

THE RAT AND HIS FOE.

FERRETS ARE THE NATURAL ENEMIES OF THE GREAT PEST.

Rats Are Divided Into Three Kinds, and Are Essentially a Social Animal—They Will Eat or Drink Almost Anything—The Flexible Ferret and His Ways.

Comparatively few persons know anything definite about rats, beyond the fact that such animals exist. They are supposed to be an article of staple diet in China, and in every other country of the world, says the New York Mail and Express, are exterminated at the expense of much loss and trouble, and yet there is a book published on the subject of rats and ferrets, the ferret being the natural enemy of the rat, and consequently being naturally included in any remarks which may be made about rats.

Rats are divided into three classes, the black, the brown and the water varieties. The most common variety is the brown rat, which was originally brought from Norway to this country about 1775. Before this time the indigenous black rat had things all his own way in this country, but the imported rat rapidly exterminated the home product. The original black rat is practically extinct, whereas the brown rat is found everywhere. This is because the brown rat is the larger and bolder and most ferocious.

That the rats in previous times were considered quite as great a nuisance as they are at present is witnessed by the fact that there was in England an official rat catcher to the king. This individual was usually a gypsy and wore a scarlet coat, embroidered in yellow worsted, with figures of rats destroying wheat sheaves. He also carried a heavy staff surmounted by the insignia of his office, which he always bore while taking part in royal pageants. He also had an attendant, who took no part in the processions, but who did the main part of the work, and was munificently rewarded by the princely wage of twopence a month.

The rat is essentially a social animal, and he habitually herds with his kind. In the cold weather a whole colony of rats, composed usually of about sixty, sleep together in a heap for mutual warmth, and they change from the bottom to the top of the heap in order to give each rat a chance at the warm spot at the bottom. This unselfishness, however, does not exist when the rats are hungry. Then they eat each other. If the mother rat does not get enough to eat she eats her young. Rats also eat their dead and infirm, which accounts for the fact that sick rats are never found at large. Where a number of rats are confined in a cage it is no uncommon occurrence for all the rats except one to combine and kill and eat one ill-fated companion.

The multiplying capacity of rats is prodigious. A writer has calculated that from a single pair of New York rats there will spring, in three years, 650,000 descendants.

There is practically nothing which a rat will not eat or drink. They will drink all kinds of liquor, and are particularly fond of oil, and it makes no difference to the rat whether whatever he eats or drinks is fresh or not. In fact, he rather prefers decaying meat and stale drink. All rats are inebriated, and get as drunk as they can whenever possible. In the breweries they lie around in drunken heaps, and are consequently easily captured. Those who have eaten rats say that they are pretty good food and taste not unlike rabbit.

As has been said, the ferret is the natural enemy of the rat, and seems to have been created for the sole purpose of exterminating the tribe. For this purpose the ferret is eminently fitted by nature. Both in head and body the ferret is flexible itself, and he can go anywhere that a rat can. A ferret is a cross between a mink, a martin and a polecat.

The ferret is a comparatively domesticated animal, and will readily become attached to its owner, but it is a very treacherous little animal, and when irritated will bite even the person by whom it has been accustomed to be fed. When bitten by a ferret the hand should never be withdrawn. The moment a ferret feels whatever he has bitten resisting, he instantly fastens upon it with the tenacity of a vise, and in order to make a ferret give up its hold it is frequently necessary to cut its head off.

Ferrets not only kill rats, but they eat them. A ferret will devour an entire rat, including skin and tail, which carnivorous quality marks his chief usefulness. The ferret does not kill the rat in the wall and then leave him to decay, but he absolutely eliminates the rat and removes him internally. When a ferret is finished with a rat there is no rat, and there is no known case where a rat, however large and ferocious, has killed a ferret.

Feeding Army Elephants.
Elephants in the Indian army are fed twice a day. When meal time arrives, they are drawn up in line before a row of piles of food. Each animal's breakfast includes ten pounds of raw rice, done up in five-two-pound packages. The rice is wrapped in leaves and then tied with grass. At the command, "Attention!" each elephant raises its trunk and a package is thrown into its capacious mouth. By this method of feeding, not a single grain of rice is wasted.

Lunacy in London.
The report of the asylums committee of the London county council shows there has been an alarming increase in lunacy during the last nine years, especially in London. While the population of London is 14,69 of the inhabitants of England, London's proportion of insane persons is 19.87.

