

FIELD AND STREAM

OFFICIAL ORGAN of the CAMP-FIRE CLUB OF AMERICA



ANNOUNCES
A SERIES
OF TWELVE
STORIES

by

ALAN GREY

By the Author of

"The Heritage of the Desert"

"The Last of the Plainsmen"

"Roping Lions in the Grand
Canyon," etc.

"DOWN AN UNKNOWN JUNGLE RIVER"

A SERIES OF ADVENTURES WITH JAGUARS, WILD BOARS AND ALLIGATORS IN MEXICO

OTHER ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

CARIBOU HUNTING by W. A. Babson

FISHING FOR RED SNAPPER by Richard M. Winans

AUTOMATIC RIFLES by Dr. S. J. Fort



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"THEY WERE LARGE AND WELL POINTED, CARRYING A BROW PALMATION EIGHTEEN INCHES IN WIDTH"

(See *"With the Salmon and Caribou of Newfoundland"*)

AMERICA'S MAGAZINE FOR SPORTSMEN

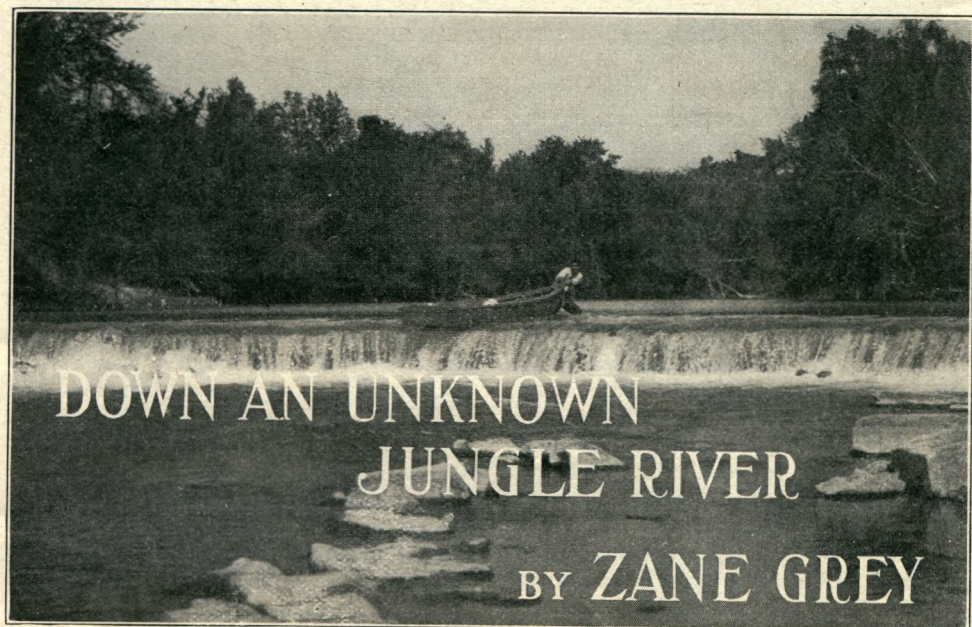
FIELD AND STREAM

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FIFTEENTH YEAR

MARCH, 1911

NUMBER ELEVEN



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 I

THE SANTA ROSA

SEVERAL years ago I was going to Tampico for the tarpon fishing, and was traveling over the Mexican Central. For days I had looked out upon dusty drab desert, grotesque cactus plants, temples and cathedrals surmounting low rocky hills, and villages swarming with dark-skinned, sandal-footed natives. Beyond Cardenas, eight thousand feet above sea-

level, the desert was a barren waste of yucca and stone. Then we plunged off the plateau down the first of the great steps to the lowland. From the chill, bare region we descended winding canyons into a temperate zone, where all was green and fresh, and crossed a wide bench of farms and forests to the second step.

Then, from my window I saw far below to the gorgeous jungle of the tropics. I looked down upon eternal summer. The train plunged once more and I was lost

in winding cuts and tunnels. Near the base of the towering mountain we came out upon the side of a deep canyon, where I caught a glimpse of Micas Falls. It was only a glimpse, but that was enough to pale the beauty of all the waterfalls I had ever seen. The river burst from a notch between two heavily wooded slopes, and leaped out into the green void. The first fall was a white streak, ending in a dark pool, then came cascade after cascade, fall after fall, some wide, others narrow, and all white and green against the yellow rock. We curved around the spur of the mountain, descended to the level, to be lost in the luxuriance of the jungle growth. At a little station called Valles we crossed the river. I had a brief glance at the clear, green water, at the great cypress trees, gray and graceful, with a long silvery waving moss, at the tangled colorful banks. A waterfowl, black as coal, with white-crested wings, skimmed the water in swift, wild flight, to disappear up the shady river lane.

