The country doctor.

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"If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect, however, I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency: to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

"If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

"Yours, my dear Friend,

"W. C."

"*To* Joseph Hill, Esq.*

"Olney, June 25, 1785.

"My dear Friend,—I write in a nook that I call my *boudoir*. It is a summer-house, not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honeysuckles; and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden-mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to my *boudoir!*) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

"The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience, you will perceive, is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

"W. C."

We quote the opening passage in the "Winter Morning's Walk," Book v of the "Task."

"'Tis morning; and the sun, with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires the horizon; while the clouds,
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From every herb and every spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportion'd limb
Transform'd to a giant's. Then, exulting, I
As if design'd to mock me, ape the gait
And stride of stalkers, such as I need approach
A cottage, walk along the plaster'd wall,
Preposterous sight! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the scents,
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
And fledged with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle mourn in corners, where the fence
Screens them, and seem half-petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder; not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied; but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustom'd load,
Deep plunging, and again deep plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass:
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care,
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air."

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR.

A grave gentleman, elderly, or at least middle-aged, stepping from a comfortable close carriage, tasselled cane in hand—this, I believe, is the most approved ideal people feign to themselves of a doctor. Neither is the presentment complete until you add an unexceptionable suit of spotless black, its sombreness relieved by white cravat, the latter so stringent in its embrace as to merit a certain name that vulgar little boys are wont to give it, but which respect for the classical purity of my mother tongue forbids my committing to paper. Such a picture was once faithful enough in its application to the town and city doctor. It is no longer so, even for him. What with the beard movement, and other changes of usage and fashion, our town and city doctors have now become pretty much, to look at, like other men, distinctive professional type having well nigh vanished.

Such a picture the country doctor never resembled in the slightest degree. Such an external was and is wholly incompatible with the surrounding circumstances of his life, with the very nature and genius of his calling. By a metaphor, not so flighty as metaphors sometimes are, the Arab is said to be born to the saddle. Even thus is it also with the country doctor. Until the time when footpaths trending o'er hill and moor are widened out into macadamized queen's highways—until the time when stiles shall be abolished, and taking a fence to save a mile shall be no longer to the country doctor a thing desirable, there can be no soft-padded close car-

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* Hill was a schoolfellow of Cowper at Westminster, and a club-companion in after-days; and their friendship was most cordial. Hill did not trifle long, but applied himself diligently and successfully to the profession of the law; and by the assistance and patronage of Thurlow, he attained a position of respectability and competence. At a late period of Cowper's life, he made Thurlow acquainted with the narrowness of the poet's circumstances, previously to which the Chancellor thought that as he was famous as a poet, he must also be rich. Probably in consequence of Hill's information, a pension was granted to Cowper, but unhappily too late for him to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing it had been bestowed, though very useful as enabling his friends to add to his comforts. When Cowper left St. Alban's, Hill took charge of his pecuniary affairs. To Hill, Cowper addressed a very lively poetical epistle, beginning—

Dear Joseph—five-and-twenty years ago—
Alas, how time escapes! 'tis even so;

and it ends by describing him as

An honest man, close-buttoned to the chin,
Broadcloth without, and a warm heart within.

—*Biographical Notices of Cowper's Correspondents, prefixed to the selections from his letters, published by the Religious Tract Society.*

riage for him. A horseman by force of circumstances he must be, and little wonder that, suiting his attire to that condition, he ends by making himself appear what—truth to write, he very frequently is—a child of Nimrod.

My entrance to the medical profession was accomplished through a four years' pupilage with a country practitioner. I therefore profess to know something about the matter of which I shall write; and I doubt not that "The Leisure Hour," in one or more of its far migrations, will meet the eyes of those who will not fail to recognise, in the description presently to be undertaken, the lineaments of my "governor."

Town and city practitioners little know of the expanse of ground a country doctor must daily cover in the course of his professional ministrations. I have known many a country doctor, some of whose patients, and these not exceptional, resided fifteen miles, in a line as the crow flies, from the doctor's own home. Happy for the village Æsculapius then, if, like the sable bird, he need pay no regard to flood or quagmire, ford or stile! And yet I cannot conscientiously aver that Dr. Green had any particular aversion to stiles. Rather let me own to a weakness of my governor—he loved them—and even five-barred gates presented no insuperable obstacle; for in his younger days he had been accustomed to go out with the squire's hounds. In truth, the country doctor in his external presentment may be looked upon as a sort of country squire on a small scale. Quite naturally, and by force of circumstances, the village doctor falls into the position of a minor country gentleman; gravitating, so to speak, towards that class, he adopts its peculiarities.

