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THE

SWAMP SECRET.

A STORY OF THE FRONTIER.

By EBEN E. REXFORD.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

CONTINUED.

"One against four, as, since Number Six has thrown up his hand," said Wayne. "That won't be so bad, after all, if we get them out of the swamp all right. It's a lucky thing that we hit upon the Big Swamp for a hiding place. They have an idea, about here, that it's impossible to get a horse into it, so they haven't thought of looking there for us. Poor Number Six! I'm sorry to leave him behind. Let's see—the plan of taking the horses down the creek from the road till it got deep enough to take them into the swamp on a raft originated with him, didn't it? I wish he were going with us, but I suppose it was his fate to be shot, and fate's something none of us can get away from. I take it."

"It'll be beginning to grow light soon," said the other. "I think I'd better be on the move. You'll be there to-morrow night, then?"

"I'll be there by midnight if nothing happens," said Wayne. "Have everything packed and in readiness to leave at sunrise. I can you. Do you know where the settlers are making their march to-night?"

"Some of them have gone up the creek," was the reply. "Our men took the horses into the thick woods at the edge of the marsh, up the road, and from that into the creek, and then down stream, and across the road, and if the settlers come on any tracks it'll puzzle them to tell which way we went, for it's hard to tell which way tracks point in a marsh and running water. I hardly think they'll get on the right scent before we're safely out of the country, if we leave to-morrow night."

"Well, take care of yourself," said Wayne. "I'll be on hand by midnight, sure. Good night, Number Six."

"Good night, captain," responded the other.

Then they separated, one going back to the house, and the other into the woods.

Rhoda wondered if she was really awake. She could hardly credit the evidence of her senses.

"So Wayne's the leader of the gang of horse-thieves!" said she to herself, in a frightened whisper. "And I've found out the whole thing! Dear me! It scares me to think of it! It don't seem as if it could be possible! I must have dreamed it! Where can Nannie be all this time? I wish she could have been here and heard it all!"

"Rhoda!" came in a low whisper from a fence corner, not far off. "Rhoda!"

"Is that you, Nannie?" asked Rhoda, in a voice but little above a whisper.

"Yes," was the reply. "Have they gone?"

"Yes," answered Rhoda. "Oh, Nannie, did you hear what they said?"

"I only heard what they said when they were about to separate," answered Nannie. "I came near running right on them, but I thought I heard some one talking, and stopped to make sure, just in time to keep from being discovered by them. What was it they talked about? Something about stealing horses, wasn't it? Tell me what it was, Rhoda—quick! I'm just dying to know."

Rhoda told what she had heard.

"Oh, Rhoda!" cried Nannie, with radiant eyes. "It was the luckiest thing in the world that I brought you home with me to-night! What you've heard will save Dick."

"That's true, isn't it?" cried Rhoda. "I hadn't thought of that. I was so excited. It seems as if the hand of Providence was in it, doesn't it? I used Dick shamefully, just because he told me the singing teacher was making a fool of me. He talked to me like a brother, and I got mad about it. Now I've a chance to help him out of his trouble, and also to get even with Mr. Wayne, and just to-night, at camp meeting, I was wishing a chance to do that would come along. Only to think, Nannie, that I, of all persons, should be the one to find out who the horse thieves are, and how they got away with the horses they stole! It's just like a story, isn't it?"

"Rhoda, I'll tell you what we ought to do," said Nannie, with sudden conviction. "We ought to follow the men who're out hunting for the thieves, and put them on the right track. There's no man here to send but the minister, and he wouldn't know where to go if we sent him. If we can find the men, we can tell them what we have heard, and part of them can go into the Big Swamp, and some of them can come back and take care of Wayne. It won't do to tell any one what we've heard till we find the men and tell it to them, for if an inkling of it gets out, Wayne'll be sure to hear something, and before the men get back he'll be gone. The best thing we can do is to follow the men. It may be a long tramp for us, but I'm not afraid to undertake it."

Nannie was brave now. She was thinking how completely Dick would be vindicated, and this thought gave her courage for anything.

"I'll go," said Rhoda. "I'm not much afraid when there's some one with me.

"Well, then, come on," said Nannie, eager to be off. And hand in hand the two girls started down the road toward the creek that crossed it a mile or more further on in its way into the Big Swamp.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CLOSE ESCAPE.