THIS WELL SPOUTS CLAY.

It Is Also a Sure Indication of What the Weather Is Going to Be.

The government artesian well at Lower Brule Indian agency in South Dakota, is a freak that is puzzling the geologists of the Northwest. Originally the pressure threw the solid six-inch stream of water to a height of twenty-one feet above the top of the well casing.

Soon after the well was completed the pipe would become choked, and at such times the water would not flow for two or three days at a time. Then without apparent cause the pipe suddenly would become clear and the water would again spout to its former height. After continuing for a few days, during which time it almost constantly spouted large quantities of sand, the water once more would become choked and cease to flow. This became so frequent and so regular that in time the agency authorities became accustomed to it and paid no particular attention to the freakishness of the well, which is constantly under their observation.

But now the matter has taken a new and more peculiar turn. Arrivals from the agency say that beginning about three weeks ago the well at intervals has been forcing out apparently endless quantities of blue clay. This in itself is nothing strange, but the manner in which the clay is conveyed to the surface is out of the ordinary. The blue clay entirely fills the six-inch pipe during the temporary eruptions, and rises slowly above the top of the casing, exactly as sausages emerge from a sausage machine, until the top is so high in the air that it becomes overbalanced; then five or six feet of the length topples over upon the ground. The continued upward movement of the clay in a few minutes causes more of the column to topple over. This has continued until circular pieces of the blue clay aggregating several hundred feet in length have been deposited on the ground in the vicinity of the well, necessitating the employment of men to remove the huge deposits before the top of the casing should become completely buried. The discharges of blue clay are accompanied by very little water, and the clay, probably from the great pressure required to force it through the well casing, is always hard and dry.

Another peculiarity is that these eruptions invariably begin a short time prior to the advent of windy or stormy weather, and continue until the weather again becomes settled.—Chicago Record.

The Etiquette of the Desert.
Social etiquette among the Arabs is a factor in life to be considered seriously if you wish to live among them without friction. Its obligations are not to be completely mastered in a few months. Sometimes when I have had companions with me presumably thoroughly on a fait with all things Mohammedan, the harmony of the occasion has been seriously endangered by some thoughtlessness or ignorance on their part, which to the Moslem could appear only as a contemptuous want of consideration. Thus, no greater insult could be offered to an Arab than a friendly inquiry as to the welfare of his wife, to us a natural civility, but to him a gross impertinence bitterly resented. On one occasion I nearly made a similar blunder. I was invited by a neighboring sheik to go over to see him, and was on the point of riding up to his tent door and dismounting there. Fortunately, however, I recollected in time that etiquette demanded that I should halt fifty yards off and call in a loud voice: "Have I your permission to approach?" This gives time to bundle off any of their womenkind who may be about, preparatory to the admission of a stranger.

It is curious, also, to notice that in spite of the real affection existing between father and son, the sense of respect dominates all other feelings, and the sons will never sit at meat with their father in the presence of a guest, but will wait upon both until the father, rising, allows them the opportunity of breaking bread with their visitor.

Provided, however, that you recognize their social customs, my experience has proved the Bedouin to be genuine, warm-hearted friends; and they really become greatly attached to those whom they know and who know them.—Century.

Says Candles Won't Burn in Dawson.
"Talk about candles being worth \$1.50 a piece in Dawson, it's all wrong," said Charles Way recently. "I wintered on the west fork of Stewart river in '94 and '95 with a party from Sitka. We went into winter quarters early, having good prospects on a bar directly in front of our log cabin. We had plenty of supplies that we had hired the Indians to bring in for us via Dyea. Among other things we had a gross of tallow candles. Things went along nicely until October 22, when at noon it began to grow cold. You could feel it settle down. The water in the boxes couldn't run more than twelve feet without getting thick, so we quit work and went into the camp. We loaded the stove up with birch wood, and somebody lighted a candle. It burned all right for a minute or two, then the light commenced to grow dim, and to all appearances went out. I was surprised, upon examination, to find that the wick was still burning, but the tallow was not melting. I watched the wick as it burned, the fire burning itself right in the middle until the wick was consumed clear down to the bottom, melting a hole about the size of a lead pencil through the tallow, but useless as a light, and we had to go to bed in the dark. Candles are not worth \$1.50 each when the weather is real cold, for they won't burn."—St. Paul Globe.

