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TRUE STORIES of Adventure

The Cave of Death

An Adventure in Darkest Africa

BY HARRY MARTIN

There are many strange stories told in Cape Town by hunters who have gone into the unmapped forests. Most of them are regarded as fever dreams, or lies invented to make the greenhorn gape. That is the way I used to think of them, but my skepticism has been shaken. I can believe anything of Africa.

Five years ago I was up north of the Transvaal after ivory. I had a good season, but a lot of my boys died and most of the others got scared and ran away. We had to carry our treasure, and I, with my seven faithful Kaffirs, struck into the Chinganza country to recruit. I had hunted there before and was on excellent terms with the king, or chief. He was happy as a lark to see me, twined his greasy arms about me, and bumped foreheads until I wiggled out of his grasp.

I thought he was a little overdone and wasn't a bit surprised to learn that he was preparing for war with the Awemba, a tribe to the eastward. His expedition was to start next morning, and he extended to me a rather pressing invitation to join his forces.

There was no courteous way to decline this invitation. Etiquette in the forest is rather a subtle quantity. I promised the support of myself and men. Besides, the Awemba were the terror of the ivory hunters.

The campaign started with the usual feasting, and twala flowed like water. When every one was properly drunk the expedition took the trail, the native warriors in the van, and my blacks with firearms in the rear to be sprung as a surprise on the enemy.

After three hours of marching the men lay down and slept themselves sober, a process which consumed the remainder of that night and the following day. After that we marched pretty steadily for ten days, sighting an Awemba topknot.

When we did sight them, we were about 200 all at once, and before there was time for a single shot both lines were so mixed up in a hand-to-hand contest that we didn't dare fire for fear of doing most damage among our men.

At the end of two days of intermittent fighting we were all tired, and it looked as though we would be killed off without winning the battle.

During a mutual suspension of hostilities while all the warriors were leaning on assegais trying to get their breath, one of the Awemba braves climbed on to a rock and in very picturesque Awemba talk challenged the Chinganza army to send one man against him. It would take him just about two hours and forty-five minutes, he said, to convert the man into food for vultures.

Umhlopegaaz, a fine specimen of a warrior who stood beside me and whom I called a friend, replied to the Awemba's taunt and offered to meet him in single combat.

"Bayete! Bayete! Bayete!" thundered the Chinganza warriors, and the Awemba thundered back, "Bayete!"

All of which is like the cheering for a football game. The sinking sun glinted on the black, greased limbs of the two men as they circled about each other. Everything was tinged with red. Even the gleaming bodies of the men seemed to carry a shade of red. From the forest all around us came the groans and cries of wounded and dying, a sombre background to the piercing yells of the combatants and the cheers of the waiting warriors.

The Awemba was a son of the forest and wore white ostrich plumes on his head, and a skirt of cow's tails which swished back and forth was suspended from his waist. Umhlopegaaz was naked except for a girdle about his loins.

The two men appeared to be sparring, but suddenly the Awemba darted inward, low, near the ground. There was a flash of steel, and blood flowed from our man's side.

He had been wounded by a spear made from a hunter's knife bound with wood fibres to the end of a stout tithe.

"Bayete!" shrieked the Awemba warriors, but their shout of triumph ended in a long-drawn wail. For Umhlopegaaz had struck at his opponent with a short knife, and while the blow was being parried, he raised his assegai and drove the rough head clean through the young chief's shaft.

The shaft of the assegai broke off short and Umhlopegaaz waved it about his head triumphantly, taunting the enemy. The Awemba rushed upon him. They did not utter a cry, but their feet sounded like the tramping of stampeded cattle on the plains.

As they charged I and my three remaining Kaffirs, let them have the contents of our four-bores. We stopped a half-dozen of the enemy, who pitched headlong to the ground, and fifteen or twenty tripped over them, falling in a confused struggling mass. But on they came.

They were nearer to Umhlopegaaz than we were, but he might have retreated to our line, which was also rushing forward.

Instead, he stood there, brandishing his short knife and swinging the broken shaft of the assegai about his head.

The first man to reach him was actually felled by a blow from the rough, narrow shaft square on the side of the neck. The second man received the blade of the knife just over the heart.

By that time we had reached him and it became a fight to rescue the hero.

Two years before that, Umhlopegaaz had found me dying in the forest after my Kaffirs had run away with all my ivory. I had been wounded by a bull elephant, and Umhlopegaaz carried me to his village, where I was nursed back to health. It was my chance to repay him, and I fought with all the fury there was in me.

