

FIELD AND STREAM



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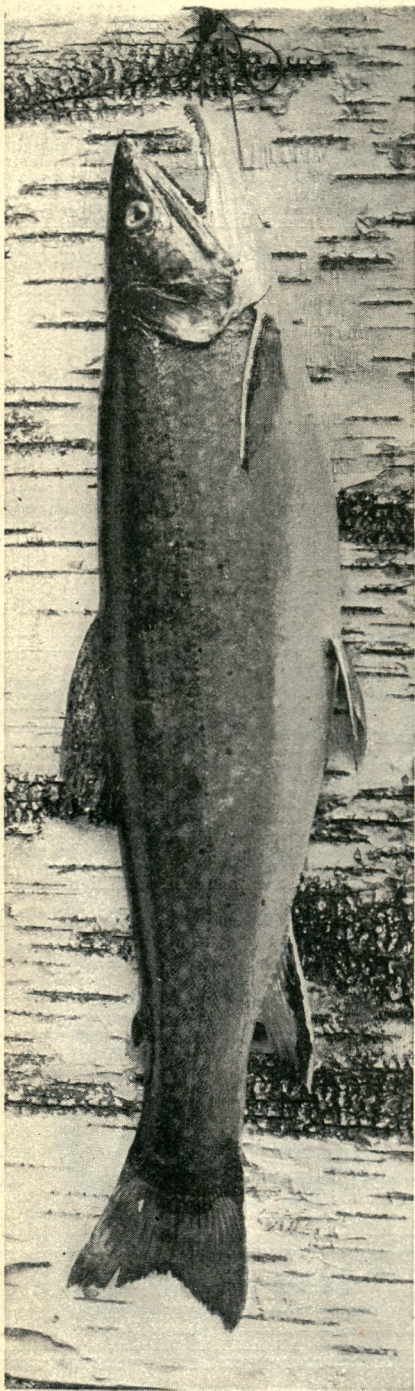
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E. F. WARNER, President

WARREN H. MILLER, Editor

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FIELD AND STREAM PUBLISHING COMPANY

24-26 E. 21st ST.