Dick Brayton had been to the old hollow tree near the pasture bars for his daily rations.

He had reached the bank of the creek near which he had constructed a little hut of boughs in an old tree-top. Here he had passed his nights quite comfortably since his enforced exile from civilization.

As he went down the bank he fancied he heard a peculiar sound behind him. It was peculiar because of its regularity. He stopped and listened.

He had heard something.

The sound was that of splashing waters.

Splash, splash, splash!

The sound seemed to be coming nearer, as he listened.

"It can't be a cow," thought Dick. "It's too rapid for that. It can't be a deer, for he'd go faster and softer."

He hid himself in a clump of willows and waited.

Splash, splash, splash.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and presently he saw shadowy figures in the dim light which sifted through the branches of the trees overhanging the stream, which was here about fifteen feet wide and perhaps knee deep.

"Horses, by all that's good!" exclaimed Dick. "Young fellow, there's mischief in the wind. I wonder if I've got on the track of the horse-thieves at last?"

By this time the horses were opposite the place where he was hidden.

He gave a great start of surprise and could hardly repress the cry which rose to his lips.

For he recognized Nell and Dolly.

He could not distinguish the features of the men who were riding the horses, the light through the branches being too dim.

He waited until they passed a few rods beyond his hiding place. Then he left it and followed them cautiously down the bank of the stream.

The Big Swamp's borders were four or five miles from the road. As the land became lower the creek widened and deepened, and the banks gradually merged the meadows into boggy flats. Thus, at the junction of the swamp with the hard-wood land on either side of the creek, there was nothing but mire and, with water standing in every hole, and it was almost impossible for a man to make his way through the tangled growth of bushes over this treacherous scoulder of terra firma.

The men stopped when the water deepened so that the horses' legs were hidden in it.

From behind a clump of immense willows growing in the bend of the stream one of them shoved out a raft constructed of light cedar logs.

With some trouble they succeeded in getting the horses upon it.

This done, they proceeded to pole it off down stream toward the heart of the Big Swamp.

"There isn't any use of my going any farther," thought Dick. "I know where the gang keeps itself, now, and I've found out how it gets there. It's a little strange that no one has ever thought of their wading down the creek till they reached deep water. But it isn't so very strange after all, for nobody supposed it possible for them to get a horse into the Big Swamp in any manner."

He sat down on a fallen cypress and thought over what it was best to do.

"I think the best plan is to go directly to Mr. Boone's," he decided. "I guess I can get there without stretching hemp. It won't take long to get a squad of men on the trail. I see how it all is, now. Wayne is leader of the gang. He hunts up jobs, and lays the plans, and keeps the other fellows posted. What I found on the old cottonwood was his instruction to them after the stealing of Deacon Snyder's horses had been settled on. It's all as clear as daylight to me now. I hope we can catch them, horses and all. If we can, won't it be a proud day for me when I can stand up before all Brownsville and say: 'I'm the man you wanted to hang for a horse-thief. Now, what have you got to say about it?'"

About a mile from the road, a bluff jutted out from the south, forcing the creek to make an abrupt turn. Dick followed it around this point; and as he came to the open space on the other side of it, he found himself face to face in the dull gray light of breaking day with half a dozen men with Bill Green at their head.

There had been a difference of opinion on reaching the place where the creek crossed the road, and part of the men had gone up the creek as the horse-stealers had planned for them to do, and Bill's party had started toward the Big Swamp, on the correct supposition that the up-stream trail was a dodge to throw them off the scent.

"They went up there a ways, an' then come back in the water an' a mile or two to'rds the swamp, they'd strike high lan' an' put for home low. They want tu keep us a-dodgin' round so's they can gain time an' get a good start of us."

That was Bill's argument, and in part he reasoned correctly. On the strength of this belief he had come down the stream, inspecting the bank closely on either side, hoping to find where the horses had been out of the water and driven on toward some of the roads leading out of the settlement.

"That's him—that's Dick Brayton!" shouted Bill Green, who had been the first to recognize the man who appeared so suddenly before them. "We're close on to the gang, now! Shoot him if he tries to run!"

Dick had no idea of running.

"You're just in time," he said. "I've discovered the secret of the horse-thieves."