The train sped on. But the beauty of Micas Falls and the wildness of the jungle river remained with me. From a native I learned that the river was called the Santa Rosa. Where it went he did not know. That was a wild country. The villages were few and were all along the line of the railroad. It was then I conceived the idea of going down the Santa Rosa in a canoe or boat. Where did that river go? How many waterfalls and rapids did it make before reaching the Gulf? What teeming life must be along its rich banks? How wild was the prospect! It haunted me!

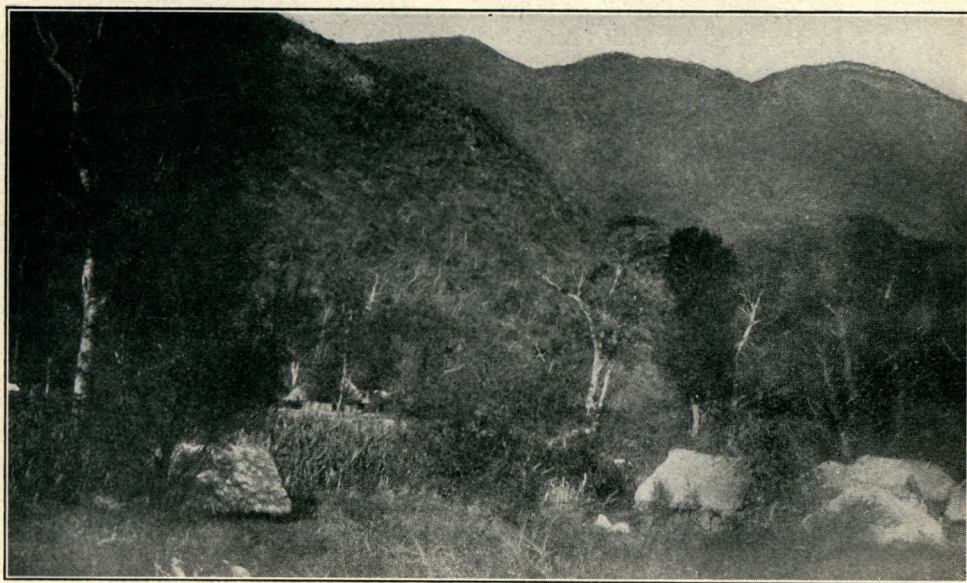
That visit to Mexico was too full of a variety of interest and sport to permit of the Santa Rosa trip. The next year I did not go South. For all that I did not forget the jungle river, and, as time passed, the clearer was its call. This winter I returned to Tampico for the express purpose of carrying out my cherished desire.

Tampico, during the winter months, is a rendezvous for sportsmen from all over the world. By the middle of February the broad Panuco River is dotted with boats from Tamos to La Barre, and everywhere the leaping silver king cleaves

the water in spectacular fight. I watched tarpon jump till I was dazzled by the flash of mother-of-pearl, and hung to a rod till my arms fell dead at my sides. Every few days I changed the rod for a gun; the shooting along the Panuco is as worth while as the fishing. An English globe-trotter, with whom I hunted, called it: "Magnificent!" From time to time I tried to interest some sportsman in my Santa Rosa trip. But I did not succeed very well owing to the wonderful sport right at Tampico, and the fact that I knew nothing at all about the Santa Rosa River.

Singular to state, I could not learn anything. The *terra caliente*, or hot belt, along the curve of the Gulf was lined with streams, many of them unknown and unnamed. The broad Panuco swung round to the west and had its source somewhere up in the mountains. I concluded that the Santa Rosa was one of its headwaters. Valles lay up on the swell of the higher ground, some two thousand feet above sea-level, and was distant from Tampico about six hours by train. So, reckoning with the meandering character of jungle streams, I calculated that I would have one hundred and seventy-five miles of travel by water from Valles to Tampico. There were Indian huts strung along the Panuco River, and fifty miles inland a village named Panuco. What lay between Valles and Panuco, down over the wild steppes of that jungle, I could only conjecture. But I was going to find out. That point once settled I was easy in mind, though eager and restless to be off.

At the very outset of arranging practical details I encountered difficulties. It was necessary for me to have a companion and a canoe or boat and an outfit. After spending a whole day in vain endeavor to interest fishermen and hunters and Mexican "mozos" in my wild project I decided to outfit first and find a comrade later. Of the infinite variety of canoes in the waterways about Tampico not one would suit my purpose. They had all been rough hewn from solid tree-trunks; they were long, slender, graceful, pretty to look at and easy to handle on the shallow lagoons, but they were too heavy and cumbersome for fast water.