Children's Column



Winter Wind.
O Wind, how cruelly you blow!
How can you treat the children so?
You give such whiffs,
And jerk our curls,
And whisk us round—poor little girls!
Oh, how you roar and rush and hustle!
Why must you be in such a bustle?

In summer-time we used to hear
The little zephyrs coming near—
Not rude and wild,
But soft and mild,
As gentle as a little child.
We always laughed and laughed, when they
Came whispering to us in our play.
Now, Wind, I'm wondering if you
Were ever like them?—tell me true.
And did you blow
Long, long ago?
As quietly and sweet and low?
Will they be like you when they're old—
So rough and cruel, and so cold?
—Sydney Dayre, in Youth's Companion.

A Little Mistake.
"Well, no one can say I have not made good use of my time," said a large white mushroom to a daisy that grew in the turf close by.
"You certainly have grown surprisingly fast," said the daisy, thoughtfully.
"Yes, and I have done it all since you folded your petals and went to sleep. I daresay, now you are wondering where I was last night."
"No," said the daisy, "I wasn't; to tell the truth, I was wondering where you would be tomorrow night."

The Mouse's Blanket.
One day Willie's mamma missed a banknote which she was certain she had put in a particular place. Thinking that Willie might have taken it for a plaything, not knowing its value, she asked him if he had seen it. But Willie knew nothing about it, neither did the nurse nor anybody in the house.
By and by papa came home. He pointed to a mouse hole in the nursery floor, and said the mice must have stolen it. A carpenter came and took up the floor, and sure enough, there was a nest of little mice all cuddled down on the bank-note, which Mother Mouse had spread out as a lining for the nest. Other pieces of paper were found, all torn and nibbled, but this, being nice and soft, had been saved for a blanket by the wise old mother.—Congregationalist.

Soldier Joe.
Tommy leaned on his snow-shovel, looking very much discouraged. Only yesterday he had cleaned off the walk, and now here it was quite blocked up again. Too bad! He was sure he never could shovel away all that snow.
Then he heard a noise in the next yard, and looked over the fence to see what was going on. First he saw a shower of snow flying up in the air, and then Joe's shovel and his small blue mittens, and last of all little Joe himself, working away as if he went by steam. He had shoveled a long, clear path, shut in on each side by two high, white, clean walls.
"O Joe! Ain't you tired?" called Tommy.
"No!" said Joe, stoutly. "I'm a soldier now!"

"You see," he went on, "I used to get tired, till sometimes I most hated my shovel. But mamma told me that the snow was a great army, all dressed in white uniforms, that came and took our town in the night. They block up all our streets and walks, and try to keep us shut up in our houses."
"But there is another army of men and boys that go out and drive 'em off with shovels, no matter how fast they come. And I'm in that army. If I was the only one that had to fight the snow, it would be sort of lonesome, but there is such lots of us that it's just fun!"

Tommy thought a minute, and concluded Joe was right. So he joined the army, too; and very soon his walk was cleared.—Youth's Companion.

A Klondike Story.
Jimmy Brennan, ten years old, and son of Police Officer Brennan of Seattle, was standing at Yesler Way, when a stranger came along. He looked like a man who had just returned from a logging camp.
"Boys," he said, "where is the Butler hotel?"
"I'll tell you for a quarter," said one of Jimmy's companions.
"I'll show you where it is for ten cents," chimed in another.
"Say, I'll do it for five cents," remarked a third.
"Mister," said Jimmy, "I will point out the Butler to you for nothing."
"You're my man," said the rough-looking stranger, and the two went down Yesler Way together; while Jimmy's companions stayed behind to call him a chump. Jimmy led the stranger to the Butler.
"Come in here," said the man, and he led the boy into a clothing store. "Give this boy the best suit of clothes in the house," said the stranger. Jimmy simply opened his mouth. Soon he had on a fine suit.
"Now give him an overcoat," said the stranger; and Jimmy's eyes tried to pop out of their sockets. The clerk adorned Jimmy with an overcoat.
"Now a hat," said the stranger.