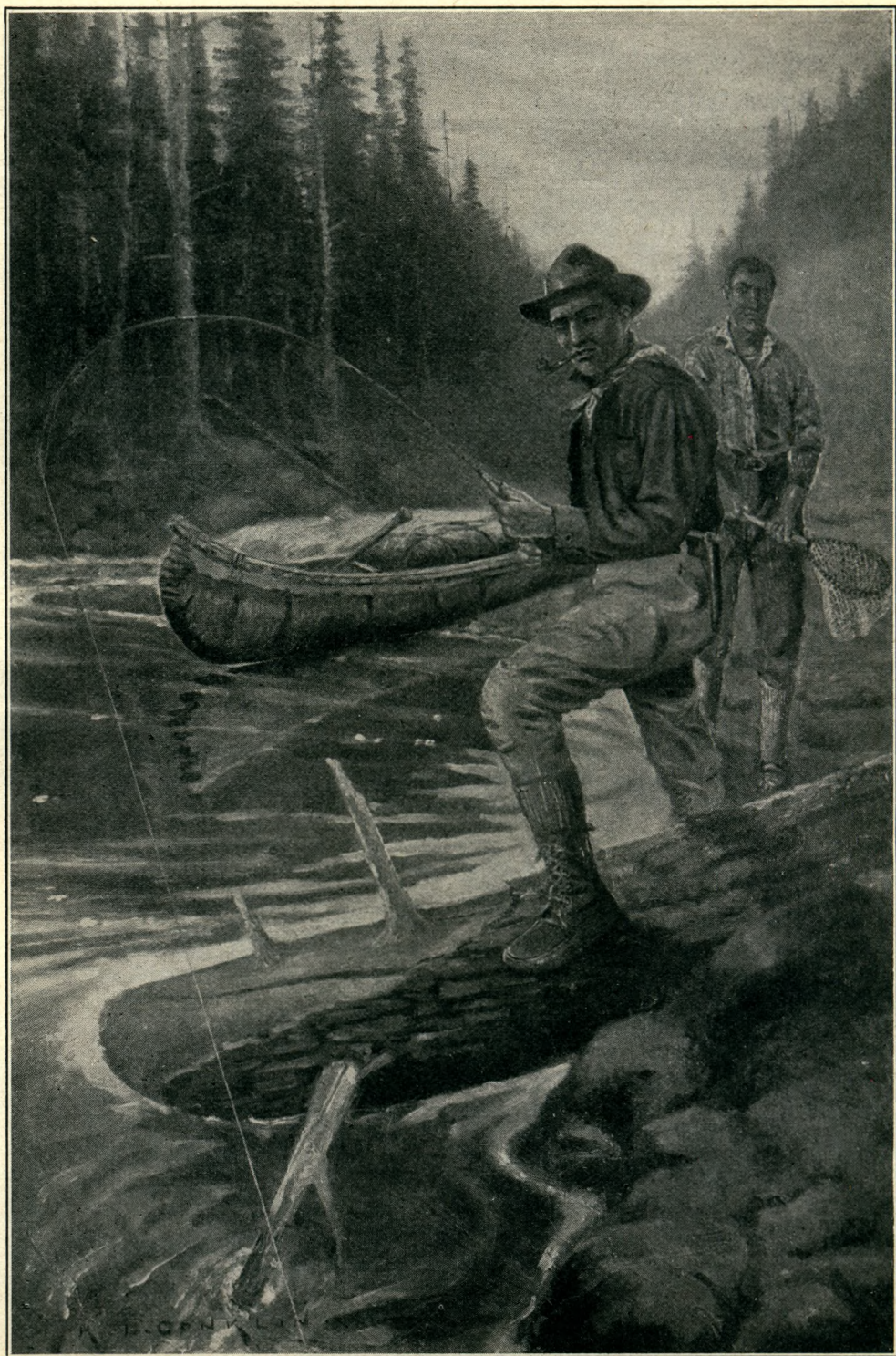
NEW YORK CITY

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OFF TO MEXICO!

*Zane Grey, Author of "Down an Unknown
Jungle River," Etc.*



SNAGGED!

Drawn by Roy L. Conklin.

AMERICA'S MAGAZINE FOR SPORTSMEN

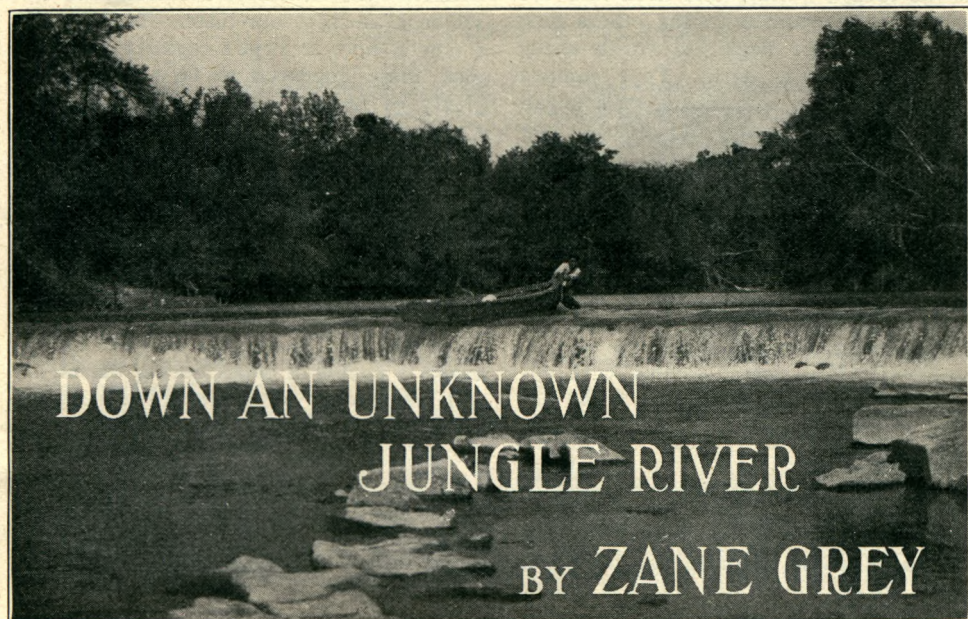
FIELD AND STREAM

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CAMP-FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA

FIFTEENTH YEAR

APRIL, 1911

NUMBER TWELVE



DOWN AN UNKNOWN JUNGLE RIVER

BY ZANE GREY

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

PART II

MICAS FALLS

IT took me only a moment to decide to make camp there and the next day to try to reach Micas Falls. The mountains seemed close at hand, and were so high that, early as it was, the westering sun hung over the blue summits. The notch where the Santa Rosa cut through

the range stood out clear. At the most it was not more than eighteen miles. So I planned to spend a day or so pulling up the river and then turn for the downstream trip.

Pepe took his long machete into the brush to cut firewood. Young Allen and I put up the strip of canvas. We stretched a rope between two trees, threw the canvas over it and pegged down the ends. I regretted that we had no tent,

but as such a thing could not be bought in Tampico we had to take what we could get.

"I'm going to sleep between you and Pepe," Allen said. "If we don't have some hot old times keeping things out of this tent I'll miss my guess."

"I daresay we won't be able to keep things out," I replied, dubiously.

Just as Pepe came into camp staggering under a load of wood, a flock of russet-colored ducks swung round the bend below. They alighted near the shore opposite us and about sixty yards distant. George made a dive into the outfit for one of his guns. Coming out with a .22 caliber he loaded quickly and fired into the flock. He crippled one; the others flew away. Then he began to waste shells trying to kill the duck. Pepe jumped in to the boat and with a long stick began to pole out into the stream. Below camp and just under the bridge the water ran into a shallow rift. The duck got in the current and went round the bend with Pepe in pursuit and Allen yelling along the shore. When they returned a little later they had the duck, which was one of an unknown species to me. Pepe had fallen overboard and George was wet to his knees. Both were glowing with enthusiasm. I began to feel that I had not made a mistake in my choice of companions.

About the middle of the afternoon the heat was intense. I found myself favoring the shade, and noted that George and Pepe did likewise. During this hot spell, which lasted from three till five, there was a quiet, and a lack of life about camp that surprised me. It was a sleeping stillness; even the insects seemed drowsy. Not a duck, and scarcely a bird passed by. I heard the mourning of a turtle-dove and was at once struck with the singular deep, full tone. Several trains crossed the bridge and at intervals the engine at the pumping tank puffed and chugged. From time to time natives walked out upon the bridge to stare long and curiously at us.

When the sun set behind the mountain a hard breeze swooped down the river. I did not know what to make of it, and at first thought we were in for a storm.

But Pepe said the wind blew that way every day. For a while it tossed the willows and waved the Spaniard's Beard upon the cypresses. Then as suddenly as it had come it died away, taking the heat with it.

Whereupon we began to get supper. The river water was col' and clean but I decided to boil all that we used. This matter of water had bothered me more than anything in consideration of the trip. And I felt relieved to find the water apparently safe. While Pepe and I busied ourselves about the camp-fire, George sat on a rock watching the wild fowl flying up stream. Once he yelled: "Canvas-backs!" We had supper, finding the russet duck much to our taste. And I made a mental note of Pepe's capacity and was glad there appeared to be prospects of plenty of meat. While we were eating, a group of natives gathered upon the bridge to watch us. I would not have liked to interpret their opinion of us from their actions.