The fight was going our way, when Umhlopegaaz, who was next to me, fell. In a trice half a dozen Awemba had pounced upon him. I sprang into their midst, using my empty pistol as a club in one hand and slashing with a knife in the other. I knocked down two men before something hurtled against my legs and I went sprawling on my back.

There was a crash against my head. I did not lose consciousness, but I felt myself, in a sort of daze, being pushed along the ground from one man to another, underneath the mass of fighting men.

At last I was dragged to the very rear of the fight, and there I saw a number of Awemba binding Umhlopegaaz' arms and legs.

I was given the same treatment, and in short order we were being borne off through the forest on the shoulders of a party of warriors. The sound of conflict grew dimmer and dimmer, and with it vanished the hope that our friends would rescue us.

We must have gone a good three miles when our captors set us on the ground, removed the thongs which hampered our feet, and we were marched along, surrounded by warriors. At least this was better than being carried willy-nilly, and the jolting of the hurrying men had aggravated my bruises almost beyond endurance.

Savages take violent death and even torture as a matter of course, but with me it was different. My friend, if he felt any anxiety, did not show it.

I was filled with repugnance at the fate I knew awaited us. Umhlopegaaz had slain the son of a great chief, and I was a white man.

That assured us both of the choicest torture the Awemba could dispense. I wished that I had managed to keep my pistol, so that I could have ended it all the instant my hands were released.

A man does not like to admit fear, but I felt something very much akin to it during that long trek.

It was a five-day march to the kraal of the Awemba. On the third day a runner passed us bearing news that the Chinganza warriors had been driven back and had fled the country. That killed our last hopes for rescue.

The village was in turmoil when we arrived. Word had gone ahead that the man who had slain the young chieftain and a white man were being brought in as captives.

As we went through the village street, old women, who were squatting before their huts pounding Kaffir corn in bowls, stopped work and hurled the grinding stones at us. Children pelted us with mud and with stones, and the young men who had been left to guard the village growled and looked ferocious as we passed.

We were put under guard in a hut and kept there for three days until the warriors returned from the field. On the first evening we were the object of great curiosity, and among those who came to the prison hut to look at us was Malinda, a daughter of the chief, with four of her maidens.

Malinda seemed much impressed by the handsome figure and strength of Umhlopegaaz, and spoke to her attendants in a manner which made me believe her curiosity might be turned into something stronger.

Next morning she returned, and when the guards were somewhat apart she spoke a few words to my fellow captive. I did not understand them, but Umhlopegaaz seemed to, and when she had gone he explained to me that he was as pretty as the little waterfalls behind his father's hut, and as graceful as a hartebeest, which I did not think graceful at all.

I was in no mood to dote upon the charms of Malinda, for they in no wise mitigated the unpleasantness of being put to death by her father. But that night she returned alone with food for us, and I saw her give to the guard a string of beads, whereupon he walked a little distance while Malinda talked with Umhlopegaaz. In the forest, love springs into life full-fledged. It does not grow gradually, and I began to hope that this affection might bring us some good.

On the second morning Malinda returned again with food, but that night she did not come. Umhlopegaaz was depressed, and even with the shadow of death over him seemed nothing more

I sprang into their midst, using my empty pistol as a club.

not less than a sulky lover. I sulked too, but for a grimmer reason.

I did not sleep, and my friend walked the floor far into the night. Suddenly there was a gentle scratching on the wall of the hut. My heart leaped with hope that it was liberation and Umhlopegaaz smiled contentment, for he thought his sweetheart had come at last. He put his ear close to a small opening in the wall, and I heard a voice whisper something to him. From his look when the whispering had ceased I judged Malinda had returned and that we were about to be liberated, but he soon dashed my hopes to the ground. It seems one of Malinda's maidens had likewise fallen a victim to the doubtful charms of the warrior prisoner, and, being jealous, had informed the chief of Malinda's visits. He had promptly put an end to them, and it seemed that our hopes of being liberated were vain. This did not seem to worry Umhlopegaaz, however, so long as he had received a visit from Malinda, and knew that she was faithful.

We did not see her again before the Awemba braves returned and we were led before the chief and the tribe assembled. The trial was short.

"Dog of a Chinganza" said the chief, pleasantly, "and cur of a white man, you have been sentenced to the Cave of Death."

