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## THE SWAMP TIGER.

BY LEWIS D. MILLER.

**I** HAVE worked at handle-making so long that the swamper down about where I live call me "Ax-handle Ike." But my chief occupation is trapping—trapping coon and mink and otter. All the swampy country of southeast Missouri still abounds in fur-bearing animals.

Besides my trapping and handle-making, I usually try to preach on Sundays. My handle-making goes on all the year round, but trapping begins and ends with cold weather. Nature never clothes an animal with good fur except when it's absolutely needed.

When I have accumulated a considerable stock of furs and handles, I get somebody to haul me and them to the river or to the railroad, and then I run up to St. Louis and sell my stock. I have been going to St. Louis for years now, and the shops and factories that use my handles know they can depend on them.

There's still some large game in the swamps—deer and turkey and bear, and a good many panthers. I remember one time when a big panther came up out of the swamps and terrorized a whole settlement for a few months. That brute caused as much trouble and excitement as any four-legged thing I ever got acquainted with. Because he was so big and fierce we usually called him the "boss" swamp tiger.

It happened a good many years ago, when I was a boy, living with my uncle on a tongue of land that ran out several miles into the swamps. The upland was too rocky and the swamp too sloppy to cultivate. But the few families that lived there were settled along the edge of the ridge, and had little farms between the two.

One day toward fall my aunt sent me over to Simpson's to borrow some bacon. I was still going barefoot, and had my trousers rolled nearly up to my knees, I recollect. I was seventeen years old, and as big as I am now. But everybody that felt like it went barefoot there in warm weather, even men eighty years old.

I crossed the ridge to Simpson's, and after talking with the boys till rather late, I borrowed a side of bacon—midding, we called it—and started for home, carrying it on my back. The midding was long and wide, but thin and rather light. Our gaunt, s'ab-sided swamp hogs never make thick meat. The bacon had been hanging in Simpson's smokehouse by two hickory withes, and I was carrying it by the same withes, one over each shoulder. There was a piece of tow cloth wrapped round it to keep it from greasing my shirt.

Dusk caught me three-quarters of a mile from home, and I heard what I thought was a woman calling. I didn't recognize the voice, but I had no doubt that it was Aunt Mat screaming at me. I had tarried longer at Simpson's than I ought to have done, and I felt certain she had got out of patience and started after me.

"Yes'm, I'm a-coming!" I shouted back. Then I hitched the bacon a little higher and hurried along the rocky road at a trot. The screams sounded angry—Aunt Mat didn't have a very gentle voice when she was out of temper.

Before long I heard another scream. Looking down toward the swamp, I saw not Aunt Mat, but some big animal coming up the open slope to meet me. He looked like a cat, but a cat as big as a cow. The curve of the land made it impossible for me to see him while he was on the ground, but whenever he jumped I could see him plainly enough. Every jump must have carried him eight or ten feet into the air, and now and then he would stop and give one of those loud, womanish screams.

I started to run back along that rocky road as hard as I could. I couldn't step far enough. My hat flew off, but it never occurred to me to drop the bacon.

Not far back the road forked. One fork crossed to Simpson's, the other led up our side of the ridge to Uncle Jimmy White's. It was two miles

back to Simpson's, and only a mile to where White lived. So I took the fork to Uncle Jimmy's.

I don't recollect feeling that bacon touch me after I got well underway. I guess it stood out straight behind. I flew so fast. The country was partly covered with scattering bushes, and the road was rocky and soon got dark; but little time did I lose for rocks or darkness.

The panther kept right after me. Every scream sounded nearer. If I hadn't had half a mile the start, the brute would have caught me. As it was, the moment I jumped Uncle Jimmy's fence the tiger screamed not sixty feet behind.

Any other time I wouldn't have dared to go near Uncle Jimmy's without calling, "Hello!" He had the fiercest dog in the neighborhood—a dog that would try to drag a man off his horse. But this time that dog didn't even growl; he was covering against the wall, shivering and whining like a frightened puppy.

As I cleared the fence I saw light shining through the cracks. I made a straight dash for the clapboard door. And when the latch broke and the door flew in, I went through like a rock out of a sling.

