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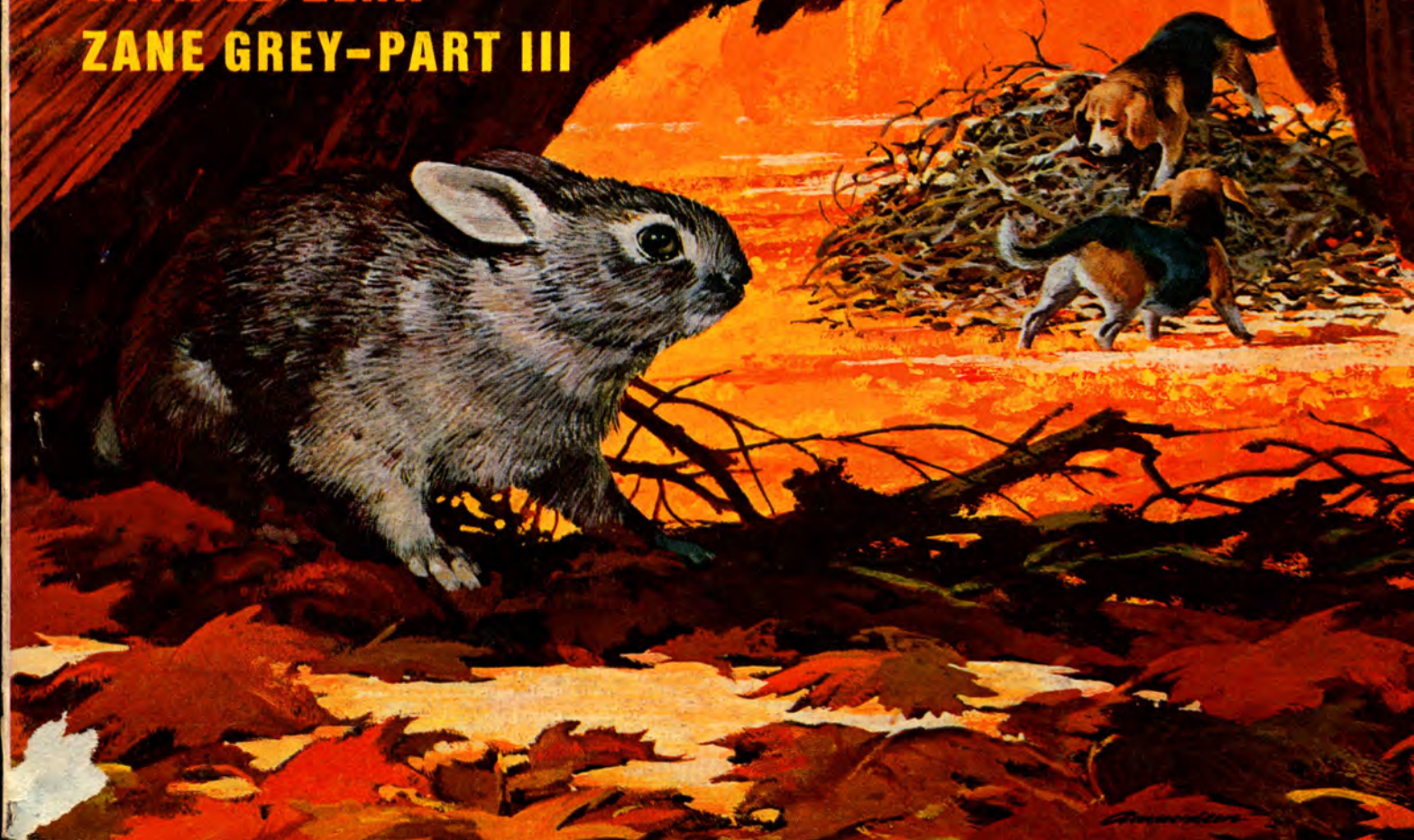
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-FIRST REPORT

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WITH ED ZERN

ZANE GREY-PART III



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ON THE COVER

Turkeys are bigger, squirrels are smarter, and pheasants can fly, but the cottontail rabbit remains the undisputed darling of the American small-game hunter. This will continue to be true for a long time because the cottontail has so many things going for him. He creates an excuse to own a beagle; as artist Dick Amundsen indicates, he's found almost everywhere; and perhaps most important, rabbit hunting is fun.