"An' we've jest diskivered one o' you a second time," answered Bill, as, with a desperate courage which he wondered at even then and could never account for afterward, he knocked Dick's gun from his hands and grappled with him. Instantly others of the party came to his assistance, and in a minute Dick was for the second time a prisoner.

"Don't be's give him a chance to git away ag'in," said one of the men. "String him up to this ol' tree, an' make sure of him this time."

"That's the talk!" cried Bill Green. "Ef we go to palaverin' with him some o' the rest o' the gang may come along, fust we know, an' help him to give us the slip. I don't believe in trials for hoss-thieves. Ef we hadn't a-waited for one afore, mebbe Mr. Boone'd b'en a span o' hosses ahead."

"See here, neighbors," said Dick, attempting to be calm. "I can prove to you that I am as innocent of what has been laid to me as any one of you is."

"Do it, then, an be quy about it," said Bill. "We hain't no time to fool away."

"I have just tracked the horse-thieves, with Mr. Boone's horses, to the border of the Big Swamp," said Dick. "I was on my way to Mr. Boone's to let him know what I found out."

"That's a likely story," sneered Bill. "But I reckon I won't go down with us. What do you think about it, fellers?"

"We don't take no stock in it," responded Mr. Balcom.

Dick's explanation had fallen like good seed on stony ground.

"Hello, there's Perkins an' Speers," cried Bill, as two men appeared on the opposite side of the creek. "Come across, boys."

Bill met the men a little way from the group which surrounded Dick, and talked with them in low tones for a few minutes.

"You're right," Dick heard one of them say. "It's best to make short work of it. Ef ol' Boone or Porter comes along afore it's done, they'll want us to hold on an' give him a chance fer a trial, an' I don't go in fer such doin's. I don't. Hangin's what I go in fer, an' I go in fer it now!"

"My idee," said Speers, concisely. "Here's suthin' that 'll git'er in place—suthin' better."

As he spoke he unwound a leather strap from about his waist. It was three or four feet long. Men often used these straps instead of suspenders, tying them or buckling them sufficiently tight to keep their trousers from slipping over their hips.

Bill took the strap and came back to the waiting group.

"I've talked with Speers an' Perkins an' they sin't in favor o' waitin'," he said. "What d'ye say, men? Is it hang?"

"Hang it is!" was the reply from every man in the party.

"For God's sake don't murder a man in cold blood!" cried Dick, as pale as death. "I tell you I am innocent. If you'll take the trouble to search the Big Swamp you'll find that I've told you the truth. Search and find out whether I've been lying to you before you hang me."

"What's the use o' foolin' with him?" cried Perkins. "We're only wastin' words an' time."

"Tie his hands," ordered Bill.

And in spite of his powerful struggles Dick's hands were tied, and the fatal strap fastened about his neck.

"For God's sake—" he began for Perkins had thrown the strap over a limb, and two or three men had seized it, and he felt himself being lifted from his feet.

At that instant a wild, shrill cry, full of mortal terror, rang through the gray gloom of the morning, and caused them to relax their grasp. Turning in the direction whence it came, they saw Nannie and Rhoda coming swiftly toward them, with faces as white as those of the dead are, making wild gestures for them to release Dick.

Dick's good angel had brought them at the very nick o' time. The men let go the strap, and his feet touched earth again.

"It wasn't he," cried Rhoda, panting for breath. "We've found out who the thieves are—and the ringleader's Wayne!"

Then she sank down on a log and burst into tears.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" cried Bill. "Don't you go to tryin' to fool us. Ef you do—"

"If we did I suppose you'd hang us," cried Nannie, indignantly. "Was that what you were going to say?"

"What is it that you've found out?" asked Perkins. "If you've anything to tell, tell it an' done with it."

Nannie drew a long breath and began.

What she had to tell the reader already knows.

(To be continued.)

A PEST OF PRAIRIE DOGS.

TEXAS DECLARES RELENTLESS WAR ON THE LITTLE ANIMALS.

No More Wolves to Eat Them and So They Are Multiplying Enormously — Millions of Them in the Panhandle—Damage to Farms—The Dogs Good Eating.