Then night came on almost before we were ready for it. I got out the mosquito netting, but to my amazement it was not needed. We lay down under our open-sided tent and were soon fast asleep. I awoke a couple of times during the night and rolled over to find a softer spot in the hard bed. These times I heard only the incessant hum of insects. But when I opened my eyes to the gray morning light I heard something that made me sit up with a jump. It was a deep booming sound, different from anything with which I was familiar. I awakened Pepe.

"Listen."

In a little while the sound was repeated, a heavy "*boo-oom!* . . . *boo-oom!*" There was a resemblance to the first strong beats of a drumming grouse, only infinitely wilder.

Pepe called it something like "Faisen Real."

This was as new to me as the noise itself. Pepe explained it was made by a huge black bird, not unlike a turkey. It had a golden plume and could run as fast as a deer. Whereupon I conceived a desire to see such a strange bird, so I got up. The sound was not repeated. Almost immediately, however, the thicket across



A BROAD STRETCH OF THE RIVER

the river awoke to another sound, as much a contrast to the boom as could have been imagined. It was a bird medley. At first I thought of magpies, then parrots, but Pepe dispelled this illusion with another word hard to spell.

"Chicalocki," he said.

And that seemed just like what they were singing. It was a sharp, clear song: "*chic-a-lock-i . . . chic-a-lock-i*," and to judge from the full chorus, there must have been many birds.

"They're a kind of pheasant," added George, "and make dandy pot-stews."

The chicalocki ceased their salute to the morning; and then as the river mist melted away under the rising sun, other birds took it up. Notes new to me burst upon the air. Familiar old songs thrilled me—the sweet carol of the meadowlark, the whistle of the quail, the mellow sad call of the swamp-blackbird. The songs blended in an exquisite harmony.

"Wait," said Pepe, with a laugh.

I did not know what to wait for, but I was enjoying the moment and anticipating much. Ducks began to whirr by; blackbirds alighted in the trees across the river. Suddenly I was astounded at a great discordant screeching, and the sweeping rush of myriads of wings. I looked up to see the biggest flock of birds I had ever seen.

"Parrots!" I yelled.

Indeed they were, and they let me know

it. They flew across the river, wheeled to come back, all the time screeching, and then they swooped into the tops of the cypress trees.

"Red-heads," said Allen in disgust. "Wait till you see the yellow heads!"

The red-heads were quite sufficient for me at the moment. They broke into a chattering, screaming, cackling discordance. It was plainly directed at us. These intelligent birds were curious and resentful. They were scolding us, as Pepe put it. I sat there for half an hour, while he and George got breakfast, and revelled in the din. That morning serenade, for so I took it, was worth the trip.

Presently the parrots flew away, and I was surprised to learn that most of the other birds had ceased singing. They had set about the business of the day, something it was high time for me to consider. Breakfast over, we broke camp.

Packing the outfit in the boat was a study for me. It had to be packed for a long trip with many things taken into consideration. Balance was all-important; a flat surface easy to crawl and jump over was absolutely necessary; comfort was not to be overlooked. I packed a small bucket of preserved mullet, some bottles of kerosene and canu, and a lantern up close in the bow. Then I cut out the first bow seat. I had brought a small steamer trunk, and this full of supplies we put in next. The two flat boxes with

the rest of the supplies filled up the space between the trunk and the rowing seat. By slipping an extra pair of oars, coils of rope, the axe, and a few other articles between the gunwales and the trunk and boxes we made them fit snugly and tightly. We cut off a piece of the heavy canvas, and folding it narrow laid it lengthwise with the blankets over the top. This made a level surface, one that could be gotten over quickly, or a place to sleep for that matter, and effectually disposed of the bow half of the boat. The grips in which we carried clothing we put under the second seat. I arranged the other piece of canvas in the stern so that it projected up at the back of the seat. I was thinking of the waves we would buffet in going stern first downstream through the rapids. The fishing tackle and guns we laid flat from seat to seat. Last of all we placed the ammunition on one side next the gunwale and my grip with camera, films, medicines, etc., on the other. I was delighted to find the boat trim and more buoyant, with our additional weight, than I had dared to hope. Pepe took the oars and we started upstream.