Field & Stream

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE SPORTSMAN'S MAGAZINE



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DOWN AN UNKNOWN JUNGLE RIVER

By ZANE GREY

THE STORY SO FAR: Zane Grey, his American companion George Allen, and a native guide Pepe, have endured the hardships of a long jungle hunting trip that has taken them down the Santa Rosa and Panuco Rivers in Central Mexico. After harrowing encounters with jaguars the party prepares to leave the island where they have camped for several days. Now on the last leg of their trip, the trio discovers the dangerous character of two other jungle creatures. This installment concludes the first of FIELD & STREAM's "Great Writers" reprint program.

IT MUST have been late in the night, for the moon was low, and I was falling asleep again when the clink of tin pans made me sit up with a start. Some animal was prowling about camp. I peered into the moonlight shadows, but could make out no unfamiliar object. Still I was not satisfied, so I awoke Pepe and told him to get up and help me chase away the night marauders.

Certainly it was not my intention to let Pepe get out ahead of me, and to take any possible risks; nevertheless I was tired and slow and Pepe rolled out of the tent before I had started.

"Santa Maria!" he shrieked.

I fumbled under my pillow for a gun. George raised up so quickly that he bumped my head, making me see a million stars.

From the outside came a sliddery, rustling noise, then another yell that was deadened by a sounding splash. I leaped out with my gun, George at my elbow. Pepe stood just back of the tent, his arms upraised, and he appeared stunned. The water near the bank was boiling and bubbling; waves were dashing on the shore, and ripples spreading in a circle.

"Alligator!" I exclaimed, before Pepe had time to speak.

"Si, si, Senor," replied he, and his big hands trembled. Then he said that when he stepped out of the tent the alligator was right in camp, not 10 feet from where we lay. He also said that these brutes were man-eaters, and that he would watch the rest of the night. I thought him, like all the natives, inclined to exaggerate; however, I made no objection to his holding watch. Nothing further happened to disturb our rest.

The next morning George did not get up when I called him. Thinking his sleep might have been broken, I let him alone a while longer, but when breakfast was smoking I gave him a prod. He rolled over, looking haggard and glum.

"I'm sick," he said.

My cheerfulness left me, for I knew what sickness or injury did to a camping trip. George complained of aching bones, headache, and cramps, and showed a tongue with a yellow coating. I said he had eaten too much

fresh meat, but Pepe, after seeing George vomit called it a name that sounded like "Colenturus."

"What's that?" I inquired.

"Tropic fever," replied George, "I've had it before."

For a while he was a very sick boy. I had a little medicine case, and from it I administered what I thought was best, and he grew easier presently and went to sleep. I sat down to deliberate on the situation.

Whatever way I reviewed it, I always came back to the same thing—we must get out of the jungle, and as we could not go back, we must go on down the river and trust to luck. That was a bad enough proposition without being hampered by a sick boy. It was then I had a subtle change of feeling; a shade of gloom seemed to prelude my spirit.

I stayed in camp all day and had the satisfaction of seeing George very much better by bedtime. I forbade him and Pepe, too, to drink any more unboiled water. In the morning George was well enough to walk; however, he appeared weak and shaky. I decided to break camp immediately.

By 9 o'clock we were packed, and turning into the shady channel, soon were out in the sunlight on the river.

From then on my hands were full. We struck swift water, where rapid after rapid, fall on fall, took us down hill at a rate that was grim gratification to me. Where the current was not rough, it yet had a 5- or 6-mile speed, and as we had no portages, and pounded through the corrugated rapids of big waves, we made by far the best time of the voyage. The hot hours passed, cool for us because we were always wet; the sun sank behind a bald hill; the wind ceased to whip the streamers of moss; and at last, in a gathering twilight, we halted at a wide, flat rock to make camp.

