climbed down the side of the ship as quickly as they had come, and swam ashore!