The Texas Legislature has passed a law which provides for the extermination of prairie dogs in the State. The law was demanded by stockmen and farmers. Its author is Representative T. H. C. Perry, a farmer and stock raiser of Baylor County, which is situated far up in the Panhandle, in the very centre of the prairie dog's domain. He was elected to the Legislature on a prairie dog extermination platform and came here determined to secure the passage of a law to rid the State of the pest. The very mention of prairie dogs caused merriment among the East Texas members who had never seen the pest, but the West Texas members unanimously favored the passage of an extermination law, and the bill was passed.

Many interesting facts concerning the prairie dog were brought out in the discussion of the bill, says the New York Sun. It was stated that the animals have multiplied enormously in the last few years. Representative T. S. Gregan, of Sweetwater, made a strong speech in advocacy of the bill. He said that he represented a district comprising 32,000 square miles and that it was honeycombed with prairie dog holes. He estimated the number of these animals in his district at not less than 5,000,000, and said that they were increasing rapidly. Before the settlement of the western part of the State by stockmen and farmers the country was overrun by wolves and other wild animals which preyed upon the prairie dogs and kept their numbers down. When the country became settled the wolves were killed off or driven out and the prairie dogs were left undisturbed in the full enjoyment of the good things which the land afforded. The town of the little animals began to multiply with startling rapidity, and the stockmen and farmers soon discovered that the pest would eventually drive them out of business if permitted to remain in the country. In some parts of the Panhandle of Texas it is estimated that the average number of prairie dogs inhabiting each section of land is not less than 10,000. The animals live in towns, the population of each being from 500 to 1000. In some sections seventy-five per cent. of the grass is destroyed by the prairie dogs, while the average destruction of grass throughout the region inhabited by the animals will reach fifty per cent. It is no wonder that the stockmen are up in arms against the pest. It is only within the last few years that the man with the hoe has invaded the prairie dog country. The animals crowed to welcome the advent of the farmer. They established towns in the centre of big fields of growing wheat and then cut down wide swaths of the grain.

The prairie dogs are intelligent and in point of activity few other animals equal them. Their towns are laid out with care and ability. Each colony seems to have a President or Mayor that directs the government of the town. It might be supposed that inasmuch as they inhabit an arid region of the State they would find difficulty in obtaining water; but each town contains one hole or habitation which goes down to water. This hole is not infrequently 150 feet in depth, and it is always occupied by the chief of the colony. The other holes of the colonies are from twelve to twenty feet deep. The animals are very domestic in their nature. They do not run about much and it is seldom that one of them is seen further than 200 yards away from its place of habitation.

The dogs are so active that it is difficult to shoot them. The cowboys derive much amusement from practicing on the animals with a pistol or rifle. A dog may be sitting on its hind legs at the door of its home when shot at from nearby. At the crack of the rifle the animal instantly drops into its hole and it is seldom that the bullet reaches its mark.

"It is my opinion that if it wasn't for the name of the pest they would be much sought after as an article of food," said Mr. Peery. "They are not a species of dog, and I suppose they received the name by which they are now known from some tenderfoot who heard the peculiar bark of the little animal and thought the sound resembled the bark of a dog."

It is said by many other people that the flesh of the prairie dog has a delicious flavor, and that but for the name the animal would be in demand by game dealers. It is said that the Comanche Indians had a great liking for prairie dogs and that they were wont to make a delicious stew of them. A few years ago a New Englander, named John Ferwin, turned up at Quanah, in the Texas Panhandle, without a cent. He had been working in a railroad office in Fort Worth and had lost his job. While tramping to Denver by way of the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad, he observed that the country was fairly alive with prairie dogs, and it occurred to him that he might be able to make a stake out of the little animals. Upon arriving at Quanah he sent a letter to a large commission firm in Chicago offering a consignment of three or more cars of "Texas squirrels." He received a telegraphic reply ordering the consignment. Immediately upon receipt of this order Ferwin started at work to fill it. He constructed large cage traps, set by trigger, in a number of prairie dog towns, and in a few days had captured and dressed several thousand dogs, sufficient to fill three refrigerator cars. He forwarded the shipment to Chicago and in due course of time received a draft for a considerable sum of money from the commission house. The animals were sold in Chicago and eaten as a delicacy, the commission house and its customers being ignorant of the imposition practiced upon them. Ferwin and the railroad freight men and a few others who knew the secret kept it very quiet for a long time. Ferwin did not care to continue in the profitable business. He cashed his draft and left for other parts.