I have heard the expression "country doctor" used disparagingly; and it does seem to carry with it a disparaging sound. Very far be it from me to foster this vulgar error. The country doctor, if he be not a specialist like the higher members of his city brethren—if he cannot lavish his regards on hearts alone, lungs alone, livers alone, or other special organs; if he cannot make a recluse of himself, following out some particular branch of science—anatomy, it may be, chemistry, or botany—is obliged to cultivate the faculty of readiness in each and every department of his profession, which his town and city fellows rarely achieve; and which, indeed, owing to their position, they are not called upon to acquire. The country doctor at a moment's notice may be called upon to treat any ill, surgical or medical, to which humanity is subject. He may be called upon to amputate a leg, or auscultate a chest, or determine the existence of a poison. In this way the country doctor has an amount of responsibility thrust upon him that his town and city colleagues easily avoid. The village Æsculapius must be a man of ready resources, and if he makes any considerable blunder, let him expect no quarter. Nor would it be just to plead on behalf of many a country practitioner, knowledge of every department of medical knowledge as an apology for failing to attain excellence in one. I have known, and still know, gentlemen belonging to this estimable class, who could hold their own in certain special branches of the profession, if measured against the highest luminaries of our metropolitan hospitals. In the branch of operative surgery, for example, I would have thus backed my governor, whose practice lay in a mining district, where accidents were almost of every-day occurrence, and some of them frightful. You might frequently have seen a messenger galloping in hot haste to convey the intelligence of some accident in quarry or in mine. Fancy then the little man returned, splashed and worn, weary and jaded, from a long round, and just about to seat himself comfortably at his fireside, his dear wife, *placens uxor*, elaborating a draught with her own fair hands, that she deemed good for the occasion. With this tranquil picture before your mind's eye, fancy now a wild horseman galloping up to the door, and with a thundering knock disturbing the pleasant *tête-à-tête*. In a few moments, should the weather be rough, the worthy doctor would stand before you an apparition a trifle weird and awful. It is to the early days of mackintosh garments that my narrative refers. Dr. Green was a little man, with Bedouin legs, acquired from much horse exercise. He had a ruddy, florid, benevolent-looking face, but somewhat firm and decisive withal. Had you encountered him riding on a lonely moor, winds howling, rain pattering, lightning flashing, and thunder rolling—had you seen him then, clad from head to foot in a black mackintosh waterproof garment, made after his own design, you might have taken him for some wild spectre. That black mackintosh, or oil-skin garment, was wonderfully made. On the crown of his head, or rather hat, it ended in a tall spire, like that of a witch's wide-awake; below, it floated away in black surges of rustling drapery. So completely was that weird-looking, but most useful garb an "over-all," that little else than the long beak-like nose and keen eyes were visible. Oh, if you could but have seen him then!

My pupilage had been arranged for a term of five years, but I remained only four; the last year having been given up to facilitate certain necessary arrangements. We parted with mutual regret, all my little errors of omission and commission, whilst a member of his establishment, being amply condoned; they were not so many after all, and, though testifying on behalf of myself, I would fain say venial. Of such minor offences an example was the following. For many a long month a certain old lady had been taking two pills per diem of a certain sort. It was my duty to make up these pills; and one morning the evil thought came into my head, that if Mrs. So and So were afflicted with a chronic malady, it did not therefore follow that I should be subjected to these monotonous fits of chronic pill-making. So, yielding to evil promptings within, I compounded pills enough to last half a year, put the lot into a large box, and labelled them. My lazy store was found; and then followed an edifying lecture, the gist and purport of it tending to impress the fact on my memory, that the type of disease might change at any time, and change of physic might become necessary. It was a responsibility imposed on us pupils—there were three of us—to see that an ample store of bandage rollers was ever at hand. The quantity was left to our discretion; and once upon a time, I remember, the heap of roller bandages swelled to grave dimensions. The governor directed his glances towards the magazine one day, gazed upon the rollers for a moment fixedly, and then, directing a sidelong glance to us young men, his eyes twinkled with a certain slyness.

"Young gentlemen," said he, "to be ready for emergencies is a very fine thing, and to study the relation between causes and effects bespeaks the exercise of that reflective faculty so necessary to the exercise of our profession. But tell me, young gentlemen," continued the doctor, "do you apprehend any increase of fractures because Mr. Marshall, the draper, has a pretty shop-girl? At any rate, we don't seem to want any calico for the present."

