

The Orphans' Friend.

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SNAKES AND MISSIONARIES.

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I send you a few observations on some of the unwelcome intruders we are occasionally obliged to eject from our houses, premising, however, that danger except to bare-footed and bare-bodied Africans is often exaggerated. Seldom do we experience anything more curious than a good fright.

The serpent family in South Africa is legion, and its extermination is a matter of great difficulty, if not an impossibility. In point of size we place the *python* at the head. It is often found as large round as the calf of a man's leg, and from fifteen to twenty feet long. A stuffed specimen of this kind may be seen in the Cabinet of Amherst College, with which the following incident is connected: Some Zulu boys, while hunting, heard the cries of an antelope in a cluster of bushes, and running to the spot found a python in the act of swallowing it. Dispatching his serpentship with spears and clubs, they feasted on the game entrapped in this novel fashion.

A Dutch farmer in South Africa tells the story of a python attacking a Zulu boy while he was asleep and attempting to swallow him, beginning with one leg. Not getting on satisfactorily, and the unfortunate lad awakening to a "realizing sense" of his situation, the serpent tried to eject the limb, but the fangs were too deeply fixed in the flesh to render this an easy matter. The poor lad was obliged to make the best of his awkward situation till help came.

During a long residence in this part of the world I have never known a case of death to a human being from an encounter with this serpent. If armed with a knife or club, one is tolerably safe. And it is easily destroyed while digesting an antelope or rabbit. When boiled, the flesh of the python is tender, and looks like had-dock. It is said to be an article of food among some tribes in the interior of Africa.

The most formidable serpent in these parts is called by the Zulus *imamba*. There are two kinds, black and green; the former being the most poisonous, and the only snake which is known to attack human beings when unprovoked. If fully grown, it is as large round as a man's wrist, and twelve or fifteen feet long. The sight of it in hot chase, with head erect, eyes dilated and tongue protruded, is not calculated to awaken pleasant emotions in man or beast. The Zulus, unless well armed with clubs and spears, generally take to their heels when a good-sized one appears in their path. Rev. Lewis Grout, in his interesting book, called "Zulu Land," gives a graphic account of a narrow escape from one which pursued him, although he was on horseback. When it enters a Zulu kraal, the greatest consternation ensues. I remember a case in which a woman was obliged to quit her house, dragging her three children after her, an *imamba* having taken possession. Her

husband, a brave fellow, entered alone, and, after a severe contest, succeeded in killing the reptile.

The appearance of snakes in native dwellings is always regarded as a bad omen. Ordinarily, after such a visitation, an ox is slaughtered as a propitiatory sacrifice to the spirits which have sent the snakes on some evil errand. A part of the beef is generally laid aside especially for these reptiles. We should suppose that, as the beef is never eaten, their faith in the utility of this offering would be shaken; but this does not appear to be the case.

African snakes often go in pairs, and when one is killed in a house, the uncomfortable apprehension remains that another is somewhere on the premises. A missionary, once hearing a rustling on the floor of his bedroom in the middle of the night, struck a light, and ascertained that a horrid *imamba* was the cause of the disturbance. He killed it, and returned to his bed. Half an hour after he was startled by a similar visitation, and was obliged to repeat the operation. The riddance of two deadly serpents in one night was quite a feat; and the next morning the Zulus were loud in their praises of their teacher.

Another missionary was reading from "Spurgeon's Sermons" to his wife, when she suddenly exclaimed: "My dear, what is that under your chair?" To his horror he found a green *imamba* coiled up near his feet. How long the visitor had been listening to the great London preacher was not then the question to consider, but how to get rid of him, which was not a very pleasant business.

The lamented Dr. Adams, pioneer missionary to the Zulus, was once preaching in a grass-covered chapel, when a beautiful but venomous serpent entered and slyly crept along the ridge, till it came directly above the good man's head, and then assumed an attitude of rest and attention. The preacher, nothing daunted, went on with his sermon, closing with prayer and benediction, and then quietly observed to his sable audience: "Now you may kill the serpent." The green *imamba* is sometimes discovered wound about the limbs of an orange tree, its head resting on one of the luscious fruits. A well-aimed shot generally brings down both orange and serpent.

A Zulu servant was sent into a garden for a bunch of bananas. Cutting it down, and placing it on his head, he returned to his master, singing as he went along. Imagine his astonishment when, placing the bananas on the ground, there emerged from them a hideous and poisonous serpent. He is said to have turned almost white.

The remedy for snake bites most extensively used in South Africa is *spirits of ammonia*. Dose for an adult, from ten to fifteen drops in a wine glass of water. The Zulus rarely suck out the poison, as do the North American Indians. In some cases this would be difficult, on account of the rapidity with which the virus

penetrates the system. One missionary says that he has found rubbing ipecacuanha moistened with water into the wound, and also some used internally, very useful. In the absence of ammonia, I have found rum and brandy to be an efficacious remedy. By once intoxicating a Zulu, I saved his life. This is, however, the only thing for which I can recommend intoxication.

According to recent homoeopathic discoveries, it is stated that a tincture made from a snake's gall forms an antidote for the bite of reptiles of the same species. A Mr. Perkins, of New South Wales, has published directions for those who are destitute of carefully prepared tinctures. He says: "If a person gets bitten by a snake and kills the reptile, he should at once extract its gall, mix one drop of it with a quarter of a pint of water, and take a tablespoonful of the compound every five or ten minutes, according to the urgency of the symptoms." I have never known this experiment tried in South Africa. Herbs growing in Natal are said to be a remedy for the poison of serpents, and toads are seen hopping to the 'umutiwenhlangwana,' the medicine for the bite of a snake called 'Inhlangwana.' Snakes do the same when bitten by each other, if we may credit the Zulus.