"HUTS MADE OF POLES AND THATCHED ROOFS OF PALM LEAVES"

Failing to find a canoe I began to look out for a suitable flat-bottom boat, one built light and strong. Of the hundreds of fishing boats along the Panuco not one would serve. I had handled boats in swift rapids and I knew what I wanted. Happening to think of Micas Falls just then I had a momentary chill and a check to enthusiasm. What if I encountered, in coming down the Santa Rosa, some such series of cascades as those which made Micas Falls.

I had about decided to have a suitable boat built, when I chanced to make the acquaintance of a young American named George Allen. He was a slim keen-eyed youth, probably more of a boy in age than he looked or pretended. He had spent a couple of years in Tampico working in the railroad offices, and had just begun a much longed-for vacation. I told him what I was hunting for in the way of a boat, and he replied that he knew just where to get it. He led me down narrow lanes, between the painted stone houses with brown-tiled roofs and iron-barred windows, till we reached the canal. We entered a yard where buzzards, goats and red razor-back pigs were contesting over the scavenger rights. Allen took me into a boathouse, and pointed out a long, light

skiff with a flat bottom. I did not need the importunities of the boatkeeper to make me eager about this particular boat. I jumped in, shoved it out, rowed up the canal, pulled and turned, backed water, and whistled my delight. For my purpose the boat was a wonder, and I made a deal with the man for one peso a day.

Young Allen expressed his curiosity, and I told him of my Santa Rosa trip, and that I now must find a comrade.

"Take me along," he said, promptly.

There was a note of American spirit in his voice, a flash and a laugh in his keen eyes that made me take him up at once. We bought a long strip of canvas, nine feet wide, blankets, cooking utensils and supplies for three weeks. Then we set out to get a boatman. All of the "mozos" we interviewed were anxious to work, but when acquainted with the nature of the trip they refused pointblank.

"Tigre!" exclaimed one.

"Javelin!" said another.

The big spotted jaguar of the jungle and the wild boar, or peccary, were held in much dread by the natives.

Finally I met a "mozo" named Pepe, who had rowed a boat for me two years before. He looked sadly in need of a job, still he did not ask for it. Allen

told me that Pepe had been one of the best boatmen on the river until "*canya*," the fiery white liquor to which the natives are addicted, had ruined his reputation. Pepe wore an old sombrero, a cotton shirt and sash and ragged trousers. He was barefooted. I noted the set of his muscular neck, his brawny shoulders and arms, and appreciated the years of rowing that had developed them. But Pepe's haggard face, deadened eyes and listless manner made me doubt his efficiency for an adventure like mine. Still, there never is any telling what a man can do. Pepe's hopeless dejection excited my sympathy. So I clapped him on the shoulder and asked him if he would like to work for several weeks at three pesos a day. That was treble the mozo's price. Pepe nearly fell off the railing of the canal bridge, where I had found him sitting, and a light flashed into his face as warm and bright as sunshine. He began to jabber, "Si, señor," and to wave his nervous brown hands. I suspected that Pepe needed a job as badly as anything. I knew it when I caught a word here and there about wife and children. On the spot I conceived a liking for Pepe and believed I could trust him. Besides, in hiring guides or choosing companions for a wild adventure I had learned to trust to an inexplicable impulse. I thought I knew how to deal with poor unhappy Pepe. So I gave him money, told him to buy a change of clothes and a pair of shoes, and to come to my hotel the next day.

"He'll spend the money for *canya* and not show up to-morrow," said Allen.

My American acquaintances in Tampico, particularly the genial proprietor of the hotel, had much to say about my wild-goose chase. At first they could not take me seriously. Then they mingled astonishment with amusement and concern. They advised me not to go; they declared they would not let me go. There were the ticks, the bats, the tigers, the boars, the alligators, the snakes, not to mention fevers, swamps, sandbars, bogs, and a river that nobody ever had explored. My friend, the hotel man, expressed himself freely.

"It's a fool trip. What's the sense in going way up there? You don't know

where you'll come out. The river here is full of tarpon now; there are millions of ducks and geese on the lagoons; you can kill deer and turkey right on the edge of town. If you want *tigre* and *javelin* go out to one of the ranches where they have dogs to hunt with, where you've a chance for your life. These tigers and boars will kill a man. There's all the sport any one wants right close. It's wild up in that jungle. It's not safe, especially with a boy and that mozo Pepe. He's soaked with *canya* and he's crazy. He'll stick a knife in you or run off and leave you when you most need help. It's a wild trip. Don't go!"