My greatest error of commission, except, perhaps, the drawing of a wrong tooth, has now to be indicated. In the hurry of dispensing, I sent a young lady a box of

COLLINS, R.A.

FETCHING THE DOCTOR.

leeches, under direction that she was to take two occasionally, as might be necessary, and an old lady a box of pills, which she was coolly recommended to apply to the part affected. A simple act of barter remedied the error, and the doctor, beginning with a serious scolding, ended with a fit of laughter.

Looking back at the four years of my pupilage, I am happy to testify they were not only amongst the most pleasing, but the most profitable of my life. Let no one decry country medical pupilage in my hearing, if they are impatient under contradiction. From the age of sixteen to twenty, I hold the advantages for a boy entering upon the profession of physic to be greatly in favour of the country. There were three pupils, as I have said; and in the establishment it was a cock-pit rule, with which the commanding officer in no way interfered, that the youngest pupil should do all the dispensing. That drudgery, as it happened, did not long devolve upon me. I was soon free to occupy my time in another way, and had reason to be thankful that my lot had been cast in a country pupilage. Daily horse exercise kept me in health, and ample time for study dissipated the objection sometimes adduced against a medical apprenticeship.

One speciality of a country doctor's avocation is the relationship he holds with the poor. In London, and other large cities and towns, medical men in private practice, as the rule, have little to do with the poorer population. What with hospitals, and what with dispensaries, easy of access, the extremely poor rarely come in the way of medical men in private practice. Gratuitous advice is sometimes, indeed, accorded; but more usually the non-paying public, not in the Union, avail themselves of hospitals and dispensaries. Rightly or wrongly, public institutions are preferred, and they sometimes withdraw from medical men patients in no way qualified by poverty for hospital and dispensary attention. In the country, the genuine country, it is otherwise. Medical attendance must there be sought and obtained, either individually, or through parochial, or union, or club organization. In my part of the world, (the west of England,) benevolent clubs are numerous, and well appointed. All the agricultural and mining population, elevated in the slightest degree above absolute want, belonged in my time, and I am informed still belong, to some benevolent club, one of the privileges connected with which is medical attendance in illness. It was a time of much excitement when a club committee, in solemn conclave, sat to elect their doctor. Woe, then, to the unfortunate man of physic against whom any charge of unkindness, inattention, or other error or short-coming could fairly be brought. Mining and bucolic minds, tranquil, if not torpid, at other seasons, then waxed energetic; tongues were unloosed, and speakers grew eloquent. Then was an Englishman's privilege to tell a bit of his mind most amply vindicated. The doctor had to incur pretty much the same sort of overhauling that falls to the lot of a candidate for electoral honours. He was expected to stand any amount of rustic eloquence without betraying the slightest ill temper. My governor took these occasions as matters of course; calmly telling us, that scolding the doctor marked such an epoch of self-satisfaction to the scolders, that in his opinion they ought not to be checked. He took all this as a matter of course, I say, one occasion excepted. There was a woman's club, and very eloquent were the speaking ladies of the committee. The doctor rather quailed, so often as the necessity for incurring this ordeal came about; but, bracing himself up strong for the occasion, by force of flattery, conciliation, and great aptitude for tea drinking, (a hollow pretence, I am sorry to write,) he got manfully through it. I am happy to proclaim, on behalf of my governor, that he was ever considerately kind to the poor. He acted from a sense of duty and love of his profession; but circumstances, nevertheless, occurred to ruffle his temper at times. It was a fixed notion with the small farmers of the neighbourhood, that save in case of direst accident, the doctor should never be summoned until the horses had done ploughing for the day. This belief was not only dangerous on behalf the patient, but unfair, as I think you will own, on behalf of the doctor. Fancy the poor doctor on some cold wintry night responsive to the bell or knocker, fancy him thrusting his head out of the window and opening a parley, (gutta percha tubes were not invented then,) and joining in the following dialogue:—

Anxious messenger. "Please, sir, Tommy Jones is bad —*cruel* bad. Please, sir, you must come immediently." (Mem. *cruel*, I would have you to know, is Devonshire and Cornish for *very*.)

Doctor. "Where is he bad?"

Anxious messenger. "Please, sir, all over."

Whereupon the doctor, scratching his ear, is lost in meditation as to the physic most appropriate to such an ill-defined malady. After a pause, he re-opens the conversation, asking—

Doctor. "How long has he been bad?"

Anxious messenger. "Dree days, sir, so to speak, he's a been wisht (so so), but he's a been cruel bad since the morning."

