

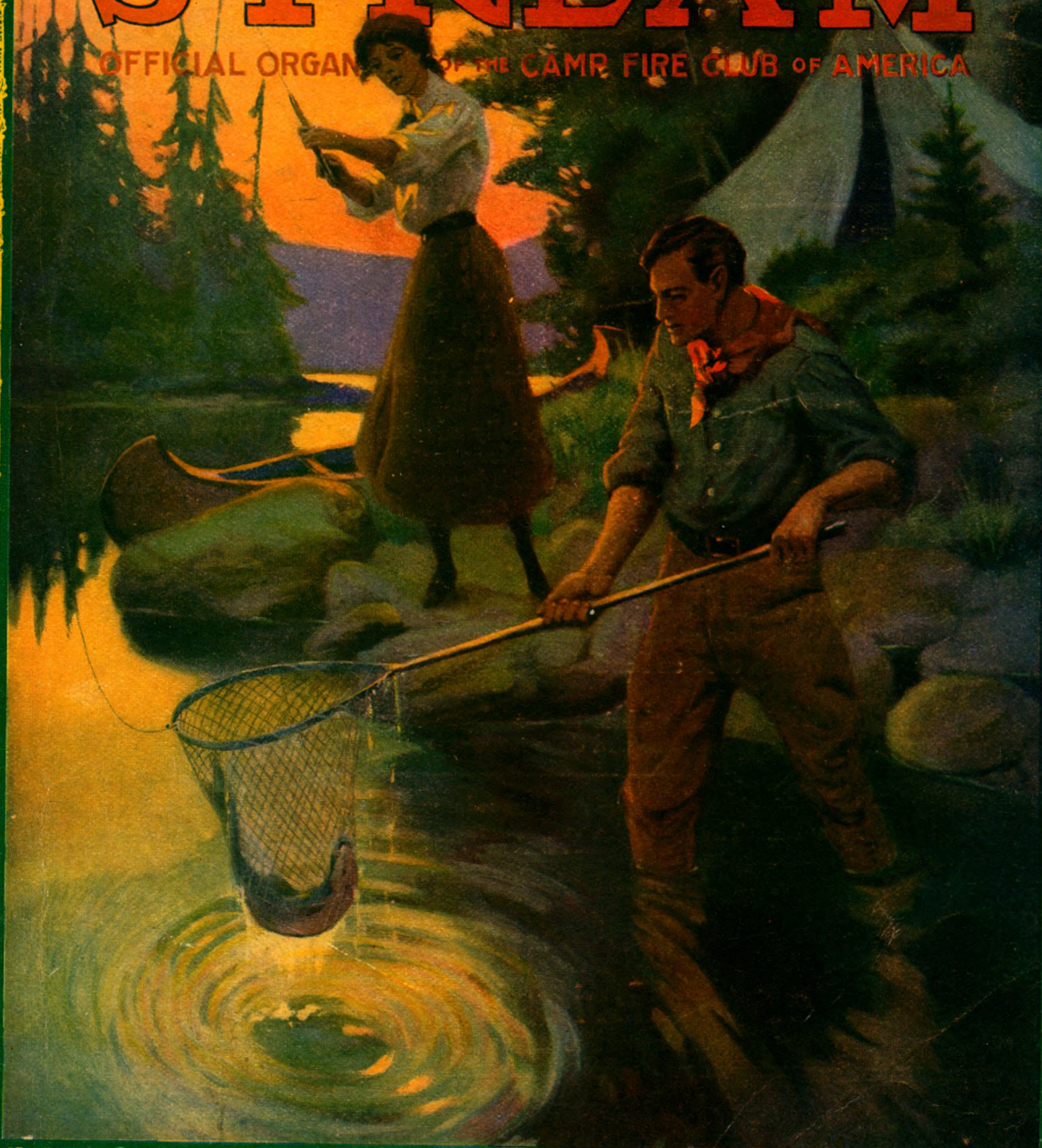
In this issue **Stories by Prize Winners in \$2000. Fishing Contest**

AUGUST

15 CENTS

FIELD AND STREAM

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CAMP FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA



After Grayling with Will Loeb and Sam Blythe — by Robert H. Davis

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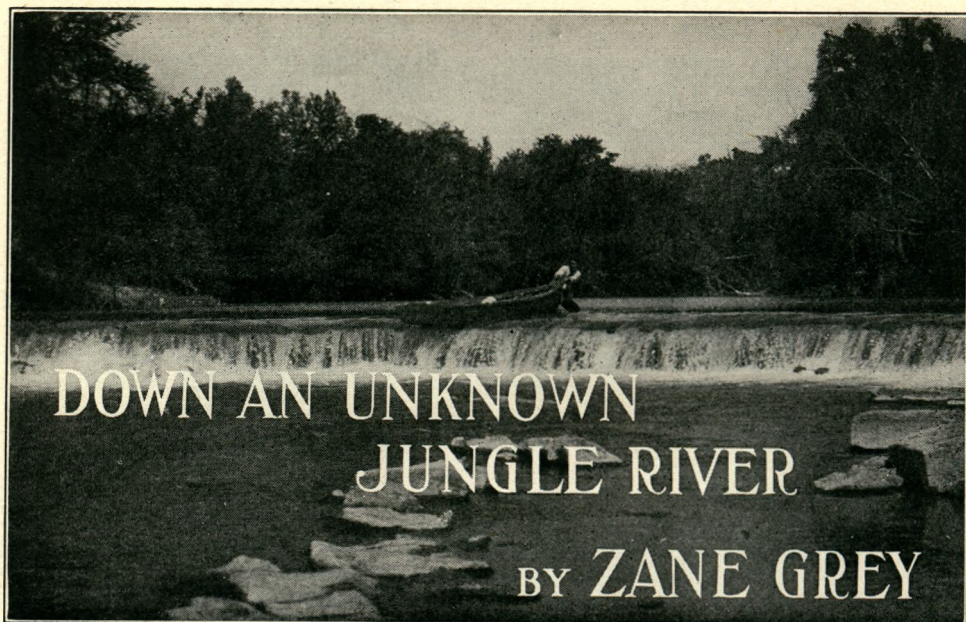
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A thrilling series of adventures with jaguars, wild boars, alligators and tropical snakes, encountered while exploring on unmapped river flowing down through the wildest jungles of Mexico.

CHAPTER VI

MORE GAME THAN AFRICA

UPON awakening in the early morning I found my state one of huge enjoyment. I was still lazily tired, but the dead drag and ache had gone from my bones. A cool breeze wafted the mist from the river, breaking it up into clouds, between which streamed rosy shafts of sunlight. Wood-smoke from the fire Pepe was starting blew fragrantly over me. And a hundred thousand birds seemed to be trying to burst their throats. The air was full of music. I lay still listening to this melodious herald of the day till it ceased.

Then a flock of parrots approached and circled over the island, screeching like a band of flying imps. Presently they alighted in the cypresses, bending the branches to a breaking point, and giving the trees a variegated spotted appearance of green and red. Pepe waved his hand toward another flock sweeping upon us.

"Parroquets," he said.

These birds were a solid green, much

smaller than the red-heads, with longer tails. They appeared wilder than the red-heads, and flew higher, circling the same way, and screeching, but they did not alight. Other flocks sailed toward us presently from all directions. The last one was a veritable cloud of parrots, a shining green and yellow mass several acres in extent. They flew still higher than the parroquets.

"Yellow-heads!" shouted George, in my ear. "They're the big fellows, the talkers. Gee! if there ain't a million of 'em!"

We ate breakfast in a din that made conversation useless. The red-heads swooped down upon our island, and the two unfriendly species flew over us, back and forth, manifestly trying to drive us away with their infernal racket. The mist had blown away, the sun was shining bright, and we were ready for our hunt when the myriads of parrots, in large and small flocks, departed to other jungle haunts.

We rowed across the wide shoal to the sand bars. There in the soft ooze, among the hundreds of deer tracks, I found a

jaguar track larger than my spread hand. It was different from a lion track, yet I could not distinguish just what the difference was. Pepe, who had accompanied us to carry the rifles and game, pointed to the track and said vehemently:

"Tigre!" He pronounced it "tee-ger-ee." And he added, "Grande!"

"Big he certainly is," I replied. "Boys, we'll kill this jaguar. We'll bait this drinking trail with a deer carcass and watch to-night."

Once upon the bank I was surprised to see a wide stretch of comparatively flat land. It was covered with a low vegetation, with here and there palm trees on the little ridges, and bamboo clumps down in the swales. Beyond the flat rose the dark line of dense jungle. It was not clear to me why that low piece of ground was not overgrown with the matted thickets and vines and big trees characteristic of other parts of the jungle.

We struck into one of the trails and had not gone a hundred paces when we espied a herd of deer. The grass and low bushes almost covered them. George handed his shotgun to Pepe and took his rifle.

"Shoot low," I said.

George pulled the trigger and with the report a deer went down, but it was not the one I was looking at, nor the one at which I was sure he had aimed. The rest of the herd bounded away to disappear in a swale. Wading through bushes and grass we found George's quarry, a small deer weighing perhaps sixty pounds. Pepe carried it over to the trail, and then joined us. I noted that he was exceedingly happy to carry the rifles and to be with us. We went on at random, somehow feeling that, no matter what direction we took, we would run into something to shoot at.