Inside I stubbed my toe and tumbled sprawling on the floor. The midding flew over my head. Uncle Jimmy afterward told everybody that that whole side of bacon hit the farther wall so hard that it left a greasy picture of itself on the logs. Uncle Jimmy was a great joker.

The old man and his wife were frightened out of their wits. They had heard the screams, and thought for a few moments that the tiger had broken in on them. They were just getting ready for him. Uncle Jimmy was loading his rifle as fast as he could, and Aunt Polly, his wife, was trying to light a pine knot at the fire.

While I was scrambling to my feet, Uncle Jimmy sprang forward, slammed the door shut and propped it with a stick of wood, but not before that dog of his had sneaked in and crawled under the bed.

Scarcely was the door shut when the tiger let out another scream, close by. Uncle Jimmy was running about the room, dragging his rifle by the muzzle. He had a bullet rammed down, and was searching every shelf in the cabin for a box of caps. Pretty soon the panther screamed again, behind the cabin door. Afterward we heard another scream, farther off.

By this time Uncle Jimmy had found his caps, and Aunt Polly had her pine-knot blazing. When they were both ready Uncle Jimmy threw open the door, and after looking about cautiously, cocked his rifle and stepped out. I offered to carry the torch, but I wasn't very sorry when Aunt Polly insisted that she knew better how to hold it.

Uncle Jimmy tramped about the yard, with his wife at his heels, holding the pine knot about her head. If the tiger was near the torch would make his eyes shine, and Uncle Jimmy would put a bullet right between them. He was a dead shot.

I stood in the door, rubbing my back. The man with his gun and the woman with her torch moved slowly round the cabin. Once Uncle Jimmy thought he discovered the tiger's eyes, but before he could take aim they disappeared. It wasn't long before we heard a scream down in the woods. The beast was going away.

I stayed in the cabin a while; then Uncle Jimmy took his rifle and escorted me and my bacon home. I was afraid to go by myself.

That was the first time the swamp tiger had been seen or heard on Chinkapin Ridge; but it wasn't the last time, by any means. Even we boys were afraid to go far to gather nuts, and the women and children hardly dared poke their heads out of doors. The men carried guns, especially at night. The tiger didn't show himself in broad daylight, although he was seen occasionally at dusk.

Meanwhile he was living on the fat of the land. He feasted on our hogs

and calves, and he even dragged down and killed two full grown cows. He was a giant of his kind, and his size made him fearless.

We didn't know what became of the tiger during the daytime, but we supposed he must retreat into the swamp. One day Tim Watson saw him lying on top of a big log in the woods, asleep in the sunshine. Tim had his rifle, but instead of blazing away, he stole off and went for help. When he got back with several men and dogs, they caught a glimpse of the tiger as he jumped off the log and disappeared. The dogs growled and turned their hair the wrong way; but they wouldn't follow the trail. Trust a dog to know what not to attack!

Things went on from bad to worse along Chinkapin Ridge. Every morning some animal was missing, and the half-devoured remains were generally found. One evening at dusk the tiger dashed up to Mason's cow pen, grabbed a rooting pig, and carried the squealing thing off under its owner's eyes. Three different men tried to kill the big brute when he came prowling around their houses at night, but their shots didn't take effect; and the belief got abroad that the panther's skin was too thick and tough for an ordinary rifle bullet to penetrate. That made him more dreadful than ever. Several times parties gathered to hunt him down; but the dogs either wouldn't or couldn't follow a cold trail.

Along in December the first light snow fell. That was the signal for a general gathering. All the men on Chinkapin Ridge, and all the boys big enough to use guns, came together for a rousing hunt. My uncle was in the party, and so was I. Every fellow had tried to get the gun with the biggest bore. And I remember that we were all bragging about what terrific loads we had put in. Some had rammed down two or three big balls or slugs, and others enormous charges of buckshot. I was carrying a musket loaded with nails.

It wasn't long after noon when we started out, and an hour or two later we struck the trail, made in the snow the night before. He printed the biggest panther tracks I ever laid eyes on.

Our party followed the trail round and round over the country. By and by we came to where the tiger had killed a hog. From there the tracks led down into the woods, and through the woods into a ravine, and up the ravine to its head, where they disappeared into a hole under some rocks.

