

The Journal.

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B. O. DENINGER, Associate Editor

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Millheim, Pa., July 10, 1913. The Journal, C. S. & C. R. R. has a circulation of 100-120 in a thriving business center, and controls the trade of an average radius of over eight miles, in which the Journal has a larger circulation than all other county papers combined.

HUNDREDS OF SNAKES.

SOME STORIES OF THE BLUE RIDGE.

Marvelous Tales That the People of the Valley of Virginia Tell—An Old Distiller's Tale—The King of the Rattlesnakes—A Woman's Wonder-Tale Exploit.

Special Correspondence of the TIMES.

WINCHESTER, Va., June 21.

Snake stories of wonderful proportions are told here in the valley. They are roused for, too, which makes them all the more interesting. The hills for miles around are just full of reptiles. To the east of this historic old town stretch the Blue Ridge Mountains. To the west the jagged Alleghenies, towers above its neighbors. Rattlesnakes, moccasins and copperheads abound. They crawl out from under every rock. They lie in the pathway—if there happens to be a pathway—ready for a spring. They live singly, in pairs, or whole dozens, and, in fact, in every way that a snake ought to live. They are a venomous set, always ready for business. It is true that they very seldom come down from the mountain, but if anyone is at all desirous of starting upon a snake hunt, all that is necessary is to step off from one of the numerous places that centre here and climb up among the hills. The hunt will be a singularly one-sided one. In fact he won't have to hunt at all, for the snakes will hunt for him and take matters into their own hands. They are pretty likely to have it all their own way, too, and there isn't much question as to which side will retreat first. It is over towards Leesburg where the snakes are the thickest. There is where the big fellows grow. Occasionally a lady will wake up and find a rattlesnake hidden away under her bed, but then people get used to that sort of thing after while, and such stories cease to be interesting. It is the stories told by the distillers up the mountains that people talk about.

FEEDING FOR A SNAKE.

There are lots of whisky distillers around the mountains. "Moon-shiners," the men who distill in a small way and evade taxation, are very scarce in this district. The Deputy Collector keeps a sharp lookout, and is thoroughly familiar with all the signs and quick to follow them up, and it takes a moonshiner of the shrewdest stamp to elude his careful search. The distillers tell some marvelous tales, and are ready to back them up with affidavits any time. "Talkin' about snakes," said one of them, who I habits the Blue Ridge, near Leesburg, the other day: "Talkin' about snakes, why, look yere, and he opened his cabin door and pointed to the walls. They were fairly covered with the skins of monsters of the reptile kind. There were stuffed rattlesnakes looking down at you from over the door. Rattlesnakes hung by their tails from the corners, and one big fellow coiled up on a box seemed all ready to spring. Touch one of them and the peculiar sound of the dry rattles would send a chill all over a person. "Aren't you afraid of them?" "Afraid of what, snakes?" said the distiller laughed contemptuously. "I fought with General Early in the Valley, faced the Yankee cannon and didn't run. Do you s'pose I'd be scared at a snake? We don't know for 'em. I kill a dozen or two every mornin', just to keep my hand in. Sticks and shoot 'em. Nollin' easier. Sometimes I fish for 'em. That's fun, but you have to work harder to do it. Perhaps you'd like to see it done?" and, receiving a nod in the affirmative, the distiller led the way in front of his cabin.

Standing up against the door was a long pole with a noose at the end. The distiller took it down, shook it for a moment in his hands and look ed around. "I've caught lots of snakes with this thing," he said. "If you look around right sharp you'll find one somewhere."

About forty feet away the sharp eyes of the distiller caught sight of a shining skin. The snake was a big one and was sunning himself by the side of a log. Motioning silence the distiller crept up to within pole's length and dangled the noose under the snake's nose. His snakeship stirred uneasily, raised his head and, seeing the coil, began striking at it. Pretty soon his head went through

the noose. The fisherman had a bite and he pulled. In a moment the huge snake was dangling in the air and a blow or two against a tree finished him.

A PRETTY BIG YARN.

The distiller smiled as he replaced the pole against the cabin. "That's no use in gettin' scared," he said. "I don't mind 'em. I caught a big fellow last summer in just that way. A medical student from Pennsylvania was up yere and wanted one to take home with him. I caught one, stuffed him and coiled him up in a cheese box, and he was the most beautiful snake you ever saw. They don't bother me much. Sometimes one or two of 'em go to bed with me and roll themselves up in the blankets, but that's nothin'." There's only one snake in these yere mountains that I've got a spite against," and the distiller looked solemn. "That snake has got to die or I have. I've sworn it," and the man rubbed a tear from his eye with the sleeve of his coarse flannel shirt and shook his head thoughtfully. "That snake killed my dog."

There was a pause of a moment or two, and then the old distiller, brightening up, went on with his story. "This yere snake is a monster. He's twenty feet if he is an inch. I sighted him about a month ago, or rather he sighted me. I was climbin' up yonder among the rocks, when I heard a rattle and looked around. The snake was just springin'. I jumped back just in time, and he went by like a flash. Scared? I reckon I was, slightly. I never saw such a monster. He looked as thick as that log over yonder. He was like a big black cloud and covered up the sun almost as completely. I didn't see that snake again until two weeks ago. Do you believe it? I heard an uncommon noise up the mountain. I looked up there and saw a whole army of them. That must have been a hundred snakes and they were comin' down with the monster at the head. I reckon he's the king of the snake tribe on these yere mountains. I got inside and crawled up to that little window over the door. Down he came. I fired into 'em and killed nine of 'em at one shot and the others glided off in a big hurry. That same night I heard my little dog yelpin' outside. I opened the door, and there he was shiverin' and shakin' and that big snake all in a heap right alongside of him and lookin' down at him with his big mouth wide open. I rushed for my gun, but befo' I got back snake and dog were both gone."