And the first bamboo swale was alive with chicalocki. Up to this time I had not seen this beautiful pheasant fly in the open, and I was astonished at its speed. It would burst out of the thick bamboo, whirr its wings swiftly, then sail. That sail was a most graceful thing to see. George pulled his 16-gauge twice and missed both times. He had the beginner's fault—shooting too soon. Presently Pepe

beat a big cock chicalocki out of the bush. He made such a fine target, he sailed so evenly, that I simply looked at him over the gun sights, and followed him till he was out of sight. The next one I dropped like a plummet. Shooting chicalocki was too easy, I decided; they presented so fair a mark that it was unfair to pull on them.

George was an impetuous hunter. I could not keep near him, nor coax or command him to stay near me. He would wander off by himself. That was one mark in his favor; at least he had no fear. Pepe hung close to me, with his dark eyes roving everywhere; but I did not need his cautious manner to make me alive to possibilities. I climbed out on one side of the swale, George on the other. Catching his whistle, I turned to look after him. He waved, and pointing ahead, began to stoop and slip along from bush to bush. Presently a flock of Muskovy ducks rose before him, sailed a few rods and alighted. Then from right under his feet labored up great gray birds. Wild geese! I recognized them as George's gun went—*bang!* One tumbled over, the others wheeled toward the river. I started down into the swale to cross to where George was, when Pepe touched my arm.

"Turkeys!" he whispered.

That changed my mind. Pepe pointed into the low bushes ahead of me, and slowly led me forward. I heard a peculiar low thumping. Trails led everywhere, and here and there were open patches covered with a scant growth of grass. Across one of these flashed a bronze streak, then another—and another.

"Shoot! Shoot!" said Pepe, tensely.

Those bronze streaks were running turkeys! The thumpings were made by their rapidly moving feet!

"Don't they flush—fly?" I queried of Pepe.

"No—no—shoot!" exclaimed he, as another streak of brown crossed an open spot. I hurriedly unbreeched my gun and changed the light shells for others loaded with heavy shot. We reached the edge of a bare spot across which a turkey ran with incredible swiftness. I did not get the gun in line with him at all. Then two more broke out of the bushes. Run!



"SUDDENLY PEPE BROKE AND FLED TOWARD THE RIVER



LOAFING ON CYPRESS ISLAND

They were as swift as light. I took two snap shots and missed both times. If any one had told me it was possible for me to miss a running turkey at fifty feet I would have thought him foolish. But I did not fetch a feather. Loading again, I yelled for George.

"Hey, George—turkeys!"

He whooped and started for us on the run. Just then there was a roar in the bushes and a brown blur arose and whizzed ahead like a huge bullet. That turkey had flushed. I watched him fly till he went down out of sight into a distant swale. There was another roar—a huge bronze cannon-ball sped straight ahead—I shot both barrels, and scored a clean miss. I watched this turkey fly and I saw him clearer. Then I was constrained to admit that the wild turkey of this Taumaulipas jungle had a swifter and more beautiful flight than my favorite bird, the ruffed grouse.

George came puffing up, gun in one hand, a heavy goose in the other.

"Walk faster," he said, "they'll flush better."

We hurried along, crashing through the bushes. I saw turkey after turkey. *Bang!* went George's gun. Then a beautiful

sight made me cry out and almost forget my own gun. Six turkeys darted across an open patch—how swiftly they ran!—and rose in a bunch. The roar they made, the wonderfully rapid action of their powerful wings, and then the size of them, their wildness and noble gameness made them, at once and forever, the royal birds for me.

At the next threshing in the bushes my gun was levelled—I covered the whistling bronze thing that shot up! The turkey went down with a crash. Pepe yelled, and as I ran forward all the air about me was full of fine bronze feathers. I found my bird, wings wide stretched. Its strength and symmetry, and especially the beautiful shades of bronze, captivated my eye.

"Come on, boys—this is the greatest game I ever hunted," I called.

Again Pepe yelled, and this time he pointed. From where I stood I could see nothing but the low green bushes. George threw up his gun and shot. I heard a squealing.

"*Javelin! Javelin!*" called Pepe, in piercing tones.

George jerked a rifle from him and began to shoot. The trampling of hard lit-



A LEANING CYPRESS ON SANTA ROSA

tle hoofs and a cloud of dust warned me where the *javelin* were. Suddenly Pepe broke and fled toward the river.

"Hyar, Pepe, fetch back my rifle!" I shouted angrily.

George turned and dashed away yelling,

"Wild pigs! Wild pigs!"