Hereupon the doctor, slightly ruffled, as well he might, and as, I think you will own, the occasion justified—"Why did you not send before?" he, after a short pause, would say impatiently—

"Please, sir, the hoss was a-ploughing and couldn't stop."

Thereupon, if the messenger was of age and position to understand argument, his candid opinion was solicited on the following points: Was a horse's day's work of more regard than a man's life? Had messenger no regard for Tommy Jones? Did messenger, or did he not, consider the doctor to have need of rest; to be insensible to the benefits of sleep; to be devoid of human feelings? But it ever ended in one way. The doctor would slam the sash, or shut the door, resigning himself forthwith to fate and duty. He would summon Ned to saddle the horse, don his clothes, finishing the attire, if the night was rough, with that peculiarly spectral-looking garment already described; and, having mounted his nag, doctor and messenger would speed away in no unfriendly converse.

My pupilage was before the Union system came into operation. Our pauper patients were parochial, not union ones; and I believe the point is conceded, that the parochial system, whatever its administrative shortcomings, can advance the greater pretensions to patriarchal kindness. It was always assumed that every pauper candidate for medical relief should come recommended with an overseer's certificate; but this, in our practice, was frequently dispensed with, and the privilege was sometimes abused.

The overseer's certificate notes merit a word or two of comment. They were very curious documents, mingling no end of official dignity with much bad spelling, and not a little vagueness of expression. A certain polite overseer affected the third person in his communications, but a stray first personal pronoun wandering into the document, begat some difficulty in our minds as to the real patient, overseer or pauper. I once had a collection of these official notes, but they are lost in the flood of

time. I called them curiosities of parochial literature, and well did they merit the title. Here is a specimen, which has escaped the fate of others by having been copied on the fly-leaf of one of my medical books:

"Sir,—This is to sartify that John Hobbs is very bad of a disease called falled down from a tree with a hook in his hand and cut his-self."

The establishment of Unions has, I fear, destroyed much of the kindly intercourse that prevailed between doctor and pauper patients in my time. The Union doctor is usually so ill-paid that, putting time and horse-keep out of the question, his salary hardly remunerates him for prime cost of physic. This condition of things is much to be lamented. It is inconsistent not only with Christian charity, but with natural justice, and therefore should not be. The common argument about supply and demand does not here apply. Many a young man desirous of entering medical practice, and not knowing where to plant his foot, might be induced to incur the charge of Union practice for an egregiously small salary, or even gratuitously, and for the reason that introductions to remunerative practice may perhaps be thereby afforded. This is radically bad. Medical men ought to be, and in the main are, kind and conscientious, but human nature is human nature; tendencies are very prone to grow into deeds, and it cannot be denied that the tendency of Union medical contracts is in the direction of inducing neglect to the ill and suffering poor.

ADVENTURES IN TEXAS.

CHAPTER VI.—A PANTHER HUNT.

The American cougar, panther, or "painter," as he is commonly called, is one of the shyest of animals. The wilderness may be traversed for a lifetime by the "still hunter," without his ever once seeing one. Nocturnal in their habits, they seek their dens at the first faint light of day, which they do not leave again till quite evening. Although they are to be found through all the States, from Canada to Mexico, they are most abundant in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, the immense cane-brakes, which are frequent in the forests of these regions, forming safe and impenetrable harbours for them. Plenty of men, well advanced in years, are to be met with in these parts, who have been devoted to the chase all their lives, who can count their slaughtered deer by hundreds, and, in some instances, thousands—their scores of bears, wolves, and leopard cats; but very few of them require more than one figure to enumerate the panthers that have fallen to their prowess. In a country where the planters raise hogs in such immense quantities that numbers of them go wild, and are scarcely missed, the depredations committed by bears, panthers, and wild cats are passed unnoticed, unless, as sometimes happens, the raid is made upon the "gentle hogs," that is, those brought up around the house and horse-lot, to whom a few ears of Indian corn are thrown each evening by some sable Gurth.