"Forty miles, if we made an inch!" I declared, and both the boys said more.

We built a fire, cooked our supper, and then weary and silent, rolled into our blankets. Next morning the mists had not lifted from the river when we shoved off, determined to beat the record of yesterday. Difficulties beset us from the start: the highest waterfall of our trip, a leak in the boat, deep, short rapids, narrows with choppy waves, and a whirlpool where we turned round and round, seemingly unable to row out. Nor did we get out till Pepe lassoed a snag and pulled us out.

We had been often unable to tell the difference between a crocodile and a log of driftwood, until it was too late. In this instance, a long, dirty-gray object lay upon a low bank. Despite its immense size, which certainly made the chances in favor of its being a log, I determined this time to be fooled on the right side. I had seen a dozen logs—as I thought—suddenly become animated and slip into the river.

"Hold steady, Pepe. I'll take a crack at that one, just for luck."

The distance was about 100 yards, a fine range for the little rifle. Resting on my knee, I sighted low, under the gray object, and pulled the trigger twice. There were two spats so close together as to be barely distinguishable. The log of driftwood leaped into life.

"It's a crocodile!" yelled (Continued on page 87)

My heart began to pound and I gripped my rifle. Every move I made—for I had started to edge carefully toward the tree—widened the little white split near the trunk



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Down An Unknown Jungle River

(Continued from page 42)

George. "You hit—you hit! Gee! Will you listen to that?"

"Row hard, Pepe—pull!"

He bent to the oars, and the boat flew shoreward.

The huge crocodile, opening yard-long jaws, snapped them shut with loud cracks. Then he beat the bank with his tail. It was as limber as a willow, but he seemed unable to move his central parts, his thick bulk where I had sent the two mushrooming bullets. *Whack! Whack! Whack!* The sodden blows jarred pieces from the clay bank above him. Each blow was powerful enough to have stoved in the planking of a ship. All at once he lunged upward and falling over backward slid down his runway into a few inches of water, where he stuck.

"Go in above him, Pepe," I shouted. "Here!—Heavens! What a monster!"

Deliberately, at scarce 20 feet, I shot the remaining four shells into the crocodile. The bullets tore through his horny hide and spouted up blood and muddy water. George and Pepe yelled, and I kept time with them. The terrible lashing tail swung back and forth almost too swiftly for the eye to catch. A deluge of mud and water descended upon us, bespattering us, blinding us, and weighing down the boat. George and I jumped out upon the bank to escape it. There we ran to and fro in aimless excitement. I still clutched my rifle, but I had no shells for it.

"He'll get away—he'll get away!" cried George. "What'll we do?"

I racked my brains, and suddenly had an inspiration.

"Pepe, get your lasso—rope him—rope him—hurry! he's slipping."

Pepe snatched up his lariat, and without waiting to coil it, cast the loop. He caught one of the flippers, hauled tight on it, just as the crocodile slipped out of sight off the muddy ledge. George and I ran to the boat, and grasping hold of the lasso with Pepe we squared away and began to pull. Plain it was that the crocodile was not coming up so easily. We could not budge him.

"Hang on, boys!" I shouted. "It's a tug of war."

The lasso suddenly streaked out with a kind of twang. Crash! went Pepe into the bottom of the boat. I went sprawling into the mud, and George, who had the last hold, went to his knees, but valiantly clung to the slipping rope. Bounding up, I grasped it from him and wound it round the sharp nose of the bowsprit.

"Get in, hustle!" I called, falling



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aboard. "You're always saying it's coming to us—Here's where!"

George had hardly got into the boat when the crocodile pulled us off shore, and away we went, sailing downstream.

"Whoop! All aboard for Panuco!" yelled George.

"Now, Pepe, you don't need to row any more—we've a water-horse," I added.