Soon the iron structure of the bridge disappeared as we turned a bend. I had expected a long shady ride, but shallow water and gravelly rapids made us get out to wade and pull the boat. It was not such hard work at first. We were fresh and eager, and hauled the heavy boat up swift shallow channels, making as good time as if we were rowing in smooth water. Then as the sun began to grow hot the wading and splashing was pleasant. We passed little islands green with willows, and came to high clay banks gradually wearing away, and then met with rocky restrictions in the stream bed. From round a bend a hollow roar, deeper than the others, told of a fall. We found it a swift-rushing incline, very narrow and deep, so that we had hard work in pulling the boat along the margin.

Above this fall the water was deep and still. We got in the boat and turned a curve to enter a long beautiful stretch of river. The green shady lane was alive with birds and waterfowl. Ducks of various kinds rose before us. There were white, blue, gray and speckled herons,

some standing six feet tall. Then there were many species of bitterns, one with a purple back and white breast. They were very tame and sat on the overhanging branches, uttering dismal croaks. Everywhere was the flash and glitter and moving gleam of birds in flight, up and down, and across the river. George began to pop away with his .22 caliber, and as he appeared to be doing little harm I made no objection.

The strangeness, beauty and life of this jungle stream absorbed me. I did not take my guns from their cases. The water was bright green and very deep; here and there were the swirls of playing fish. The banks were high and densely covered with a luxuriant foliage. Huge cypress trees, moss covered, leaned half way across the river. Giant gray barked cebias spread long branches thickly tufted with aloes, orchids and other jungle parasites. Palm trees lifted slender stems and graceful broad-leaved heads. Clumps of bamboo spread an enormous green arch out over the banks. These bamboo trees were particularly beautiful to me. A hundred yellow black-circled stems grew out of the ground close together, and as they rose high they gracefully leaned their bodies and drooped their tips. The leaves were arrowy, exquisite in their fineness.

I looked up the long river lane, bright in the sun, dark and still under the moss-veiled cypresses, at the turning vines and blossoming creepers, at the changeful web of moving birds, and I indulged to the fullest that haunting sense for wild places.

"Chicalocki," said Pepe, suddenly.

A flock of long-tailed birds, resembling the pheasant in body, were sailing across the river. Again George made a dive for a gun. This one was a sixteen-gauge and worn out. He shot twice at the birds on the wing. Then Pepe rowed under the overhanging branches and George killed three chicalocki with his rifle. They were olive green in color and the long tail had a brownish cast. Heavy and plump, they promised fine eating.

"Pato Real!" yelled Pepe, pointing excitedly up the river.

Several black fowl, as large as geese, hove in sight, flying pretty low. I caught a glimpse of wide white-crested wings,

and knew then that these were the birds I had thought of for so long.

"Load up and get ready," I said to George. "They're coming fast—shoot ahead of them."

What swift powerful fliers these birds were! They swooped up as they sighted the boat and afforded a splendid target. Allen's little sixteen-gauge rang out. I heard the shot strike. The leader stopped in midair, dipped, and plunged with a sounding splash. We picked him up and I found him to be most beautiful and as large and heavy as a goose. His black feathers shone with the green lustre of an opal, and the pure white of the shoulder of the wings made a remarkable contrast.

"George, we've got enough meat for today, more than we can use. Don't shoot any more," I said.

He appeared to be disappointed, but laid aside his gun without comment.

Pepe resumed rowing, and I told him to keep under the overhanging branches, and to row without splashing. He was skillful with the oars, so that we glided along silently. How we were rewarded for this stealth! Birds of rare and brilliant plumage flitted among the leaves. There was one, a long slender bird, gold and black, with a white ring about its neck. There were little yellow-breasted king-fishers no larger than a wren, and great red-breasted king-fishers with blue backs and tufted heads. We passed under a leaning cecilia that was covered with orchids. I saw the slim sharp head of a snake dart from among the leaves. His neck was as big as my wrist. For a moment I fingered the trigger of George's gun, then decided not to kill him. There would be plenty of time for me to shoot, besides I did not care to disturb the silence. The snake reminded me, however, that hunters had told me of snakes in this jungle which measured from fifteen to twenty feet, and were as large as a man's leg.