Besides the tracks leading in, there were others leading out. But we felt pretty sure that the tiger was in his lair. The dogs wouldn't go near the hole, and they didn't bark. But they kept their backs bristled and watched the hole and growled. Somebody got a long stick and poked it in to the hole; but he jumped back suddenly, for a warning growl came from under the rocks.

Now we knew that the tiger was at home, and every man and boy of us—there were twelve or fifteen in all—cocked his gun and pointed at the hole. We expected the tiger to come out, and stood ready to make short work of him, but he didn't show himself; and before we could devise any way to stir him out, night came on.

"Let's smoke him, boys!" somebody proposed. And while some of us stood guard around the tiger's den, the others went to piling dead brush against the hole. When there was a good sized pile we set fire to it.

The snowy brush burned slowly and smoked a great deal. As the fire began to crackle the tiger began to growl, and when the smoke worked into the hole he growled louder. My uncle called out:

"Be ready, boys! It's either come through that brush pile or suffocate; and he'll come through the brush pile."

We backed off several yards, and every gun was aimed at the point where the tiger was expected to appear. It was dark by this time—pitch dark everywhere except around the fire. For a time we could hear the tiger growling under the rocks.

We waited and waited, but still he didn't show himself. The fire climbed among the loosely piled brush until the whole pile was ablaze. Finally somebody—Simpson, I believe it was—spoke up:

"He's smothered to death, boys. That's why we don't hear him any more. No animal could live in that hole with 't' at fire in the mouth of it. He was so afraid of the fire that he would rather suffocate than come through it."

After standing guard a while longer, we all agreed that the tiger must be dead. None of us knew that there

was a little cave under those rocks. Now we closed up around the fire and stood with our gunstocks on the ground, warming ourselves. We felt jolly over getting rid of our troublesome, dangerous enemy, and were going to pull straws for the skin. In fact, Simpson was arranging the straws, when suddenly something happened to the fire. As nearly as I can describe it, that blazing brush heap exploded!

There was a roar behind it, and the next moment the brush was flying, and the panther's frightful form came crashing through. As the big, savage brute burst out of the fire, he knocked one man down, and two or three more fell over one another trying to get out of the way. I jumped back to dodge the flying fire, and stumbled over a dog.

The dog howled, and as I tumbled backward the hammer of my musket struck something, and the old musket exploded with a roar. The load of nails went off through the woods, but I thought I was killed.

The second leap carried the tiger away from the fire, and another carried him into the darkness. About this time the men recovered from the panic and began to shoot; and they kept banging away down the ravine. The heavily loaded guns spurted fire and roared till every report seemed to split the very trees as it went echoing through the woods.

When the excitement was past, we gathered round the fire again. Most of us felt rather sheepish over the escape of the tiger; but several declared that he must be mortally wounded, and that we'd find him dead somewhere. But as we couldn't track him in the dark, we all returned to our homes.

The next morning we came back and took up the trail. We found several badly scarred trees; but there wasn't any blood on the snow, or any other evidence that the tiger had been hit. In fact, there was pretty good evidence that he wasn't hurt at all; for we tracked him as far as we could into the swamp, and the last we saw of his trail he was still going, fifteen feet at a jump. He must have been pretty badly scorched, and he was certainly badly scared.

For a year we half expected him to come back, but he didn't; and after that night we never heard of him again. I suppose his experience with the fire convinced him that life on the uplands wasn't very attractive. So he went back to his native swamps and stayed there.—Youth's Companion.

### Higher Education in Siberia.

The University of Tomsk is well supplied with buildings including a very large one for clinics. The museum is amply stocked in every department, being specially rich in its archaeological relics and its anatomical specimens. The library, of over 100,000 volumes, received at the outset a most valuable collection of books, engravings and original designs and sketches, contributed by Count Storogonoff. Some of these volumes would be counted rare treasures in any European capital. The chemical and physical laboratories are specially fitted up to meet the demands of the numerous mining industries of the region, while the botanical garden is scarcely excelled in Europe in the variety and completeness of its collections.—George Frederick Wright, in The Chautauquan.