Chinese Nervelessness.
A North China paper says the quality of "nervelessness" distinguishes the Chinaman from the European. The Chinaman can write all day, work all day, stand in one position all day, weave, beat gold, carve ivory, do infinitely tedious jobs for ever and ever, and discover no more weariness and irritation than if he were a machine. This quality appears in early life. There are no restless, naughty boys in China. They are all appallingly good, and will plod away in school without recesses or recreation of any kind. The Chinaman can do without exercise. Sport or play seems to him so much waste labor. He can sleep anywhere—amid rattling machinery, deafening uproar, scuffling children, and quarrelling adults. He can sleep on the ground, on the floor, on a bed, on a chair, or in any position.—New York Ledger.

Two Lucky Servants.
Two of the luckiest persons in Paris at the present moment are a maid servant and a concierge in the Luxembourg district. Their mistress, a wealthy lady without children, recently died, leaving \$300,000 to be divided between them. They are also to inherit two houses, and nobody has as yet arrived to contest the will.—Paris Letter.

Jimmy wanted to cry. He thought it was Christmas time, and that he was by the side of a grate fire, reading one of Andersen's fairy tales.

Soon he was arrayed in new hat, new suit, new overcoat. The stranger paid for all. Jimmy started out of the store. He was so bewildered that, if several goblins had put in their appearance, he would have joined them in their fairyland festivities.

"Just wait a minute," said the stranger. Jimmy waited. If the stranger had said, "Go, roll in the dust of the street," Jimmy would have done it.

The stranger went down in his pocket, and closed his dealings with Jimmy by giving him a five-dollar gold piece and a gold nugget worth about five dollars.

Then Jimmy thanked the stranger and went off to tell his companions about the man to whom he showed the Hotel Butler "for nothing."

The stranger was a Klondiker, supposed to be Patrick Galvin, who returned on the Rosalie recently with a fortune estimated at about twenty thousand dollars. It pays to be polite. If you don't think so, ask Jimmy Brennan.—Seattle (Wash.) Post-Intelligencer.

Roc, the Brazilian Pirate.
Mr. Frank R. Stockton is writing "The Buccaneers of Our Coast," for St. Nicholas. Mr. Stockton describes the career of a famous character on the Spanish Main.

This famous buccaneer was called Roc, because he had to have a name, and his own was unknown or suppressed, and "the Brazilian," because he was born in Brazil—though his parents were Dutch.

Unlike most of his fellow-practitioners, he did not gradually become a pirate. From his early youth he never had an intention of being anything else. As soon as he grew to be a man, he became one of the buccaneers, and at the first opportunity he joined a pirate crew and had made but a few voyages when it was perceived by his companions that he was destined to become a most remarkable sea-rover. He was put in command of a ship, and in a very short time after he had set out on his first independent cruise he fell in with a Spanish ship loaded with silver bullion. Having captured this he sailed with his prize to Jamaica, which was one of the great resorts of the English buccaneers. There his success delighted the community, and soon he was generally acknowledged as the head pirate of the West Indies.

As for Esquemeling, he simply reveled in the deeds of the great Brazilian desperado. If he had been writing the life and times of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar or Mr. Gladstone, he could not have been more enthusiastic in his praises. And as in "The Arabian Nights" the roc is described as the greatest of birds, so, in the eyes of the buccaneer biographer, this Roc was the greatest of pirates.

The renowned pirate from Brazil must have been a terrible fellow to look at. He was strong and brawny, his face was short and very wide, with high cheek bones, and his countenance probably resembled that of a pug dog. It was his custom in the daytime to walk about carrying a drawn cutlass resting easily upon his arm, edge up, very much as a fine gentleman carries his high silk hat.

He was a man who insisted upon being obeyed instantly. But although he was so strict and exacting during the business sessions of his piratical crew—by which I mean when he was cruising around after prizes—he was very much more disagreeable when he was taking a vacation. On his return to Jamaica from one of his expeditions it was his habit to give himself some relaxation after the hardships and dangers through which he had passed; and on such occasions, with his cutlass waving high in the air, he would often rush into the street, and take a whack at every one whom he met. As far as was possible the citizens allowed him to have the street to himself and it was not at all likely that his visits to Jamaica were looked forward to with any eager anticipation.