But Pepe did not enter into the spirit of the occasion. He kept calling on the Saints and crying: "*Mucho malo.*" George and I, however, were hilarious. We had not yet had experience enough to know crocodiles.

Faster and faster we went. The water began to surge away from the bow and leave a gurgling wake behind the stern. Soon we reached the middle of the river where the water was deepest, and the lasso went almost straight down.

I felt the stern of the boat gradually lifted, and then in alarm, I saw the front end sinking in the water. The crocodile was hauling the bow under.

"Pepe—your machete—cut the lasso!" I ordered sharply.

Wildly Pepe searched under the seat and along the gunwales. He could not find the machete.

"Cut the rope!" I thundered. "Use a knife, the ax—anything—only cut

it—and cut it quick!"

Pepe could find nothing. Knife in hand I leaped over his head, sprawled headlong over the trunk, and slashed the taut lasso just as the water began to roar into the boat. The bow bobbed up as a cork that had been under. But we had shipped 6 inches of water.

"Row ashore, Pepe—steady there—trim the boat, George."

We beached at a hard clay bank, and rested a little before unloading to turn out the water.

"Grande!" observed Pepe.

"Yes, he was big," I assented.

A little later, as I was spreading my blankets, George called my attention to shouts up in the woods.

"Pepe's treed something," I said. "Take your gun and hunt him up."

I went on making my bed and busying myself about camp with little heed to George's departure. Presently, however, I was straightened up by unmistakable sounds of alarm. George and Pepe were yelling in unison, and, from the sound, appeared to be quite a distance away.

"What the deuce!" I ejaculated, snatching up my rifle. I snapped a clip in the magazine, and dropped several loaded clips and a box of extra shells into my coat pocket. After my adventure with the jaguar I

had decided never again to find myself short of ammunition. Running up the sloping bank I entered the forest shouting for the boys. Answering cries came from in front of me, and a little to the left. I could not make out what was said.

Save for drooping moss the forest was comparatively open, and at a hundred paces from the riverbank were glades covered with thickets and long grass and short palm trees. The ground sloped upwards quite perceptibly.

"Hey boys, where are you?" I called.

Pepe's shrill yells mingled with George's shouts. At first their meaning was unintelligible, but after calling twice I got the drift.

"Javelin!—go back! Javelin!—we're treed!—wild pigs!—Santa Maria!"

I began to climb the slope, stopping every few steps to listen and look. I wondered what had made Pepe go so far for firewood; still there was nothing but green wood all about me. Walking round a clump of seared and yellow palms, that rustled in the breeze, I suddenly espied George's white shirt. He was in a scrubby sapling not 15 feet from the ground. Then I espied Pepe, perched in the forks of a cebia, high above the thickets and low shrubbery. I was scarcely more than a dozen rods from them, down the gradual slope, and both saw me at once.

"Run!—you Indian! Run!" bawled George, waving his hands.

Pepe implored me to fly to save my precious life.

"What for, you darn fools! I don't see anything to run from," I shouted back. My temper had soured a little during the last few days.

"You'd better run or you'll have to climb," replied George. "Wild pigs! a thousand of 'em!"

"Where?"

"Right under us. There! Oh! if they see you! Listen to this." He broke off a branch, trimmed it of leaves, and flung it down. I heard a low trampling roar of many hard little feet, brushings in the thicket, and cracking of twigs. As close as I was, however, I could not see a moving object. The dead grass and brush were several feet high, up to my waist in spots, and though I changed position several times no javelin did I see.

"You want to look out. Say! man, these are wild pigs—boars, I tell you. They'll kill you!" bellowed George.

"Are you going to stay up there all night?" I asked, sarcastically.

"We'll stay till they go away."

"All right, I'll scare them away," I replied, and suiting action to word I worked the automatic as fast as it

would shoot, aiming into the thicket under George.