"The Cave of Death!" shrieked the members of the tribe.

We were led off amid a mob of wildly dancing, chanting savages, men, women and children, who laughed and taunted us, all the time prancing and gesticulating in a weird sort of dance.

A quarter of a mile from the village we stopped at the mouth of a cavern between two enormous rocks. The tribe formed in a semi-circle and six of the warriors approached us with long ropes made of thongs. Crawling about six feet into the cavern, one of them tossed the end of a rope down a black hole about three times the size of a man's body. Then they led us to the hole and made signs for us to descend by means of the rope of thongs.

I did not know what awaited us at the bottom of the black shaft, but I knew that it was a death worse than that to be met at the point of an assegai, so I struggled in the hope that one of my captors would end it. But I was simply bound rather loosely, the rope was drawn up and passed under my shoulders, then I was lowered into the cave.

Umhlopegaaz was treated likewise, and in a few moments landed beside me. I judged we had been dropped forty feet, and as I lay there on my back all I could see was a dim diffused light above me, for, as I have said, the shaft was located about six feet from the entrance to the upper cavern.

What awaited us in that pitchy blackness I did not know, but I preferred to meet death in any form with my limbs unfettered, and as I had been bound but loosely I soon twisted my hands free and liberated my own legs. I heard Umhlopegaaz stirring and soon he informed me that he, too, was unbound. We huddled together and lay there in fear for some time.

As our eyes became somewhat accustomed to the darkness we were able to see the walls of the cave, for a few feet. They were wet and slimy. Feeling them, we found them to be rock, covered with dank vegetable growths, in some places dripping with filthy water. Outside the little circle of light, diffused from the shaft-like entrance to the cave, we could not see at all, but we groped our way along.

At every step we knew we might plunge down some unseen abyss, but we did not fear death so much as we did life in that chamber of horror. Tightly we gripped each other about the waist, for we were determined that if one fell to death the other should not be left alive to go mad in that den.

By feeling our way along the black wet walls and keeping the dim circle of comparative light always in view, we found that the subterranean cave was circular in shape, and, I judged, not more than a hundred feet in diameter.

At one point my hand felt the rim of the hole in the wall. I could not see it, but found that it was not quite as big around as my body.

Nevertheless, I pushed my hand in as far as it would go. I thought the tunnel might grow larger, and if so, we might be able to enlarge the opening enough to explore the passage beyond. As far as I could feel, the hole did not increase in size.

Suddenly I heard a sharp hiss. I started, drawing my hand partly out. Again the hiss. Cold sweat drenched me. I trembled. Something cold and soft touched my hand.

"My God!" I cried, and yanked my hand from the hole. Twisted about my forearm was a snake. In a frenzy I tore it away and smashed it against the rocky wall until it dangled like a thong in my fingers.

Repugnance sickened me, and I dropped it. Then I laughed. Umhlopegaaz was holding me about the waist. I cried, then laughed again, covering my face with my hands. Through it all Umhlopegaaz was stoical, yet his terror must have been greater than mine, for he did not know what I had encountered.

When I was myself again, I told him, and even that sturdy warrior shook like a leaf. The noise and commotion had roused all the reptile life of the cave, and all about us we heard a hissing and the sliding of slimy bodies.

I would have welcomed the stinging sensation which would have meant that the fangs of one of the snakes had darted into my flesh, for no death from poison could be so terrible as to perish from starvation among the reptiles.

But the snakes were evidently not poisonous, nor had they fangs to bite with, for although they wriggled over our feet and twisted about our ankles they did not molest us.

Umhlopegaaz groaned. Even he was breaking down; but strengthened by his weakness, I rallied him. If we were to die, it were better we should die sane. I had a terrible fear of going mad before the end should come.

So that we might try to fight off our tormentors, we made our way into the circle of dim light. It was fading fast and we knew night must be approaching. It seemed years later that the circle dwindled into nothing and we were left in total blackness.

Then I cursed as I had never cursed before. I tell you I am ashamed of it, but I did. And I think I was mad, stark mad. I wonder that my mind ever returned.

There was no sleeping. We dared not lie down to have the reptiles crawl over us, although the snakes, apparently heavy after their meal, had returned to their holes to lie in stupor. I do not know how long I had been raving when at last I awoke to the realization that a voice was calling from above.

"It is Malinda," whispered Umhlopegaaz.

