

THE TWO ANACONDAS.

(Continued.)

forest which lay between his new clearings and his home. At that time the tropical forests are as silent and as motionless as if they were dead. It was through such a scene as this that Mr. Barclay rode on his return home, and it was amid such stillness that his attention was at once attracted to a large creeper hanging from a tree in front of him, and which, amid the deadly stillness around, was swinging quickly. Such signs in the forest are never to be disregarded, and Mr. Barclay was too old a woodsman not to be at once on the alert. After waiting some minutes, till the oscillation ceased, and being reassured by the quietness of his horse, which would have been the first to scent a jaguar or a puma, he rode carefully towards the tree, and at a little distance examined it, but for some time in vain. At last the cause of the disturbance, and of the danger also, became apparent on close inspection. On a limb of the tree overlooking the path lay a huge black anaconda, piled in great masses fold over fold, as it is wont, with the end of its tail curled round the limb on which its great bulk rested, and its head left free and elevated about two feet above the rest of its body. In this position it was quite prepared for action, and, holding on by its tail, could at once drop its great length down with irresistible force on any unhappy animal or even person, that might pass below; and when once secured in its gigantic folds, death was certain, whether to man or goat, or deer or sheep. Mr. Barclay, however, was not inclined to give it such a chance as this on his account, and waited quietly at a little distance till, by some cautious maneuvering, he got a full view of the creature's head against the bright, blue sky. Then he fired, and with one charge of slugs so shattered the huge reptile's head that after writhing for a single moment, it came in a long heap to the ground. It was far from dead, however, and plunged wildly, so that for a time he durst not approach it, as it lay knocking the leaves and branches about in all directions. At last it lay still, when he got a close shot with his second barrel, and this so completely shattered the serpent's head that it never moved again. Like a cautious woodsman, however, Mr. Barclay did not feel secure till he had divided with his knife, and not without great difficulty, the vertebrae in the centre of the back. The serpent measured nearly twenty-nine feet in length, and was evidently, from its great thickness, immensely powerful. The only question which remained to be the successful hunter was, what was to be done with the carcass. He was loth to leave it where it was; besides, he wanted its skin—as what victorious hunter does not?—and, above all, he wished to show Mrs. Barclay how easily such seeming monsters could be killed. Not unnaturally, then, though in an evil hour, he determined to drag it home. For this purpose he undid his stirrup-leather, and making it fast over the head of the snake, led his horse along, which, as it towed the snake, left a deep mark in the baggage, and so, following a trail of blood on the grass over which the carcass was dragged. As he advanced, with the huge reptile trailing at his heels, some evil genius put it into his head that now was a fine opportunity to give Mrs. Barclay a lesson that would cure her of her fear of serpents. He never seems to have thought of the matter unkindly, or to entertain for a moment an idea that her woman's nature would not as soon and easily get over its repugnance to these reptiles as he, in his wild, rough life, had doubtless been enabled to do. There is no doubt but that nothing more than a rough practical joke entered his mind, and this was perhaps the only kind of joke the point of which he was capable of perceiving. His simple plan of mischief was soon laid. He determined to take the serpent into the house, and coil it in the sitting-room in such a manner as that its wounded parts could easily be hidden. He dragged it, therefore, with some trouble along the verandah, and soon managed to coil away its great folds in such a way that its injuries were hidden, and it looked indeed as if alive.

When all had been quietly arranged by himself, he went out and called for a servant to fetch down her mistress, who, as is the custom of the country, was sleeping out the great heat of the day in her own room. Little suspecting what was to follow, she came down at once, and the instant she entered the sitting-room Mr. Barclay slipped out and fastened the door behind him. What passed afterwards can only be guessed with horror. Her screams, of "The serpent, the serpent!" were at first so shrill and loud as to quite drown Mr. Barclay's calls at her that the reptile was dead, and that she must look at it quietly; and he was only first alarmed by a noise of struggling, and the piercing cries of some half a dozen female servants, who, drawn by the shrieks of their mistress, had entered the room by another door. What they saw on entering was Mrs. Barclay attacked by a huge anaconda, which had followed up the broad track left by the body of its slaughtered mate. The instant their cries alarmed it, it rolled back its folds through the window by which it had entered. Mrs. Barclay was found insensible, and only slightly torn about the face, and partly on the bosom, by the fangs of the boa. She was quite insensible, however, and never rallied. In spite of all restoratives, she remained in a comatose state till the succeeding day, when convulsion succeeded convulsion, till her death left Mr. Barclay a widower and the parent of a still-born child.—*Serpents and Veno mous Snakes.*

The following plan, to break a bottle or jar across its circumference, so as to form a battery cup, or vessel for other purposes, may be of some service to our readers. I have performed the operation successfully many times. Place the bottle in a vessel of water, to the height where it is designed to break it; also, fill the bottle to the same level. Now pour coal-oil, inside and out, on the water; cut a ring of paper, fitting the bottle. Saturate with alcohol or benzine, so that it touches the oil. Pour, also, some inside the bottle. Set on fire; the cold water prevents the glass from heating below its surface, while the expansion caused by the heat will break the vessel on the water-line. *Scientific American.*

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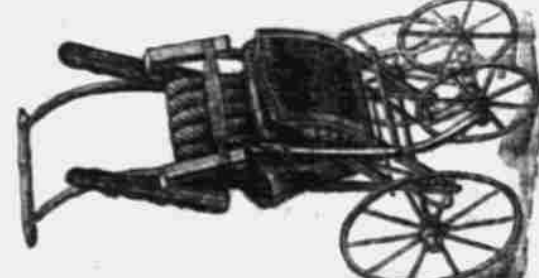
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