The distiller stopped again and shook his head sadly. "He was a good dog and I miss him. What become of him? Why, I don't reckon that's much doubt about that. He went down that snake's throat and that's the reason that snake's got to die."

A WOMAN KILLS 480 SNAKES.

This story may sound big, but it is nothing by the side of some of the stories which are told about here as the truth. People who have climbed about the mountains to any extent will tell you that the snakes will stare out at you from under every rock. Sometimes the heads are as thick as the fingers on a man's hand and as the wicked-looking little eyes are enough to strike terror into anyone who sees them for the first time. A story is told in Leesburg of a woman's adventure up the mountain. She went out one day to pick huckleberries, and before she was aware of it, she was surrounded by rattlesnakes. She had wandered near a den of them and there was no backing out of it. It was kill or be killed, and she preferred the former. Grasping a thick stick in her hand she awaited action. Had the snakes attacked her several at a time nothing could have saved her, but, fortunately for her, they began the onslaught singly. A snake would hardly coil himself up for a spring when she would knock him over. One after another they fell dead, until they laid in swaths all around her. As fast as possible she backed out from her unpleasant situation, but not until the last snake of the den was killed was she safe. She counted the dead and they numbered four hundred and eighty. That lady doesn't pick huckleberries on the mountains anymore. When the snakes are in a half torpid condition it does not require much courage to clean out a den, but an immense amount of nerve is necessary to beat real live, hungry rattlesnakes in their dens.

FIGHTING THE STORM.

"A fearful day, neighbor Sheffer!" "You say truly, neighbor Bait; there has been nothing like it since the great storm of '24. Heaven have play on us!"

So muttered to each other the villagers of Seckendorf, as they crouched behind the rocks along the river bank in the gray of that wild March morning, with a hurricane, such as no living man could remember, rushing and roaring down the valley. Young and old, even babies and bedridden grandmothers, were all gathered within; for it was no time to linger within walls which cracked

and groaned with every blast, and might at any moment come crashing down in one mass of ruin.

Even in that sheltered spot the jackets of the men and the long hair of the women flapped in the wind like torn canvass; but out in the open ground the fury of the storm was fearful to look at. Tall trees were bending like whips, huge stones rolling down the surrounding ridges, twigs, and even large branches flying through the air like straws; while on the unsheltered uplands, more than one shepherd's hut had been literally blown to pieces, and lay strewn far and wide over the hills, a helpless wreck of shattered timbers.

But even more fearful was the sight of the flooded river below, which, swollen by weeks of rain, and lashed into fury by the tremendous gale, went foaming down the narrow valley with a roar that seemed to shake the very rocks that walled it in; and as the peasants stood gazing at it, one of them a stalwart headman of the upland pastures, pointed with a sudden paleness on his sunburned features, to the little cottage that stood on an island in the centre of the stream, at the window of which a human face had just shown itself.

"It's the ferryman and his family," whispered one. "They haven't had time to escape."

"God help them, then!" muttered another; "it's all over with them now!"

At that moment the clatter of hoofs was heard along the stony road, and a single horseman came tearing down toward the bank, his white hair and the horse's mane streaming on the wind like a pennon. A murmur ran through the crowd as he approached: "It's our master—it's the Count of Hildesheim!"

Even before he reached the spot, the Count had evidently seen the danger of the island family; for his first words were:

"Two hundred thalers to the man who saves them. Who will go?"

The men looked at each other in silence. There were no faint hearts among them; but the bravest man might well have shrunk from that whirl of foam, in whose grasp the strongest boats would have been nothing. More than one eye kindled, more than one hand clenched itself; but nobody stepped forward. At that moment a huge wave went roaring up over the island, and striking the cottage wall, tore it away like paper, while the shrieks of the children and their mother, who were now plainly visible, were heard even above the howling of the storm.

"Will you let them perish before your eyes?" roared the Count. "If I were ten years younger I'd go myself."

Just then a solitary figure, which seemed to have risen through the earth so suddenly did it appear, was seen on the very brink of the river, launching a small boat. In another instant boat and man vanished together into the whirlwind of spray that filled the air. The Count clutched his horse's mane, and his lips moved as if in prayer, while more than one stifled cry broke from the peasants as the little bark reappeared close to the islet, dancing like a feather amid the roaring waves that surged up around. But the ferryman had seen the coming help and prepared for it. In an instant his wife was lowered down, with her baby in her arms. The other two children followed; but alas! there was no place for the father in the tiny skiff already overloaded.

The two brave men exchanged a look, and understood each other. Off went the boat, shooting down the foaming current like an arrow. More than once all seemed over; but the oarsman's hand was true, and at last far down the stream, he brought his charge safe to land. Then, without halting a moment, he seized a tow rope, and dragging his boat to the point whence he had started, shot out into the raging flood once more.

"God be with him!" cried the Count, fervently; no other man in Saxony would have dared such a deed!

Stoutly did the gallant man strain at his task; but he came only just in time. The ferryman had barely leaped into the boat when the whole building came crashing down. In an instant the whole crowd was in a motion, and headed by the Count himself, they rushed down the bank to meet the rescued man and his deliverer as they reached the shore.

"There, my brave fellow!" cried the old noble, holding out his purse to the oarsman; "never was money better earned!"

"Not so, sir Count," answered the other. "God has enabled me to keep myself by the work of my own hands, and I need nothing more. Give your gold to this poor man and his family, who have lost their all."

And without awaiting a reply, he turned on his heels and disappeared.

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