When the swine-herd has remarked that for two or three successive evenings some of his most regular customers have failed to make their appearance, or, as he generally expresses it, "have come up missing," measures are at once taken to discover who has been the destroyer. No one doubts their fate for a moment, as there is no more punctual guest than a properly brought up pig: if alive, he makes nobody wait for him. I was swinging in a hammock, and smoking my post-prandial pipe at my wigwam on Caney Creek—it would be called a considerable river in Europe—which takes it name from the immense cane-brakes upon its banks, when a friend of mine rode up. Ben K., my visitor, was a great bear and cat-hunter, and, from having some tastes in common, we became very intimate. He had one weakness, a very amiable one; he was never tired of telling you about the parentage, birth, education, and exploits of each of his hounds: of these he had rather more than a quarter of a hundred. This would not, perhaps, have mattered much once in a way, but at each meeting he had either forgotten or did not care to remember that the story was an old one to you, and so he would commence his labour of love as though it was something quite new, which he had saved for you. Notwithstanding this dog worship, he was a first-rate, generous, unselfish fellow, never happier than when, either with his person or his purse, he could be of service to his friend. As to hospitality, it is common to all his class—for where will you find the Southern planter, who has ever produced the "cold shoulder" to his guest even when he has been an unmitigated bore?

Of course I invited Ben to "look at his saddle," *i. e.*, dismount, and after we had imbibed some mint juleps, he opened the business which had brought him my way. It appeared that he had missed some of his "gentle pigs," and that he had discovered some "painter sign," which made him, he said, "pretty considerable sartain they'd been chawed up by them rotted varmints;" and he expressed his determination to make them "smell thunder," provided I would consent to ride over with him, and sleep at his house, so that we might make an early start in the morning, and try to bring these marauders to justice. I agreed readily, and at once proceeded to saddle my horse, a duty I ever performed, and which example I would advise every horseman to follow in a warm climate, as probably, if you leave it to others, who are careless, you will have a horse with a galled back to nurse for a week or so. After a pleasant ride through the forest, of above five miles, during which, as we had no dogs with us, I managed to keep him to the general news of the county, we arrived at his plantation.

His house, built upon the banks of the Creek, like most Texas log-houses consisted of two rooms, both boarded in all round, and divided from each other by a kind of hall, open at both ends, in which it was customary to take the meals; there was, too, a gallery which ran all round the house, and in this the saddles, lassoes, fishing nets, etc., were hung, and the weapons used in the chase. On each side of the house, but detached, were two other log buildings, one used for cooking, and the other as a smoke-house, where the meat was smoked and kept; and on the outer walls were stretched and nailed up to dry several hides of leopard cats, deer, Mexican hogs, otters, etc. Through the house, and around it, perfectly unrestrained, wandered quantities of dogs, turkeys, ducks, and fowls; for Ben was a bachelor, and everybody and everything did pretty much as they liked.

In clearing a space for these buildings, many very fine forest trees had been spared for a shade, and in these the fowls roosted, as it is not the custom to have fowl-houses in Texas, the poultry thriving best when allowed to shift for themselves, being freest from fleas, and vermin of that description, when following nature the closest. The same rule applied to the hounds, who slept about where they pleased, and who also protected the fowls from the visits of the opossums, racoons, etc.; and when one ever did venture to prowl round, they were certain to put him up a tree and make him remain there till the morning light allowed the rifle to do summary execution on the varmint.

Ben, who had left me when we first arrived, to give sundry orders, now joined me, followed by a negro girl

bearing a waiter, upon which was some newly-plucked mint, ice, crushed sugar, and fresh water. Having fixed our drinks, I lit my pipe, and, throwing myself down on a bearskin, prepared to listen to Ben's inevitable encomiums upon his hounds; for, with them in sight, it would have been perfectly useless, as well as cruel, to any longer attempt to evade a topic which gave him so much delight. "Do you see," he commenced, "that thar blue ticked hound, that one that's scratching his ear? That's Rock, that is; I expect, now, you might sarch for a month or more pretty considerably close, afore you'd scare up his ditto exactly, arter cats. I'd bet my bottom dollar, now, you might fix a plate of nicest kind of fixings, and put it down alongside of a fresh cat trail, and ef he got wind, as he'd be sure to do, of the scent, he'd leave them victuals as ef they was pison, he would so. He's about the smartest, keenest bit of bone and muscle wrapped up in dog skin, my two little blue eyes ever gazed on. Last Tuesday morning as ever was, all the team on 'em got on to a catamount trail near the hog-pen, and ran him down to the edge of the elm-flat, and they lost him; and they're as cute a pack as arey a man owns round these diggins; all but old Rock, he didn't give him up, though, by a long chalk. You might make yourself rich betting Spanish mules on that thar dog, for sure. The cunning varmint had 'treed,' and as the trees grew considerable close, he had passed from one top to another by the limbs, for a matter of more than a hundred yards. Old Rock guessed his game well, he did, and cast round, looking up in all the trees, till at last he spied him, and you had better believe the way he gave tongue was a caution. Any how, I killed him, and I shouldn't have done it ef it had not been for that thar old hound. You ask my overseer, Simpson, when he comes in; he was along, and he'll tell you all about it."