Of course, my genial friend's remarks made me only the more eager to be on the way to the Santa Rosa.

"Well, if you must go, there's one thing I want you to find out," he concluded. "We've always wondered how far the tarpon run up the Panuco. Nobody knows. It's a mooted question."

When it came to getting the boat shipped we met with more obstacles. But for the friendly offices of a Texan, an employee of the railroad, we never could have convinced the shipping agent that a boat was merchandise. The Texan said he would arrange it and got me a freight bill. He took an entirely different view of my enterprise from that of the hotel man, and in the cool, curt speech of a ranger, he said:

"You'll have the greatest time of your life. I worked at the Valles station as operator for a year. That jungle is full of game. I killed three tigers while I was there. You want to look out for those big yellow fellows. They make for a man the moment they see him. You just have to shoot. Then the pigs, they are bad. They put me up a tree more than once. I don't know anything about the Santa Rosa and never heard where it goes. There are no boats or canoes at Valles. The stream is full of rapids, and alligators, too, don't forget that. You've sure got sport coming to you."

Pepe presented himself at the hotel next day an entirely different person. He was clean-shaven and no longer disheveled. He wore a new sombrero, a white cotton shirt, a red sash and blue trousers.



"A BEAUTIFUL WILD RIVER ON WHICH BOATS WERE UNKNOWN"

He carried a small bundle, a pair of shoes and a long machete. The dignity with which he approached before all the other "mozos" was not lost upon me. A sharp scrutiny satisfied me that Pepe had not been drinking. I gave him several errands to do and then set him to packing my effects. These I ordered taken to the station in the afternoon in his charge.

Our train was to leave at five, and Allen and I went down early. It was the time when the "mozos" were returning from the day's tarpon fishing on the river, and they, with the *cargadores*, streamed to and fro on the platform. Pepe was there keeping guard over our outfit. He had lost his fame among his old associates, either justly or unjustly, and for long had been an outsider, considered as worthless. Here he was in charge of a pile of fine guns, fishing tackle, grips and supplies—a collection representing a fortune to him and his simple class. He had been trusted with it. It was under his eye. All his old associates passed by to see him there. That was a great hour for Pepe. What a little thing will win back a man's hope and self-respect! Pepe looked bright, alert and supremely happy. It would have fared ill with loafers or

sneak-thieves to have made themselves free with any of the articles under his watchful eye.

We left Tampico at five o'clock. The broad Panuco was rippling with the incoming tide. Wild fowl dotted its green bosom. Here and there splashes and spurts showed where playful ravalos were breaking water. Great green-backed tarpon rolled their silver sides against the little waves. White cranes and blue herons stood like statues upon the reedy bars. Low down over the opposite bank of the river a long line of wild geese winged its way toward a distinct shimmering lagoon. And against the gold and crimson of the sunset sky a flight of wild ducks stood out in bold black relief. We crossed the Tamesi River and began to draw away from the Panuco. On the left, wide marshes, gleaming purple in the darkening light, led the eye far beyond to endless pale lagoons. Birds of many kinds skimmed the weedy flats. Here was a flock of aigrets, the beautiful white fowl with the priceless plumes. There was a string of pink flamingoes, tall, grotesque, wading along with waddling stride, feeding with heads under water.

At Tamos, twelve miles out of Tampico, we entered the jungle. Thereafter, I

could see nothing but the impenetrable green walls that lined the track. We reached Las Palmas at dark and then began to ascend the first step of the mountain. It was a steep grade, and we climbed perhaps two thousand feet. The moon was in its first quarter. In the tropics the moon is large, radiant, a wonderful green-gold. It shed a soft luminous glow down upon the sleeping, tangled web of jungle. It was new and strange to me, so vastly different from barren desert or iron-ribbed mountain canyon, and it thrilled me with nameless charm.

About ten o'clock we arrived at Valles. A crowd of chattering natives, with wide-peaked sombreros and blankets over their shoulders, crowded round the little stone station. Visitors were rare in that village, as was manifested by our difficulty in securing lodging for the night. We had about decided to camp on the station platform when Pepe found a place where we could sleep. We were led into a big ramshackle house. There were no lights, and we bumped into things while following our guide. Finally we climbed to a kind of loft, where the moonlight streamed in at the open sides. Our beds were cots made of heavy canvas, stretched over a high framework. Mine was as high as my head and most awkward to climb into. I was of half a mind to sleep on the floor, but feeling rather ashamed of so poor a courage at the outset of a dangerous trip, I swung myself up and by dint of muscle managed to get into the cot. My comrades were not so lucky at first. Pepe's cot collapsed, and Allen, in climbing up, swung over too hard, and rolled off the other side. The thump he made when he dropped jarred the whole loft. The way Pepe laughed at this mishap and the way Allen went to climbing up the framework of his trestle bed pleased me exceedingly. For a sense of humor and a good fighting spirit are the best attributes in a hunter's comrades.