"Be still," he commanded, and I stood silent.

For some seconds they spoke, then the voice from above ceased and my friend explained what had passed. Malinda had bade him wait patiently until the following night.

That was all we know. We were to wait all that night and the next day.

Time was not. It was one long, unmeasured period of blackness and dark thought for me. The reptiles crawled over my feet and ankles, but I might have been one of them for all the effect it had on me. I laughed and cried and prayed, but how the hours passed I do not know.

I remember that Umhlopegaaz shook me into sensibility, and I realized that the circle of light had faded, and that it was again night. I did not know that I was hungry, yet I must have been, for we had not eaten.

Then came the voice from above. There was a little whirr and a thud. Umhlopegaaz put a leathern rope into my hands and told me to hold it until he should climb to the surface of the earth and lift me out.

I swayed on my feet, and to make sure, he fastened the thong under my shoulders. He clambered upward, and a few moments later I felt myself lifted.

Fresh air stung my nostrils as I was lifted into the moonlight. Umhlopegaaz was standing beside Malinda. I staggered and they supported me until I was able to control my own legs. Then we fled into the forest.

Of the trip to the Chinganza stronghold I need not tell. Day and night we traveled living on herbs and berries which we gathered, and at last we staggered into the kraal.

Umhlopegaaz is a chief now, unless he has been killed, and Malinda is his wife.

I have known many women, beautiful and talented, and I have cared for some of them, but the one for whom I would do most, the one who seems most beautiful of all, is the savage Malinda as she stood in the moonlight in the forest that night, at the mouth of the Cave of Death.

Feeding Bees in the Winter.

If bees are to be wintered so as to come out ready for work in the spring it is necessary that they go into winter quarters with plenty of stores. Owing to the fact that the bees raised considerable brood in the fall of 1923-24 at the Lennoxville, Que., Dominion Experimental Station, more than the usual amount of feeding was required. This was accomplished by feeding three frames of clover honey per hive, and supplementing with a syrup made of sugar two parts and water one part. Common five and ten-pound honey pails were used as feeders with sixty or seventy small nail holes punched in the covers. The pails were filled and inverted on top of the frames of each colony. On November 25 fourteen colonies were put away in a cellar especially fixed for the purpose, and four were placed in the quadruple wintering case with dry planer shavings as an insulator. Each of the colonies to be wintered in the cellar was fed to weigh up to 70 pounds without the cover while those in the wintering case were fed to weigh 80 pounds.

A damp woollen cloth will pick up small pieces of broken glass.

Does the Corn Borer Breed on Weeds or Other Plants Than Corn?

At meetings and in private conversation one frequently hears statements to the effect that the recommended methods for controlling the borer will not work because it breeds freely in weeds and other crops. Were this statement true, control would be very difficult indeed, but fortunately it is not true, so says Prof. Lawson Caesar. Ever since the borer was discovered the entomologists have had this thought in mind and have been examining weeds and other plants besides corn to determine the effects. Special attention has been given to this work this summer in the very severely infested areas in Essex and Kent, where the greatest number of borers present might naturally be expected to lead to their breeding on plants other than corn if they had any inclination to do so. The results show that while they do breed in oats to some extent, yet the ripening of the oats kills the borers are full grown before death, so that oats are a source of danger as breeding plants. In all other cases it was found that weeds or other crops were only attacked when they were growing among the corn or close alongside of it, and that where there was a field of any other kind of crop, as for example, sugar beets, any appreciable distance from the corn, there were no corn borers present, though sometimes other kinds of borers were found feeding. All like the corn borer were there. All the evidence shows that we need not fear that borers in weeds or in other crops than corn or oats except when they have been attracted to these from the close proximity of the corn field. What the borers would do if there were no corn is a matter of conjecture, and need not cause any worry to farmers at present. Cleaning up corn plants and plowing the stubble destroys, of course, the borers present in the weeds in the corn field as well as in the stubble and debris.

Poultry Feeding Tests.

A couple of winter feeding tests with poultry, ten birds in each as nearly equal in type and vigor as possible, at Nappan, N.S., the Experimental Farm, are of interest and value. Two rations were used in each test, which extends over seven and six months, the Superintendent's Report gives details in full are given. The results in 1923-24 as well as the average for three years. In both the cost of feeds consumed are included in the particulars published. The first test, which ran from November 1 to May 1, determine the relative values of versus skim milk when used as laying rations. The three-year average of beef scrap was 65.3 eggs, a profit per bird of $1.79 in favor of the skim milk 93.7 eggs, profit per bird of $1.65 in favor of the skim milk. If the increased profit were assumed can be credited to the milk, says the report, when it goes through the eggs, it has a market value of $1.32 per pound weight.