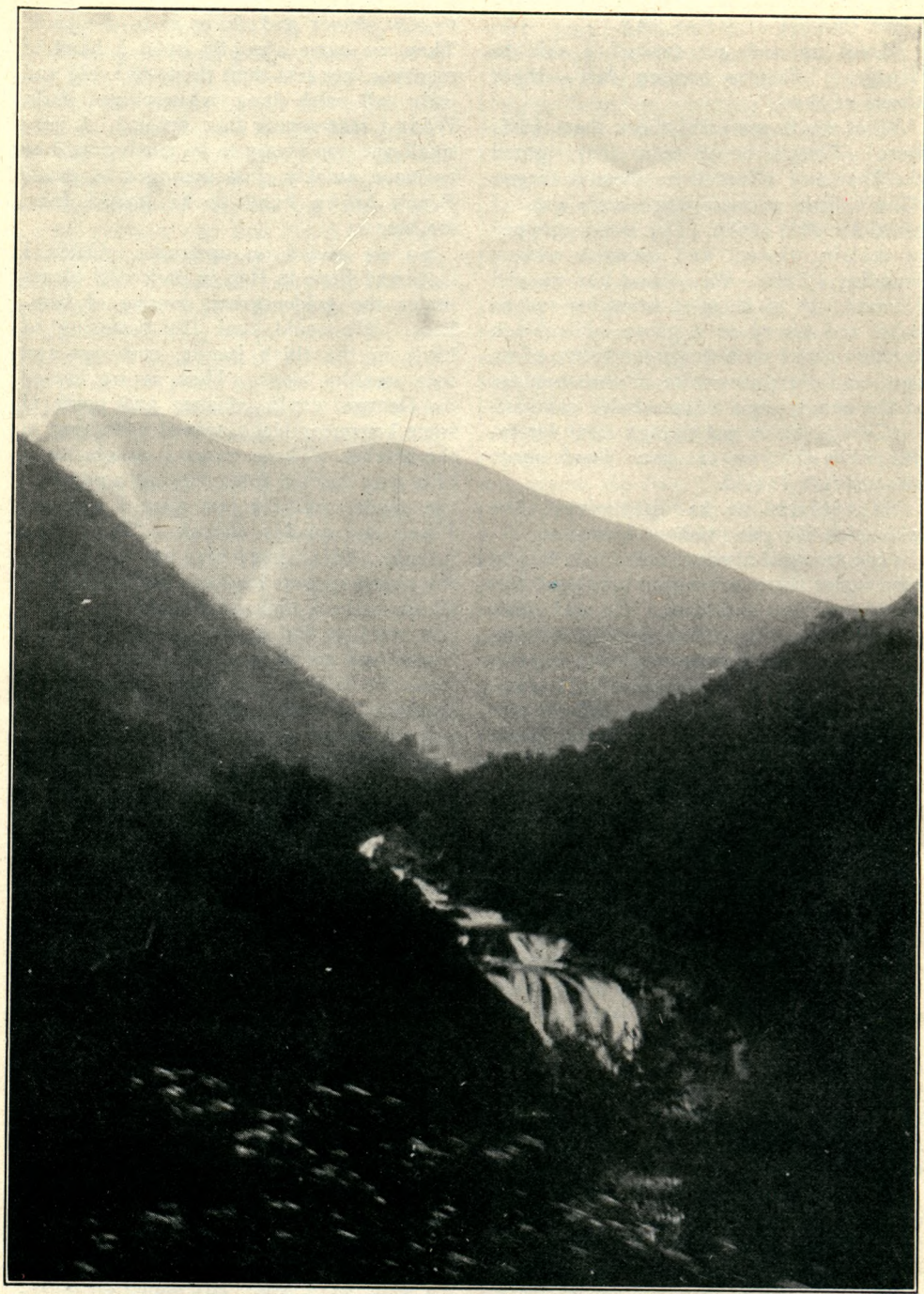
Most of the way the bank was too high and steep and overgrown for any animal to get down to the water, still there were dry gullies or arroyos every few hundred yards, and these showed the tracks of many animals. Often we would hear a pattering of hard feet, but we would reach one of these drinking places only to see