Vegetable Mould.
The value of vegetable matter in the soil is very commonly over estimated. If it is extra abundant in virgin soils freshly cleared from forest it is a sign that the subsoil is wet and cold. Such soils when first cleared are generally less productive than they are after one or two years of cultivation, which has not only opened them to light and air, but has also decomposed some of the mould and converted it into carbonic acid gas. There is, besides, a difference in the quality of mould dependent on what vegetation it is made from. That in swamps is mostly from leaves of trees and mosses which have little except carbon. Such soils are often made very productive by applying to them potash, so as to cause more active decomposition. The slow decomposition of carbonaceous matter in water generates what is known as humic acid, and which is very poisonous to the roots of plants.

Vegetable matter, which is highly nitrogenous, heats rapidly, and its carbon is so quickly burned out that it makes very little vegetable mould, and that on further exposure to air quickly disappears. Hence on the richest land there is often less vegetable matter in the soil than there is on land which is black with it only because it is cold and wet. The application of nitrogenous manures hastens the decomposition of vegetable matter in the soil, while coarse, strawy manures turn to a mould that has comparatively little fertility, but which makes the soil look much richer than it really is. Farmers have too long been deceived by the idea that it is the black soil that is always the most productive, and especially if it is black to great depth. Most such soils lack potash or phosphate, and often lack both of these before they can be made profitably productive.—Boston Cultivator.

AGRICULTURAL TOPICS.

Proper Treatment of Frozen Plants.
As soon as discovered, remove the frosted plants to a cool place where the temperature can by some means be gradually raised until it reaches that to which the plants have been accustomed. A sudden rise in the temperature, after plants have been badly frosted, throws them too rapidly and results disastrously. Trim off the tender shoots which are beyond help, and then gradually raise the temperature during the day until it reaches the accustomed mark. They may then soon be placed in their proper places, but it might be well to shade them for a day or two from the sun.

A splendid and effective protection against a certain amount of cold is secured by placing cones over the plants, made from paper. In this manner cold drafts from about windows on very severe windy nights can be kept from harming the plants.—Woman's Home Companion.

Dairy and Beef Cows.
The dairyman must fully understand that the most profitable dairy cow is the one that is the best mother, and the feeding and care of the young heifer must be such as will best develop the mother functions. Some farmers find beef production the most profitable, and when this is the case they want an animal that converts food into flesh, but in a dairy animal dairy production is what is wanted. An animal that by breeding and feeding has had the beef type eliminated, puts the food over and above what is necessary to sustain animal life into milk. We may secure a fairly good dairy and beef animal combined, one that after calving will give a fairly good quantity of milk and then when dried up will, if well fed with a proper ration, grow fat. But when we want a cow that will yield above the average in production she will lack in some of the essentials needed in the most profitable dairy animal. Feeding will make some difference, but breeding will make more.—N. J. Shepherd, in Nebraska Farmer.

Plant Pests in the Window Garden.
Green aphids, black flies, white worms and neutral tinted slugs are an assured nuisance to the window gardener, whether considered individually or collectively, writes G. T. Woolson, of Vermont. Just how to dispose of this artistic quartet is often a problem outside of greenhouses, for living rooms are not opened to the wholesale treatment given elsewhere. For a light attack of verdant lice, hand picking and frequent showering is often all that is necessary, especially if tar or tobacco soapsuds are used in the sprinkler.

But when the vermin lie thick on vein, crevice or fold, tobacco fumes alone are equal to the occasion; the smoke, however, must be confined, or it is of little use. I often group a number of afflicted plants on a table, closely covering the same with newspapers, come fashion, leaving space at the bottom to introduce the smoke; a cigar or two may be thus comfortably utilized or the tobacco may be burned on coals if due precaution is used. The paper should be left on twenty-four hours to prevent possible resuscitation of the narcotic victims.

The black flies and white worms are more closely related than appearance or habit would indicate. If the soil is badly infested it is well to replot the plant if it is small, but the larger growths will not bear having their roots shaken free. A teaspoonful of saltwater in a quart of water used at intervals of a few days speedily lessens and eventually quiets the pests and serves as a fertilizer as well. Hand picking is first in order for the slugs, which never in life or death relax their hold. I found a maidenhair fern thus infested and after clearing the stems I showered freely with whale-oil suds and have not since been troubled.

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A TRYING SITUATION.

A man may be a hero
In most any walk of life;
But certain situations
Make him falter in the strife;
And one that tries his mettle,
'Till warm beneath the collar,
Is when he comes to parting
With his last and only dollar!