Interesting Sketch of a President's Wife.

The following is taken from an historical sketch of Haddonfield, N. J., in the Camden Press:

"The old tavern house, where sat the Colonial Legislature and the Council of Safety, has associated with it another interesting character. Soon after the war of independence had ended, and before the colonies had entered into the federal compact, the house was kept by Hugh Creighton, whose descendants or family name have not been known in this region for many years. A frequent visitor at his house, and a relative, was a young lady who resided in Philadelphia. Her maiden name was Doratha Payne, a daughter of John and Mary Payne. She was born in North Carolina in 1772, while her parents were on a visit there, they being residents at that time of Hanover county, Virginia. Her father served as a captain in the American army during the Revolutionary war, but afterwards, being convinced of the religious doctrines of Friends, became a member of that society, and was among the first who had religious scruples about holding slaves. In 1776 he sold his landed estate in Virginia and removed with his negroes to Philadelphia, where they were all set free. The nurse of Doratha, 'Mother Amy,' refused to leave her master and remained in his family until her death, and out of her earnings gave by will \$500 to her foster child. Doratha was educated according to the opinions of Friends, and in 1791 married John Todd, a wealthy young lawyer of that city, he being of the same faith and order. He died in 1793, of yellow fever, leaving her with two children. After the death of

her husband she abandoned the religious faith of her parents, laid aside plainness of dress, entered fashionable society, and at once became an attractive and fascinating lady. Her presence in the village drew around her the country beaux, and more than one, even in their old age, confessed their inability to resist her charms. Their outdoor parties in summer and quilting frolics in winter always found her a welcome guest, when she was the centre of attraction and admiration of all. Philadelphia was the metropolis, and where resided those administering the government, whose wives and daughters made society gay and fashionable. In this Mrs. Todd was also a conspicuous personage, and where she had many suitors.

Among the delegates to Congress from the State of Virginia was James Madison, a young lawyer of talent, and even then regarded as one of the brightest intellects of the State. His strict attention to the studies of his office prevented his making many acquaintances; but on the occasion of his introduction to the bright young widow, he fell desperately in love. This on the part of one whose attainments were in advance of his years, led to considerable gossip among the ladies, and made him the point of many jokes and other pleasantries with the heads of the government, even to President Washington, who appreciated his worth and abilities. In 1794 Doratha Todd, generally known as Dolly Todd, became Dolly Madison, and the wife of a future President of the United States. In 1801 her husband was appointed Secretary of State by Mr. Jefferson, and removed to Washington City, then little better than a wilderness. They remained there until 1817, at the close of the second term of Mr. Madison's Presidency, and then went to Montpelier, Virginia, upon his parental estate. Soon after the decease of her husband, in 1836, she returned to the national capital, and remained until her death, in 1849. In her exalted position she never forgot her friends about Haddonfield, nor the many pleasant days she had spent among the people there. Some of her old admirers sought honorable promotion at the hands of her husband during his administration, whose claims were strengthened by her influence, and which led to success. She survived all her contemporaries, and in her declining years was honored with a seat on the floor of the House of Representatives, where she commanded the respect of the great men of the nation. She would always relate the pleasant reminiscences of her early life to those presented to her as residents of West New Jersey, making inquiry concerning the old families of this village, some of whom, however, have at this day scarcely a representative left."

A "Poor man's Friend."

More than one generation have sung the praises of good old David McWayne, one of the early settlers of Oxford County, Maine. He lived in Waterford, and the

place of his residence is still known as "McWayne's Hill," in honor of him.

He was an eccentric man, but a true friend to the unfortunate, and when David McWayne died, the poor men of the section lost their chief stay.

On a certain season the corn crop failed almost entirely in the country. It was McWayne's custom to keep a year's supply of corn on hand in advance; and then, again, on his elevated land, the late frosts of spring and early frosts of autumn did not trouble him as they did his neighbors of lower-lying farms. And so it came to pass in this winter of scarcity, David McWayne had enough and to spare. Some people over in the adjoining town of Norway, hearing that he had plenty of bread-stuff, and knowing his liberality, drove over for the purpose of purchasing. They asked him if he had corn to spare. "Yes," said he, "I have corn to spare." They wanted twenty bushels.

"Have you any money to pay for it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered the spokesman of the party. "We should not have come without money."

"Then, gentlemen," said McWayne, with calm decision, "I cannot let you have corn. If you have money, you can send to Portland for it. I am surrounded by poor people, who have no money and no corn. I must supply them and let them pay me in work. They would suffer else."

And through that long, hard winter David McWayne adhered to his resolution. No man who had the money to pay for it could buy his corn; but to the poor and penniless he emptied his garner, allowing them to work for him in return at their own convenience.

Ancient Measurements.

At a recent meeting of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, a paper on "Ancient Metrology," by Mr. F. R. Conder, was read. In this paper Mr. Conder indicated the confused and contradictory state of our present knowledge of the subject, and proceeded to establish an absolute metrical base, identifying the barley-corn, which the Hebrew writers state to be the unit of length and weight, with the long measure barley-corn and with the Troy grain. The grounds of identification were—(1) actual measurement and weight of full-sized grains of barley at time of the harvest; (2) determination of specific gravity according to statements made in Hebrew literature; (3) actual dimensions of ancient Jewish buildings, and actual weight of a Babylonian talent now in the British Museum, which corresponded to Mr. Conder's determination of 960,000 Troy grains within one per mille. The remarkable double division of the Chaldee metrical system, which is both decimal and duodecimal, was then explained, and shown to apply to measures of length, area, capacity, and weight. The origin of the Troy ounce, the diamond carat, the Spanish ducat, and other existing divisions is traced to the early system employed by the Phœnician traders.