### Emancipated Welsh Women.

There is a village in Wales, by name Llandryllin, which possesses a lady barber, a lady doctor, and a lady lamp-lighter. The lady barber has scraped the chins of men for forty years, and is an expert and adept at her vocation. Yet this Welsh lady is modest, unassuming, and thinks little of her achievements. The lady lamp-lighter has lit lamps enough in her time to attract the inhabitants of Mars—if all the lights could have been condensed into one simultaneous bonfire—and no one has ever complained about her. She never missed a lamp, never overslept herself by five minutes in the morning when the lamps had to be extinguished, and never failed to light a lamp at night at the precise time of her instructions.

### "Rain" of Butterflies.

Milan has just been the scene of a remarkable "rain," or downfall, of butterflies or moths. They settled in tens of thousands on almost every available inch of space on the ground, and on the buildings of the central quarters of the city. The insects are described as perfectly black and marvelously active. Their presence is ascribed to an air current swept along in front of a hurricane.

## SCIENCE & MECHANICS

Sir W. Ramsay and Professor Soddy have found distinct evidence of the presence of helium in the spectra of gases emanating from radium bromide. Present observations, therefore, indicate that radium shines largely by the light of the rare gas helium which it evolves.

A public analyst of London reports the finding of a notable quantity of arsenic in a sample of candy sent him from the Isle of Wight. The poison occurred in small, apparently chocolate colored, sugar cubes. As a matter of fact, however, the dark brown coating was not due to chocolate, but to oxide of iron, which almost invariably contains traces of arsenic. Mr. Hehner, the analyst, also refers to finding the same dangerous coloring substance in such food substances as bloater paste, anchovy sauce, and chocolate powders.

An English paper says that the British Consul-General at Coburg states that a simple process has just been invented for manufacturing petroleum briquettes, very similar in appearance to those made from coal. A mixture of 150 grammes of soft soap, 150 grammes of resin, and 300 grammes of soda lye are added to one litre of petroleum and the whole heated and well shaken. The briquettes can be used within an hour or two of being manufactured. By the addition of sawdust and sand the briquettes will be more solid and at the same time cheaper. From experiments said to have been conducted on tugs the inventor claims it to have been clearly shown that these briquettes give out three times as much heat as ordinary coal.

Mr. Edgar R. Waite, of the Australian Museum at Sydney, in support of Mr. Henschel's account (recently given in this column) of the duet which his bullfinch and canary used to sing, cites a somewhat similar feat performed by two magpies. The first one had been taught a simple little song, which he piped very often and accurately, even maintaining it exactly in F, the key in which it was first given to him. A second magpie was purchased, and this bird soon learned the tune from the other one. When the first bird commenced its song the newcomer immediately came to attention, and with half-open beak awaited a certain note, at which point the other bird stopped, and the song was finished by the second singer. No matter how far separated, if the birds were within hearing distance of one another, the duet was always sung in this way.

The most reliable method to determine the steam consumption of an engine is to make an evaporation test; that is, to measure the water fed to the boiler in a given time and delivered to the engine in the form of steam. This method, however, entails considerable trouble and expense. So engineers often figure out the water consumption from indicator diagrams. The terms water consumption and steam consumption are here used indiscriminately, for a pound of water will produce a pound of steam at any pressure. Figuring that way can never be wholly accurate, because the data requisite to insure results are not thus procurable, states the Mining and Scientific Press. That is, the amount of water accounted for by the indicator is always less considerably than it ought to be, because of cylinder condensation, valve and piston leakage, to the extent that it might be that only fifty per cent., or at best not more than ninety per cent., of the water passing through the cylinder would be accounted for by the indicator. But if the cylinder were properly steam-jacketed, or if superheated steam were used, and there was no leakage of steam from valves and pistons, the water consumption could be closely calculated from an indicator diagram.

### Few Theological Students.

The number of theological students in Germany has diminished gradually from 4267 in 1830 to 2140, or less than half, although the population has doubled since 1830.

### No Chemically Pure Iron.

Chemically pure iron does not exist commercially. The purest irons are those from Yorkshire and Swedish ores.