a little cloud of dust. So I cautioned Pepe to row slower and closer in to the bank. Then we came abruptly upon a band of raccoons, not less than thirty-five, big and little, all with long white-ringed tails. What a scampering they set up! A very small one, too young to be much afraid or to move quickly, just managed to evade Pepe's brown hand as he leaned from the boat.

So we glided on upstream. Often I motioned Pepe to stop in dark cool places under the golden-green canopy of bamboos. We could hear the fluttering of birds in the thick jungle, rustlings and soft stealthy steps. Then as we moved on George would whisper and point at some brown or black animal vanishing in the thicket. Three times I caught sight of a gray spotted form slipping away into the shade, and the last time I directed Pepe's eye quickly enough. "Tiger-cat," he said. This I knew was not the jaguar, the great spotted lord of the jungle, but all the same I took up Allen's .32 caliber and tried to find a way up on the bank. There was no place to climb up, unless I tried the branches of trees and drooping bamboos. In fact, there were only here and there low stretches where we could see over the matted roots and creepers. Then, as we continued up the river, the sound of rapids put hunting out of my mind. We had Micas Falls to reach.

That long stretch of deep river ended in a wide shallow noisy rapid. Fir trees lined the banks. The palms, cypresses, bamboos and the flowery mossy growths were not here in evidence. Thickly wooded hills rose on each side. The jungle looked sear and yellow. Before we had reached the top of that rapid we stumbled upon an eight-foot alligator. Pepe hit it with an oar. Thereafter we waded carefully in shallower water.

Above the rapid extended a quarter-mile stretch where we could row, and then came another long rapid. When we had waded up that one it was only to come to another. It began to be hard work. But I kept the boys buckled down and we made good time. We pulled up seventeen or eighteen rapids and covered distance that I estimated to be about ten miles. The blue mountains loomed closer



MICAS FALLS—THE HEADWATERS OF THE SANTA ROSA

and higher, but I began to have doubts of getting to Micas Falls that day.

Moreover the rapids grew rougher as we ascended the stream. Finally we came to one that had long rung in my ears. All the water of the river rushed down on the right-hand side in a channel scarcely twenty feet wide. It was deep and swift. With the aid of ropes and by much hard wading and pulling, we at last got the boat up. A little farther on was another bothersome rapid. At length we came to a series of falls, steps in the river, that barred our progress. I climbed up on the bank here to find the country open, with patches of jungle, groves of palms, and wide flats leading to hills. The mountains were close, and I caught a glint of Micas Falls. We might have reached the falls by extraordinary exertions, but in view of the long trip down the river it was not to be thought of. Besides I saw stock fences across the river, and heard a train rumbling up on the mountain slope, and concluded we were near one of the native villages along the railroad.

We made camp on a grassy bench above a foam-flecked pool. I left the boys to get things into shape for supper, and, taking my camera, hurried off to try to get a picture of Micas Falls. I found open places, and by-paths through the dry, brushy forest. I saw evidences of forest fire and then knew what had ruined that part of the jungle. There were no birds. It was farther than I had estimated to the base of the foothill I had marked, but loath to give up I hung on and finally reached a steep scaly thorny ascent. Going up I nearly suffocated with the heat. Ample reward there was, however, for my exertions. Micas Falls glistened in the distance like a string of green fans connected by silver ribbons. I remained there watching it while the sun set in the golden notch between the mountains.