Of all the fool things a nettled hunter ever performed that was the worst. A roar answered the echoes of the rifle, and it was a trampling roar, circling around the space bounded by the trees the boys were in. Nervously I clamped a fresh clip of shells into the rifle. Clouds of dust arose, and strange little squeals or grunts sounded seemingly at all points about me. Then the grass and bushes seemed to wave apart and be divided by gray streaks. They were everywhere.

"Run! Run!" shrieked George, high above the tumult.

For a thrilling instant I stood my ground and fired at the bobbing gray backs. But every break made in the ranks by the powerful shells filled in a flash. Before the vicious charge I wavered, then ran as if pursued by demons.

The way was downhill. I tripped, fell, rolled over and over, still clutching my rifle, rose with a bound and fled. The javelin had gained on me. They were at my heels. I ran like a deer. Then, seeing a low branch I leaped for it, grasped it with one hand, and crooking an elbow round it swung with the old giant swing of athletic days.

Before I knew hardly how it had happened I was astride a dangerously swaying branch directly over a troop of brownish-gray, sharp-snouted, fiendish-eyed little peccaries.

Some were young and sleek, others were old and rough, some had little yellow teeth or tusks, and all pointed their sharp noses upward, as if expecting me to fall into their very mouths. Feeling safe once more I loaded the rifle and began to kill the biggest, most vicious javelin. When I had killed twelve in twelve shots, I saw that shooting a few would be of no avail. There were hundreds, it seemed, and I had scarcely fifty shells left. Moreover, the rifle barrel grew so hot that it burned my hands. Hearing George's yell, I replied, somewhat to my discomfort.

"I'm all right, George—only treed. How're you?"

"Pigs all gone—they chased you—Pepe thinks we can risk running."

"Don't take any chances," I yelled in answer to this.

In trying to find a more comfortable posture, so I could apply myself to an interesting study of my captors, I made the startling discovery that the branch which upheld me was splitting from the tree trunk. My heart began to pound in my breast; then it went up into my throat. Every move I made—for I



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had started to edge towards the tree—widened the little white split.

"Boys, my branch is breaking!" I called, piercingly.

"Can't you get another?" returned George.

"No!—I daren't move—hurry, boys! If you don't scare these brutes off I'm a goner!"

My eyes were riveted upon the gap where the branch was slowly separating from the tree trunk. I glanced about me to see if I could not leap to another branch. There was nothing near that would uphold me. In desperation I resolved to drop my rifle, cautiously get to my feet upon the branch, and with one spring try to reach the tree. When about to act upon this last chance I heard Pepe's shrill yell and a crashing in the brush. Then followed the unmistakable roar and crackling of fire. Pepe had fired the brush—no, he was making his way towards me, armed with a huge torch.

"Pepe, you'll fire the jungle!" I yelled, forgetting what was at stake. I had a horror of forest fire.

The javelin stirred uneasily, ran around under me, tumbling over one another. When Pepe burst into sight, holding before him long-stemmed palm leaves flaring in hissing flames, the whole pack of pigs bowled away into the forest at breakneck speed.

"By heavens! Pepe, it was a nervy trick." I leaped down and the branch came with me. George ran to us, his face white, his eyes big. Behind him came a roar that I thought might be another drove of javelin till I saw the smoke and flame.

"Boys, the jungle's on fire. Run for the river!"

I kept watching the forest back of us as if I expected it to blow up like a powder mine. Nevertheless I was agreeably disappointed. A cloud of smoke rolled westward; there was a frequent roaring of burning palms, but the forest fire was nothing such as I had feared.

"Boys, we'll have some roast pig tomorrow. I guess there's fire enough up there for that," I remarked.

Just before dark, when we were at supper, a swarm of black mosquitoes swooped upon us. These mosquitoes were very large, black-bodied, with white barred wings; their sting was as painful as that of a wasp. We went to bed, but it was only to get up again, for the mosquitoes could bite through two thicknesses of blanket. The only thing we could do was to sit or stand in the smoke of the campfire. There we spent a wretched sleepless night, with the bloodthirsty mosquitoes humming about our ears

like a swarm of bees. They did not go away till dawn.