The Peery law provides that any person who shall permit prairie dogs to remain on land owned by him after August 1, 1899, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine not exceeding $100 for each section, or part of section, on which prairie dogs are permitted to remain. After August 1, 1899, it is lawful for the owner or lessee of adjacent land to exterminate the dogs at a reasonable charge, the payment of which shall be a lien upon the land. This lien shall be superior to all other liens except taxes. The Commissioners' Court of any county where prairie dogs exist may employ men to destroy the dogs on the lands of non-residents, and the cost of the work shall be charged against the owner of the land. There are vast tracts of land in the Panhandle and west Texas that are owned by railroad companies and non-residents, and representatives of these interests tried to defeat the bill. They said that the expense of destroying the dogs would be very heavy. The resident land owners said that unless the law included the non-resident owners its efficiency would be greatly impaired for the reason that the dogs would multiply on the lands of non-residents and migrate to the lands of the resident owners, thus preventing their extermination from ever being effected.

It is said by residents of the prairie dog region that it will be a comparatively easy matter to exterminate the animals and that they will be able to wipe them out of existence in Texas within one year. The most efficient method of destroying them is to place poison near the colonies. The animals are greedy eaters and fall easy victims to poison.

She Wanted to Know.

Of women who wear black some women always have an air of recent bereavement which puzzles the ordinary mind. At a railway station in this State not long ago a tall woman robed in deep black, accompanied by a young woman in colored garb, sat waiting for a train. The station matron hovered in the vicinity, evidently with something on her mind and finally beckoned to the young woman, who went to see what was wanted.

"Has she got a corpse with her?" the station matron asked. "Corpse?" the young woman exclaimed, looking over her shoulder in ghastly fright—"Who got a corpse with her? What do you mean?"

"Don't be scared, lady," the matron exclaimed, "most of you that travels in deep mournin' has corpses on the train. I just wanted to know if your lady had a corpse with her."

"Goodness, no!" said the young woman, "her husband's been dead fifty years; you ought to be ashamed to shock people that way; don't you ever treat me that way again."

The station matron looked disappointed, and the young woman went back and sat down without even feeling at liberty to tell the lady in black what had happened.—Indianapolis Journal.

Skate Sailing.

The home of skate sailing is Norway, the land of fjords, mountains and lakes. In order to sail in the Norwegian fashion two skates one meter (3.28 feet) long and a sail rigged to a long bamboo pole are required. Long skates are necessary, because the enormous lateral pressure of the wind on the sail would otherwise overturn the skater. The sails are made in all conceivable shapes; almost every sportsman has his own particular form, of the efficiency of which he is firmly convinced.

The sail frame is firmly held by the right hand and is directed by a steering cord held in the left hand. A forward pressure of the right hand forces a steel spur at the end of the bamboo pole into the ice, whereby the skater is enabled either to reduce his speed or to stop himself entirely. The sail is simple in construction, but requires no little dexterity in handling.

Skate sailing is particularly enjoyable on the great fjords of Norway. On the Sognefjord, for example, 100 kilometers (sixty-two miles) can be covered in a comparatively short time if the wind be favorable.—Scientific American.

When Romero Saved General Grant.

The late Minister from Mexico, Senor Don Matias Romero, served a longer period in Washington than any other member of the Diplomatic Corps. For more than forty years he was a prominent figure in society. His most intimate friend and the man he most loved was General Grant. For that heroic figure he always had a warm admiration, and his personal grief affected him more than his friend's failure. The moment he heard of it Mr. Romero sent a check to General Grant begging him to draw on his bank account for whatever he might need. It was the very first money the General received after financial disaster overtook him, and he was greatly affected by this evidence of true friendship.—Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post.

A Museum of the Insane.

St. Petersburg, Russia, is to have a novel kind of museum—a building containing models of famous lunatic asylums and specimens of clothing and appliances used in such asylums, besides brains in alcohol, books, photographs, etc.

SEED FROM THE ORIENT.

FAR EASTERN PLANTS THAT MAY BE CULTIVATED HERE.