As I had heard quite as much as I cared for, I refrained from questioning Mr. Simpson on his arrival, which took place a few minutes afterwards, and we all three sat down to supper. During this meal our plans for the hunt were arranged; and, that over, when the table was cleared we did not sit long, for it was soon time for us to turn in, as it was necessary to be astir very early in the morning.

Before any sounds of the coming day were audible, except the crowing of the cocks in the trees round the house, we were up and getting our breakfasts, running dry swabs down our gun-barrels, and preparing to start on our hunt. There was a heavy dew, which fell in showers upon us whenever we touched a bush as we rode along, which gave promise of a fine scenting morning. Our greatest fear now was that the hounds might take the trail of some cats, numbers of which must have been prowling about in the course of the night, before we arrived at the place where the "painter sign" had been discovered. However, we did manage, with much rating, to keep the pack together, though many an angry threat had been launched at the heads of the younger and more eager hounds by Ben and Mr. Simpson, before we got to our destination. Upon coming to this spot Ben dismounted, and went down upon his knees, and after a few seconds' scrutiny he arose, stating his opinion that a "painter" had passed that spot not very long previous to our arrival. Rock was now called, that he might declare his view on the subject. The old hound was not a second deciding; giving one long howl—as much as to say it's all correct—he dashed off into the cane down the bank of the creek, followed by the rest of the pack. As the jungle was so thick and matted, it was impossible for us to ride near the hounds, and we were compelled to confine ourselves to the cattle-trails and wood-roads, guided in our course by the cry of the hounds. After about ten minutes' galloping, trotting, walking, and creeping, as the nature of the ground permitted, we all suddenly pulled up. The pack had divided—there was no mistake about it, as we could hear some hounds in full cry still continuing down the creek, in the direction they had all along been going; whilst others, which had seemed for a few moments making directly for us, had made a half circle, and were returning nearly on their old line. Ben at once expressed his opinion that there were two panthers afoot, and that we should ride on down the creek after that part of the pack which had gone on in that direction; and, telling Simpson he had better go back and see what the others were after, he put spurs to his horse, and left me to my own devices.

Now, it had at once struck me that if there were two cougars, the one which had turned back must be a cub, or perhaps cubs, and that the old one had kept on, thinking to lead the pack away from them. I felt pretty certain that if my surmise was correct, that there would be a better chance of getting a shot at the cub, whose turning probably was caused by its becoming tired; and if so, I thought, it would not be long before it "treed." It was no part of my business to enlighten the worthy Simpson—who was pounding along just before me as fast as he could—for I knew him to be a good hunter, and it was very possible his ideas were similar to my own, and I had determined to try all I knew to get the first shot; nor did I doubt that he had the same intention. Had it been a bear, a deer, or any common game, I should have cared very little who killed it; and had a green hand been with me, I should most likely have exerted myself to secure the first shot for the tyro; but with a panther the case was different. My anticipations proved correct; they had scarcely passed through my mind before we heard the baying of the hounds, and we both threw ourselves from our horses, securing them to some saplings, and held right in as fast as we could force our way, for the welcome sounds. Only those who have tried it can imagine the difficulty there is in making a way through a cane-brake. Independent of the bamboos themselves, which grow very close, thousands of brambles, vines, and creeping plants interlace and mat them together.

We both had cane knives, and worked with a will, for, though unexpressed, we each knew that the other was striving for the first shot.

I, it seems, had awoke to ill luck that morning, for I was just in time to see the smoke from Simpson's gun—to see the panther, which had been fatally wounded, hang clinging by one fore paw to the boughs upon which it had been crouched—to see him make one or two frantic efforts to regain his lost position, rendered useless by the want of his other foot, for his shoulder had been broken by the shot; and finally, to see him drop amongst the dogs, too nearly dead to do any mischief.

It proved to be a cub of some six or eight months old, as was evident from its shedding its teeth—the two lower tushes having been shed, whilst the upper ones were loose. It measured 8 feet 4 inches from the tip of its nose to the dark bunch of fur on the end of its tail, and weighed 94 lbs. Its colour was red, very much like that of the deer of the country, but the fur was short, very thick and soft.

The largest panther I ever saw, measured in extreme length 9 feet 6 inches; but we had no means of ascertaining its weight.

Some two hours after we had got home with our