It looked as if there was nothing else for me but to make tracks from that vicinity. Never before had I run from a danger which I had not seen, but the flight of the boys was irresistibly contagious, and this, coupled with the many stories I had heard of the *javelin*, made me execute a sprint that would have been a record but for the hampering weight of gun and turkey. I vowed I would hold on to both, pigs or no pigs; nevertheless I listened as I ran and nervously looked back often. It may have been excited imagination that the dust cloud appeared to be traveling in my wake. Fortunately, the distance to the river did not exceed a short quarter of a mile. Hot, winded and thoroughly disgusted with myself, I halted on the bank. Pepe was already in the boat and George was scrambling aboard.

"A fine—chase—you've given—me," I panted. "There's nothing—after us."

"Don't you fool yourself," returned

George, quickly. "I saw those pigs, and like the ass I am, I blazed away at one with my shotgun."

"Did he run at you? That's what I want to know!"

George said he was not certain about that, but declared there always was danger if a wounded *javelin* squealed. Pepe had little to say; he refused to go back after the deer we had left in the trail. So we rowed across the shoal, and on the way passed within a rod of an alligator. Had I not prevented George he would have wasted some more ammunition.

We reached camp tired out, and all of us a little ruffled in temper, which certainly was not eased by the discovery that we were covered with ticks. Following the cue of my companions, I hurriedly stripped off my clothes and hung them where they could singe over the campfire. There were broad red bands of *pini-lius* round both my ankles, and reddish patches on the skin of my arms. Here and there were black spots about the size of my little fingernail, and these were *garrapatoes*. I picked these off one by one, rather surprised to find them come off so easily. Suddenly I jumped straight up with a pain as fierce as if it had been a puncture from a red-hot wire.

Pepe grinned and George cried:

"Aha! that was a *garrapato* bite, that was! You just wait!"

George had a hundred or more of the big black ticks upon him, and he was remorselessly popping them with his cigarette. Some of them were biting him, too, judging from the way he flinched. Pepe had attached to himself a million or more of the *pinilius*, but very few of the larger pests. He generously came to my assistance. I was trying to pull off the *garrapato* that had bitten a hole in me. Pepe made me desist, saying it had imbedded its head and if pulled would come apart leaving the head buried in the flesh, which would cause inflammation. Pepe held the glowing end of his cigarette close over the tick, and it began to squirm and pull out its head. When it was free of the flesh Pepe suddenly touched it with the cigarette and it exploded with a pop. A difficult question was—which hurt me the most, the burn from the cigarette or the bite of the tick. Pepe scraped off as many of the *pinilius* as would come, and then rubbed me with *canuja*, the native alcohol. If this was not some kind of a vitriol I missed my guess. It smarted so keenly I thought my skin was peeling off. Presently, however, the smarting subsided, and so did the ticks.

We lounged about camp, resting in the shade during the hot midday hours. For supper we had a superfluity of meat, the waste of which I deplored, and assuaged my conscience by deciding to have a taste of each kind. The wild turkey I found the most toothsome, delicious meat it had ever been my pleasure to eat. What struck me at once was the flavor, and I could not understand it until Pepe explained that the jungle turkey lived upon a red pepper. So the Taumaulipas wild turkey turned out to be doubly the finest game I had ever shot.

All afternoon the big alligator sunned himself on the surface of the shoal. I

wanted an alligator skin and this was a tempting opportunity to get one, but I resisted it. Before sundown Pepe went across the river and fetched the carcass of the deer down to the bar.

Twilight found us stationed at the lower end of the island, comfortably ambushed behind stones. I placed George and Pepe some rods below my position. They had the 32 rifle and my shotgun loaded with solid ounce balls.

I settled down for a long wait, some fifty yards from the deer carcass. A wonderful procession of wild fowl winged swift flight over my head. They flew very low. It was strange to note the difference in the sound of their flying. The cranes and herons softly swished the air; the teal and canvas-backs whirled by, and the great muskovies whizzed like bullets.

When the first deer came down to drink it was almost dark, and when they left the moon was up, though obscured by clouds. Faint sounds rose from the other side of the island. I listened until my ears ached, but I could hear nothing on our side. Heavier clouds drifted over the moon. The deer carcass became indistinct and then faded entirely, and the bar itself grew vague. I was about to give up watching for that night when I heard a faint rustling below me. Following it came a grating or crunching of gravel.

Bright flares split the darkness—*crack! crack!* rang out George's rifle, then the heavy *boom! boom!* of the shotgun.

"There he is!" yelled George. "He's down—we got him—there's two! Look out!"

I caught the flash of a long gray body in the hazy gloom of the bar, and took a quick shot at it. The steel-jacketed bullet scattered the gravel and then hummed away over the bank. The gray body moved so fast I could just see it; nevertheless I turned the little automatic loose and made the welkin ring.

Next instalment: The First Jaguar.

(To be continued)