Test No. 2, extending from November 1 to April 30, was designed to ascertain the relative values of mixed versus commercial mixtures in economical egg production. The three-year average of pen 2 showed 180 eggs laid with home-mixed feed at a profit per bird over feed cost of $1.277 and of pen No. 3 with commercial feed mixtures 607 eggs at a profit per bird over feed cost of $1.

In each case the ration and the constituents of the mixture, as well as the method in feeding, are given in the report which can be had free on application to the Publications Branch, Ottawa.

Save the Twine.

Since moving on the farm I found there was a great need from the children for twine. Even my husband's splendid use of my ready-to-hand twine to mend last year's sacks which held shipping grain, potatoes, etc., twine unravelled from bags which I make into dishcloths, left the odd bits around but I wind into the home, I wind into a ball.

This ball is always kept in the hand drawer of the kitchen so that we never lose for it.—G. T.

The purchase of eggs according to quality is meeting the approval of producers in all sections of the country. An Alberni, B.C., poultryman who keeps over six hundred hens recently stated to Mr. William Egg, Inspector under the Live Stock Branch, that he was convinced that the regulation gave the producer an added profit.

S.S. LESSON

December 6, Paul's Voyage and Shipwreck, Acts 27: 1-44. Golden Text—Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid.—Matt. 14: 27.

ANALYSIS.

I. PAUL'S FAITH AND PRACTICAL SAGACITY IN A GREAT CRISIS, 30-36.

II. THE SAFE ESCAPE TO LAND, 37-44.

INTRODUCTION.—The narrative of the voyage of Paul to Rome is the most valuable document regarding ancient methods of navigation which has come down to us from antiquity. This excellence it owes to its being the exact account of an eye-witness, Luke having attached himself to Paul and having noted in his journal the whole details of the adventure. But apart from this technical value, the narrative throws a most interesting light on Paul's practical wisdom and his ability to assume the functions of leadership in a great material crisis. When the safety of the ship is threatened by storm and mutiny, he displays a remarkable presence of mind before which the commander of the ship and the military officers on board have simply to give place. And this mastery of the situation he owes to his invincible faith in the power and goodness of God.

In the present lesson we are dealing with the practical measures adopted to save a ship rather than with the teaching with which Paul sought to save the souls of men. Yet religion has to do with the whole of life, and we see the power of faith no less in the practical counsels put forward by Paul at this moment than in the sermons which we have heard from him on so many occasions.

I. PAUL'S FAITH AND PRACTICAL SAGACITY IN A GREAT CRISIS, 30-36.

V. 30. The storm was now so high and the ship so helplessly adrift that the crew, despairing of her safety, resorted to the dastardly expedient of saving themselves in the ship's boat, and had even lowered the boat on the pretext of laying out further anchors from the ship's head. But Paul was aware of this cowardly purpose, and resolved to prevent it.

Vs. 31, 32. The only thing to do was to appeal to the centurion and the soldiers on board. Paul revealed the trick intended by the crew, and said to the centurion that unless the sailors could be prevented from leaving, there was no hope for the passengers. The soldiers at once and cut the ropes of the boat, thus allowing her to drift adrift at the moment the boat was in the swirling water beneath the bottom.

Vs. 33, 34. Then Paul urged the passengers to take food, and as he, in terrified faces, he saw they were waiting for a whole fortnight by the boats, he pleaded that they put off their fasting for rest or to take any mouthfuls of food. Paul advised them earnestly, that, moreover, there would be no harm. For God had given him a promise that not a hair of their heads should perish. Amen.

Vs. 35, 36. Paul's confidence in God, his faith in prayer, and his presence of mind, and his sagacity in the sight of all, and he begins to eat, sufficient to encourage the stricken crew to take some food.

II. THE SAFE ESCAPE TO LAND, 37-44.

V. 37. The number on board is given as 276, a certain ancient manuscript and it is probable that the number is the right one.

V. 38. The ship was lightening the cargo. A great help from the East, relieved of part of its cargo, was to right the waters. So, after the meal, all that was thrown overboard.