He'll laugh at old misfortune
When he hears the dollars clink,
And be brave for any danger,
When he knows he's got the "chink";
But he sings a different measure,
When his board is growing smaller,
And he finds he's come to parting
With his last and only dollar!

You speak in praise of striving,
And of conquering adverse fate,
And prove how oft the humble
Have been truly good and great;
But philosophy is vanquished
By both the boor and scholar,
When it comes to final parting
With the last and only dollar!
—Detroit Free Press.

HUMOROUS.
Different kinds of punishment are good for unruly children, but as a general thing spanking takes the palm.

"What's Old Calamity howling about now?" "Because he can't get as much for wheat here as you are paying at the Klondike."

Wallace—I presume you are aware that money is a great carrier of bacteria. Hargreaves—Yes. That is why I burn it as fast as I get it.

"And why," said the young porker, "do you feel so sad whenever you see a hen?" "My son," replied the old hog, "I cannot help thinking of ham and eggs."

First Hen—What are those young bantams fighting about? Second Hen—Oh! they are disputing about the question, Which is the mother of the chick—the hen that lays the egg or the incubator?

Lounger—Do cook-books form an important item in your sales? Book-seller—Yes, we sell them by the thousand. "The women appreciate them, eh?" "Oh, the women don't buy them; their husbands do."

"Pat, you complain of being out of work, and yet I heard that coal dealer offer you a job to drive one of his carts, not ten minutes ago." "Yes, sir; but I'm blamed if I'll freeze myself to death to keep alive, begob!"

Maud (showing fashion plate)—Papa, that's the way I would look if I had a sealskin saque. Maud's father (showing advertising picture labeled "Before taking")—And that's the way I would look, dear, when the bill came in.

"Papa," said Sammy Snaggs, who was seeking for information, "how much is gold worth an ounce?" "I can't tell you what gold is worth an ounce here, but in the Klondike I understand that gold is worth its weight in doughnuts."

Mrs. Asken—It's the unluckiest store to shop in, dear. Mrs. Pricest—Why? Mrs. Asken—There isn't a thing you might ask for they haven't got, and everything they have is so lovely you're forced to buy without going further.

She beats the bars of her prison in her wrath. "Release me," she shrieked, "or I shall break out—if not in one way, then in another." The warden trembled. If she proved to be a poetess of passion, would he be responsible?

"You," said she, as she came down leisurely pulling on her gloves—"you used to say I was worth my weight in gold." "Well, what if I did?" he asked, looking at his watch. "And now, you don't think I am worth a wait of two minutes."

"You enjoy coaching, do you? I never could see where the fun comes in. One looks so like a blamed fool, sitting up on a three-story coach and coveting over the highway tooting of a horn." "I know it, but it isn't every blamed fool that can afford it."

Johnnie—Papa, is mamma the better half of you? Father—Yes, my son, that's the way they put it. Johnnie—And are all wives the better part of their husbands? Father—Certainly, my son. Johnnie—Then, what part of King Solomon were his wives?

He Put Out the Flash.
The American clergy did a great deal by precept and example to stimulate patriotism during the Revolution. In his book on "Chaplains and Clergy in the Revolution," the late historian Headley relates a number of incidents of "fighting parsons." The Rev. Thomas Allen, the first minister ever settled in the town of Pittsfield, Mass., was a man renowned and beloved for his gentleness and piety. When hostilities between England and the colonies were declared, Pastor Allen's flock was astonished to hear their mild shepherd announce his intention to join the militia and fight for the right!

"At the battle of Bennington the Berkshire militia had their share in the conflict, and the Rev. Thomas Allen fought as a common soldier, side by side with his fellow countrymen. Knowing this good man's natural aversion to violence and bloodshed, some one said to him after the battle was over:

"They say you fought at Bennington, Mr. Allen. Is it true?" "Yes; I did," answered the man of God. "It was a hot, close battle, and it became every patriot to do his duty."

"Well, but, Mr. Allen," said the parishioner, "did you kill anybody?" "No," replied the courageous but conscientious clergyman; "I don't know that I killed anybody; but I happened to notice a frequent flash from behind a certain bush, and every time I saw that flash one of our men fell. I took aim at the bush and fired. I don't know that I killed anybody, but I put out that flash!"