Result of Professor Knapp's Visit to China, Japan and Manila—Improved Kind of Rice From Japan—Effective Methods of Agriculture.

Professor S. A. Knapp has lately returned to Washington from a visit to Japan, China and the Philippines, where he went as agent of the Agricultural Department to secure such native seeds and plants as could be profitably grown and developed in the United States and to procure for experiment an improved kind of rice grown and cultivated in Japan. Mr. Knapp said to a reporter:

"Many parts of our rice belt have suffered considerable loss by breakage in the milling of the rice, due to the poor quality of the grain. In many districts over sixty per cent. is broken in milling. The loss to the planter is so big even when it is known that the head or whole rice brings two cents more to the pound than that which has been broken. The Agricultural Department took the question under consideration, knowing that if a quality of rice could be secured that would not break to any large extent during the milling process it would be a great saving to the planters. Specimens from all rice growing countries of the world were secured by the Department, and after a careful analysis it was found that the rice grown in Japan would come nearest to solving the problem.

"I secured a variety of rice which is now on its way across the continent to San Francisco from the island of Kyushu, which lies south of the Inland Sea. The quality of this rice is far superior to that of China and the Philippines, for the reason that it is better cultivated, that the berry is smaller and that it is less liable to break under milling process. In addition to rice I brought some varieties of peas that are considered delicious food and recommended by the Imperial Agricultural Society of Japan for general use as growing stock on account of being so hardy. I also secured in Japan a variety of a compact tree, used to make commercial camphor, which will stand a heavy frost. Among other varieties secured is a new forage plant known as the hagi, a species of the Lespedeza. It will grow on light and thin soil, should be cut four or five times every year, and is indorsed as nutritious as clover. Believing that its introduction would be exceedingly beneficial to the Southern States, on account of the variety of uses to which it can be put, I secured several varieties of bamboo.

"Japan," continued Mr. Knapp, "can never cut any great figure in manufacturing outside of the men necessities, because the area of arable land is so small that there is only enough to produce food for her own people. Japan is trying to force native products in the empire, and the land that can be cultivated is only 18,000 square miles, or about one-third the size of the State of Iowa.

"Japan must look for her greatest influence in the industrial world through her manufactures and not through her agriculture. All of her agriculture is a hand process, like gardening. For example, the rice and wheat produced in the empire is first planted in hotbeds and transplanted in the fields, treating it the same as our farmers do cabbage. The fields are so small that it is impossible to use machinery on them.

"In methods of cultivation the conditions in China are similar to those in Japan, except that China is a very large country, and the area of fertile land is larger in proportion. Nearly all the labor on the farms and in the fields is done by hand. Undoubtedly within a few years China will be opened to the trade of the world, and the commerce will be of such a character that it will give a great impetus to trade in our country.

"In a great many respects the general character of the Philippine Islands is like that of Japan, but there is a much larger area of land that can be cultivated. The climate is in the same zone and consequently the temperature is as conducive to growth as that of any country in the world, while the rainfall is very heavy and uniform. The report of the Manila observatory shows that in some years rain falls as many as 200 days, while the annual average in rainfall is from seven to ten feet.

"Referring to the principal products of the islands, Professor Knapp said the Northern Luzon was mainly devoted to rice and corn, Southern Luzon to hemp, the islands of Panay, Negros and Cebu to sugar, while the island of Mindanao is famous for its fine timber. Just before the professor left Manila a section of a mahogany tree seven feet in diameter was brought to from that island. The mineral wealth of the islands is as great as the agricultural, the supplies of coal, iron and copper being very rich. Many coal mines are reported within twelve miles of Manila.

As to the persimmons, Professor Knapp found very few varieties sufficiently tested to be worthy of introduction. A few, however, were secured. The persimmons, the report shows, are the most universally used of all the fruits in Japan. This makes the first importation of the seedless variety of the persimmon, which is dried and preserved like a fig. Some plums were purchased in Japan for breeding our plums.

The bamboo is used in Japan for an infinite variety of purposes, and it is even a table delicacy. Whether the American taste will be educated to use the bamboo as a food is not ventured, but the report says it will thrive in many of the Southern States, and be of great value in various ways. Among other uses it is suggested as a material for cave troughs, light fences, staging poles, rafters, etc. It is the product of a warm climate, and in rich, moist soil frequently grows sixty feet in one year.