V. 39. Morning came, revealing a strip of land which the ship was driven, knew what it was, but they noticed a creek with a resolved, if possible, to run in there, and to take the safety.

Vs. 40, 41. The anchors were cut, the rudder lashed, the sails hoisted, the ship being got ready for the wind, with the intention of running for the land, but the ship struck off shore, and was wrecked. Meantime, the breakers broke the afterpart of the ship.

Vs. 42, 43. In this the soldiers, fearing for the safety of the prisoners, plan to put them to death. But, the officer in charge, desirous to save Paul, forbids the carrying out of the order so that all may escape. Every one who can swim is to take to the sea and make for the land. The rest are to follow on boards or on pieces of the wreckage.

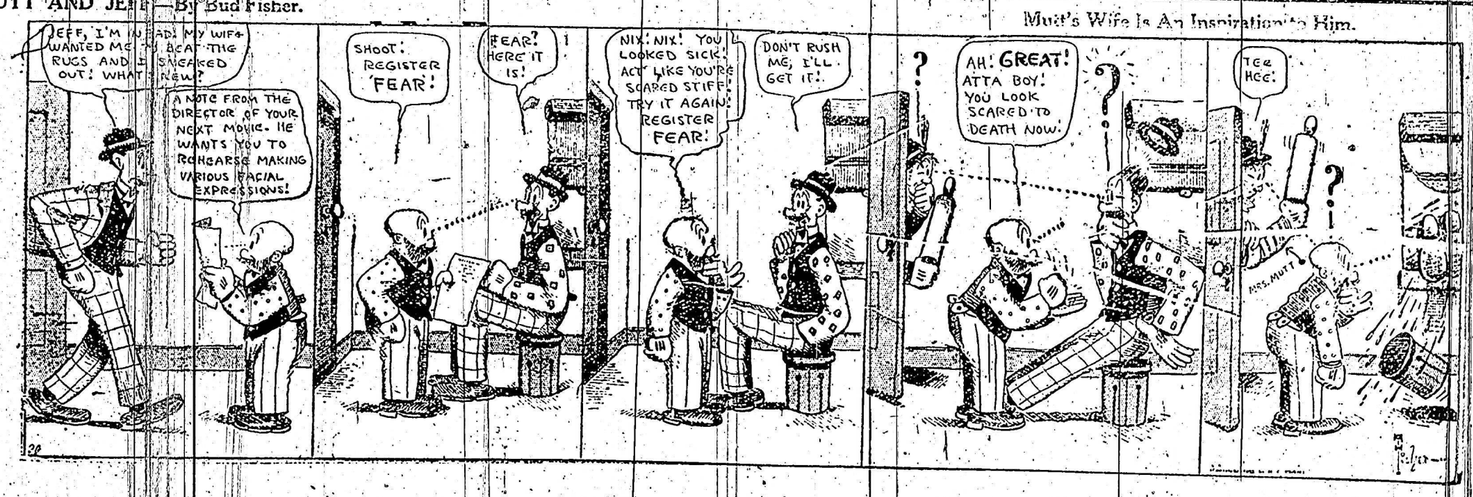
V. 44. And so it came about that all escaped safely to land on pieces of the wreckage.

From the above we learn that the man who will also be quick to perceive and ready to lend a helping hand to help in every way. Religion does not mean that we are to be blind to the storms of life, and to be careless and foolish regard for our safety. It is an attitude of life which should be more heroic exemplified in particularly in the matter of the weak and helpless, and the whole of life and conduct.

He Got One.

Fishing is always an interesting pastime for boys, and it is supposed to conduce to a philosophic frame of mind, but not always. The other day a small boy sat on the edge of a wharf, intently watching his line. A benevolent old gentleman regarded the boy for a long time and then asked: "What are you fishing for, my boy?" "Eels," replied the boy, snappishly, at the same time looking around with an impudent grin. At that instant a big fish gave a tremendous tug at the line and over went the boy. The fish got half his mouth and eels were all of good size, and his fishing tackle was lost, and the old gentleman beamed placidly on the dripping boy.

Grain in bins or wagon-boxes can be estimated as follows: Multiply together the length, breadth and depth (in inches) of the pile of grain, and divide by 2150 (the number of cubic inches in a bushel). This gives the bushels of grain or shelled corn.

MUTT AND JEFF—By Bud Fisher.

Mutt's Wife Is An Inspiration to Him.