When I awakened the sun was shining through holes in the thatched roof. We descended from our lofty beds without breaking any bones, had an early breakfast and were ready for the day. Valles consisted of a few stone and wood houses

along a main street and a number of huts made of poles and thatched roofs of palm leaves. The inhabitants manifested a kindly interest in us, which changed to consternation when they saw the boat and learned of our project. Pepe questioned every native we met, and all he could learn about the Santa Rosa was that we would never get beyond a rapid some few kilometres below Valles. There were a few fields under cultivation around the village and beyond rose the impenetrable jungle. It seemed useless to try to find out anything about the river. We did not run across a man who ever heard of the headwaters of the Panuco. But they told us enough about *tigre* and *javelin* to make Pepe turn pale and Allen's hair stand on end and to give me a thrill and a shock both in one.

The hardest task, so far, developed in the matter of transporting boat and supplies to the river. At first we were informed that there was no wagon, and then that there was no road. We tried to hire a hand-car so as to move the outfit along the railroad track to the bridge, but it was impossible. Pepe came to our aid again with a native who had a cart. This fellow said he knew a trail that went to a point from which it would be easy to carry the boat to the river. His cart was a remarkable vehicle. It consisted of a narrow body, between enormously high wheels. A trio of tired little mules was hitched to it. The driver at first willingly agreed to haul our outfit for one peso, but when he drove up to the station, to be surrounded by neighbors and friends, he suddenly discovered that he could not possibly accommodate us. Patiently we endeavored to persuade him. No, it was not possible. He made no excuses, but he looked mysterious. When I came out bluntly and offered him five pesos he began to sweat. From the look of his eyes I judged he had not earned five pesos in five months. But his cunning kept him from weakening. He had the only cart in the village and fortune seemed hovering over him. He refused my offer.

I had dealt with his species many times before.

"Ten pesos!"

He began to jabber like a crazy man.

We lifted the boat upon the cart and tied it fast, then packed the rest of the outfit inside. I was surprised to see how easily the little mules started off with such a load. At the edge of the jungle I looked back toward the station. The motley crowd of natives were watching us, making excited gestures and shouting. Our guide drove into a narrow trail, which closed behind him. We followed on foot, brushing aside the bushes. I drew a breath of relief as I got into the shade. It was about noon of March the second and very hot. The trail was lined and overgrown with slender trees, standing very close, making dense shade. Many birds, some of beautiful coloring, flitted in the branches. In about an hour we came to a little clearing where there were several thatched huts. I heard the puffing of an engine, and looking out through the trees to see the railroad, I realized we had reached the pumping station and the bridge.

Our driver rounded up six natives, who lifted the boat upon their shoulders. As they were carrying it down the trail they encountered two natives who had never seen a boat.

"What is it, the devil?" they ejaculated.

If I needed any more than had already been said about the wildness of the Santa Rosa, I had it in the bewilderment of these natives. A beautiful wild river, to which boats were unknown! When I conceived

the idea of the trip I had not hoped for so much.

There was a deep satisfaction in the moment. As I followed the men down the trail there was little I failed to note. I heard the soft rush of water over stones, and the mourning of turtledoves. We rounded a little hill to come abruptly upon the dense green mass of river foliage. Giant cypress trees, bearded with gray moss, fringed the banks. Through the dark rich green of leaves I caught sight of light green water. Birds rose all about me; there was the whirr of ducks and rustling in the thick underbrush. We penetrated the dark shade and came out into the open on a grassy point bordered with rocks.

The Santa Rosa, glistening, green, swift, murmured at my feet. The men dropped the boat in the water and went back for the rest of the outfit. I looked up the shady lane of the river, and thought of the moment three years before when I had crossed the bridge in the train. How strange it was, on the moment, to see a large black duck with white-crested wings, sweep by swift as the wind! I had seen that wild fowl, or one of his kind, three years before; and he had haunted my dreams.

[Note.—In our next installment begins the wrestle with the unknown falls and rapids of the river, the strange wild birds and the first encounters with snakes.—ED.]

(To be continued)