On the way down, as I waded through a flat overgrown with coarse grass and bushes, I jumped a herd of deer, eight in number. These small sleek gray deer appeared tame, yet I could not photograph them. It cost me a little effort to decide not to fetch my rifle, but as we already had meat there was nothing to do except let the deer go. When I got back to camp

Pepe grinned at me, and, pointing to little red specks upon my shirt, he said: "Pinilius."

"Aha! the ticks!" I exclaimed.

They were exceedingly small, not to be seen without close scrutiny. They could not be brushed off, so I had laboriously to pick them off. Allen and Pepe laughed at me, and a little to my surprise seemed to derive some sort of satisfaction from the incident.

"Say! these ticks don't bother me any."

Pepe grunted and George called out:

"Just wait till you get the big fellows—the garrapatoes."

It developed presently that the grass and bushes on our camp site contained millions of both *pinilius* and *garrapatoes*. I found several of the larger ticks—these were almost the size of my little finger nail, crawling upon me, but I did not get bitten. Pepe and George, however, had no such good luck, as manifested itself from exclamations at different times. By the time they had cut down the few bushes and carried in a stock of firewood both were covered with the little pests. Whereupon they sat down and became engaged in a task infinitely puzzling to me. Both Pepe and George were cigarette smokers, and I saw them burning the ticks off shirt sleeves and trouser legs. But this was not the feat that puzzled me. It was when they held the red point of their cigarettes close to their naked flesh. I grew over curious and had to see that performance at close range. They were as sober as judges.

"What in the deuce do you do that for?"

"Popping ticks," replied George.

The fact of the matter was soon clear to me. The ticks stuck on as if glued. When the hot end of the burning cigarette was held within a quarter of an inch of them they simply blew up, exploded with a pop. I could distinguish easily between the tiny pop of a *pinilius* exploding, and the heavier pop of a *garrapato*.

"But, boy, while you're taking time to do that, half a dozen other ticks can bite you!" I exclaimed.

"Sure they can," replied George. "But if they get on me I'll kill 'em. I don't mind the little ones—it's the garrapatoes I hate!"

On the other hand Pepe minded most the pinilius. I took my exploding in laughter.

"Boys, from now on you're Pinilius Pepe and Garrapato George."

"You'll laugh on the other side of your face pretty soon," replied George. "In three days, you'll be popping ticks yourself."

The prospect did look serious to me. When I found the grass under our canvas alive with them I began to cast about in my mind for a remedy. On the ridge above the bench was a palm tree, and under it were many dead palm leaves. They were enormous in size, had long stems and were as dry as tinder. I hit upon the idea of setting fire to these leaves and dragging them about over the grass. When lighted they made a flaming hot torch. It did not take me long to scorch all the ticks near that camp.

Then we had supper and enjoyed it hugely. The scene went well with the camp fire and game dinner. There were the foamy pool, the brawling rapids, the tufted palm trees, and, above, the dark blue mountain. We went to bed at dusk and were so tired that we dropped into slumber at once.

In the night a yell awakened me. I sat up, clutching my revolver. The white moonlight made all as clear as day. George raised himself, stupid with sleep. But Pepe was not under the canvas. I heard him thrashing about outside. Leaping up, I ran to him and found him beating and clawing and tearing at himself like one suddenly possessed. I thought he had been stung by something or bitten by a snake.

"Pepe, what is it?" I shouted.

"Look! Look!" he cried, pointing downward. Then he yelled an unintelligible Spanish word.

I saw a stream of black ants pouring over the ground. It was an army of jungle ants on a march! They made a straight line across the bench, and their passage had been under the canvas. As Pepe happened to be in that line they surged over him, and as he had awakened and moved they promptly bit him.

The stream of ants was about a foot wide and black as coal. It moved steadily, with order, and quite rapidly, and took a full hour to pass through our open tent.

"What did I tell you?" asked George, sleepily, as we turned in again. "It's coming to us!"

(To be continued)