The Japanese pear brought here is very hardy and is largely used to graft on to, and it is usable for this purpose throughout the United States. One advantage it has over the American pear is that it is said to be proof against blight. Camphor trees were selected because this variety will stand the frost of our Gulf States, and the tree is large and ornamental. The bark of the paper mulberry, it is argued, will go well with the bamboo for a variety of purposes. The Cryptomeria Japonica is the principal tree used for reforesting the mountains of Japan, and it will be a valuable addition to the woods of the Southern States.

PHILIPPINE PET SNAKES.

They Destroy Pests and Are a Household Necessity.

As the writer was sitting out under the broad piazza at the restaurant in Iloilo, in the Philippines, taking coffee after dinner and smoking, his eyes happened to be turned overhead. About ten feet above his head there was a broad beam, probably eighteen inches square, the horizontal support of the second story. Directly above, looking down at the group below, was the head of an immense snake, ten feet away. The end of his tail was carelessly hanging over the beam's side.

The writer gave one yump, landing six feet away, exclaiming: "Good heavens, Partridge! look the consul-general at Manila, to be merely in charge of American matters at Iloilo!"

"Where is it?" he asked, not moving from his comfortable American cane-seated chair.

"Why, just over head!"

"Sit down here," he said to me. "That snake came here when this house was put here. There are three or four others of his kind here besides. Without these snakes this lowlying that town would be almost uninhabitable. They keep the houses absolutely clear and free from termites, roaches, water-bugs, an occasional tarantula, or scorpion. He scents a stranger as quickly as would a detective. He knows you are one. But as you are with me, it will be all right. He and I are acquainted."

"Bite? Oh, yes, and viciously, too, it looked with. He can inflict serious wounds with his fine, sharp teeth. But he has no poison fangs."

Two or three evenings after that I witnessed how he operated. A great coal black rat was running along on a beam just below the one occupied by his snakeship. As he came opposite to me a big serpent's black and yellow spotted head shot out four or five feet away. He seized the rat just as a cat would between its teeth. Next day as I passed this snake fast asleep in the hot sun I noticed a ratlike enlargement or expansion on his dinner. I knew where that rat was.—Washington Post.

He Wanted a Kiss.

A story is going the rounds which makes a well known society young man and a millionaire's pretty daughter the principal characters in a rather laughable comedy.

The young man, who is noted for his handsome bearing and winning voice, accompanied the young lady to her home on Friday evening and, as all true lovers do, lingered yet a little while at the gate to have a lover's tete-a-tete with his fair companion. The night was beautiful, no one was near to intrude, and, above all, he loved. Why shouldn't she kiss him?

With maidenly modesty she refused. He implored. She still withheld from him that which would fill his cup of happiness. The request was repeated several times, and as expressed did the young man become so insane that he failed to notice the approach of a parental step.

The old gentleman, who had been there himself and did not care to intrude upon the happiness of the young people, quietly stepped behind a convenient evergreen and waited, thinking the young man would soon leave. In this he was mistaken. The lovers turned over the request until the patience of the old gentleman was exhausted. A voice the couple well knew arrested them from their happiness to a tone of impatient anger by saying:

"Alice, kiss the young idiot and let him go home!"—Trenton (N. J.) Times-American.

Wealth Taken From the Mines.

The total product of all the mines in the United States last year reached $810,050,023, which is only double the value of the product of the hay fields. This was an increase of $59,737,768 over 1897. The value of the coal mined within the limits of this country was $210,263,953, iron $111,858,294, gold $64,300,000, copper $61,244,326, petroleum 49,277,000, silver $37,321,326, coke $31,920,000, lead $16,410,265, zinc $10,267,397. The remainder of the total is made up of 120 different minerals, known to the useful arts. Nearly every mineral of value is produced in the United States.

Glass Used in Ancient Times.

Glass mirrors were known to the Egyptians and Romans. Specimens have been found in the tombs of the former, and documentary evidence from Pliny, Seneca, Lucretius and others undoubtedly proves their possession by the latter. Glass was used for lamps in Pompeii, but we have no evidence of its being applied to such a purpose in Egypt, where it was appropriated more largely to ornamental and decorative rather than domestic purposes.