We were all haggard and languid, but George's condition showed me the necessity for renewed efforts to get out of the jungle. Pepe appeared heavy and slow, and what was more alarming, he had lost his appetite. We made George a bed on the canvas in the bow of the boat, where he was soon sound asleep. Then Pepe and I took turns at the oars, making 5 miles an hour.

But there was no place to camp. The muddy banks were too narrow at the bottom, and too steep to climb to the top. So I bade Pepe and George find as comfortable places as they could on the boat, and I sat down to make a night of it at the oars.

So the hours passed and the moon went down into the weird shadows and the Southern Cross rose pale and wonderful.

Gradually the stars vanished in a kind of brightening gray, and the dawn was at hand. I awoke to the realization of weary arms and back. Morning came with its steely light on the river, the rolling and melting vapors, the flight of ducks and call of birds. The rosy sun brought no cheer this day. George did not come out of the boat, and Pepe and I got breakfast in silence. Soon we were once more on the breast of the current.

I slept all the morning and awoke to find Pepe bowed over the oars. Watching him I fancied he was stronger than on the preceding day, and I was relieved. We passed a long dug-out canoe in which were two half-naked natives poling with their huge paddles. Pepe's inquiry brought the information that we were two days from Panuco.

The river grew wider and long sandbars obstructed our passage. As it was quicksand we could not wade and had to pole off into the channels. This was wearisome work. We met another canoe and were told Panuco was far, far away, many kilometers. Towards night other natives said the village was just around the next bend, but that was an untruth. The stretches of the river were now miles long and the bends seemed interminably far apart. There was no village beyond any particular bends—nothing but bare banks for miles. We went ashore for a meager supper, rested a couple of hours, and about dark shoved off into the current.

I rowed until I gave out, then awakened Pepe. He took the oars and I crawled back to the stern where I covered my damp, chilly body with a blanket and fell asleep.

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from oblivion. Pepe was shouting in Spanish. I heard the soft swish of swift current. Raising up I caught the glimmer of glancing water under the lowering moon. Pepe was frantically pushing his oar into the stream, which told me we had grounded on a sandbar. As we seemed solidly fixed and in no danger whatever I calmed Pepe's fears, and we lay down in the boat and slept till morning.

That day was a repetition of the one before, hotter, wearier, and the stretches of river were longer, and the natives we met in canoes more stolidly ignorant of distance. The mourning of turtle-doves almost drove me wild. There were miles and miles of willows, and every tree was full of melancholy doves. At dusk we halted on a sandbar, too tired to cook a dinner, and sprawled in the warm sand to sleep like logs.

At noon, when we came unexpectedly upon a cluster of thatched huts to find they made up the village of Panuco, I was sick; for I had expected a little town where we could get some drinking water, and hire a launch to speed us down to Tampico. This appeared little more than other places we had passed, and I climbed up the bank wearily thinking of the long fifty miles we still had to go.

But Panuco was bigger and better than it looked from the river. We found a clean, comfortable inn where we dined well, and learned to our joy, that a coach left in an hour for Tamos to meet the 5 o'clock train to Tampico.

We hired a "mozo" to row the boat to Tampico and, carrying our lighter things, we boarded the coach and behind six mules were soon bowling over a good level road.

It was then that the spirit of my mood changed. The gloom faded away as I had seen the mist-clouds dissolve in the morning sunlight. It was the end of another wild trip, which I suddenly discovered had been a success. George was ill, but a rest and proper care would soon bring him around, so I was free from worry on that score. I had no skins for trophies, and only a few pictures, but then I had memories.

So, when some miles across country we saw the little town of Tamos shining against the sky, I came again into my own. There were the same beauty and life and wildness. Beyond the glimmering lagoons stretched the dim, dark jungle; a flock of flamingos showed pink across the water; ducks dotted the weedy marshes, and low down on the rosy horizon a long curved line of wild geese sailed into the sunset.

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