

[From Life Illustrated.]

## ALL ABOUT LIONS.

[Concluded.]

But what is the result? The Arabs assess the tribe to pay the fine, and burn as before.

M. Gerard remarks at great length his first encounter with a lion. Long had he ranged the forest in search, and many a night had vainly watched by the paths that led from the lion's lair to the cattle-fold. Happily for the Arabs, there are not many lions. In the course of ten years' hunting M. Gerard only saw twenty-five, and his first lion was unusually long in making his appearance.

The Arabs, and particularly the Arab women, made no secret of their contempt for the Christian dog, who supposed that with his single arm he could lay low the terrific animal which often had kept at bay the hunters of a whole tribe. Hear M. Gerard narrate the conclusion of the long adventure:

Already night drew the curtains of the earth. Distant objects disappeared, and nearer ones assumed a dusky hue, while the shadows blackened in the forests, under the cork trees. I knew that there was no moon that night, and yet each minute shortened the twilight, and nothing announced the coming of the lion, unless perchance it might be the absence of the wild boars that were usually rooting in the forest glades.

I can hardly tell the anguish and anxiety that tortured my mind. I counted and recounted the days that had passed since I left the camp, and I came to the conclusion that I must go back on the morrow, and this time with no hope of ever trying the chase again.

My companions, harassed by dangers, and worn out with fatigues, were anxious to avoid passing the night in beating the mountain paths, and had risen from the turf where they were stretched, with the intention of leaving. Bon-Aziz pointed to the stars that were already burning brightly in the sky, and said:

'It is too late to meet him here—he has already left the woods for the plains by some other path.'

I could not bear to leave, though I saw my companions shoulder their guns and start.

'You can go,' I said; 'I will follow you by-and-by.'

They had hardly taken ten steps when the heavy roar of the lion sounded in the ravine below. I was so wild with delight that, not thinking of the condition of my gun, I sprang into the woods to run straight to the lion, followed by my two comrades. When the sound ceased I paused to wait.

Bou-Aziz and Ben-Oumbark were close on my heels, pale as two spirits, and gesticulating to each other that I had gone mad. In a few moments more the lion roared again, about a hundred paces distant, when I rushed forward in the direction of the sound, with the impetuosity of a wild boar, instead of the prudence of a hunter.

When the roar ceased, I made another halt in a small opening, where I was rejoined by my two companions. The dog, that until then did not seem to understand what was required of him, threw up his nose in the air, and with his bristles raised, and his tail low, commenced taking a scent that he followed into the woods. In a little while after he came running back, all doubled up with fear, and crouched himself directly between my legs.

In a moment more I heard heavy steps on the leaves that carpeted the woods, and the rubbing of a large body against the trees that bounded the clearing. I knew it was the lion that had risen from his lair, and was coming right to where we stood.

Bou-Aziz and the spahi stood with their guns to their shoulders, awaiting the coming struggle with firm hearts. I motioned them to a mastic tree, a few steps behind me, enjoining them with my hand to remain there.

These brave fellows were deserving of the highest honor, for in spite of their mortal fear, they would not leave me alone. You may call this kind of courage by what name you please, but I consider it one of the strongest tests of a man's mind to remain a quiet spectator of a doubtful combat, when his own life depends upon the issue.

The lion slowly approached, and I could measure with my senses the distance that separated us. Now I heard his steps—now his rustling against the trees—and now his heavy and regular breathing. I stepped one or two paces farther forward, toward the edge of the opening, where he was to come out, to have as close a shot as possible.

I could still hear his steps at thirty paces distant, then at twenty, then at fifteen, and yet I was all the while afraid lest he might turn back, or in some manner avoid me, or that my gun might miss fire.

What if he should turn aside? What if he should not come out of the woods? With every new sound my heart beat in heavy throbs with the intoxication of hope. Now all the life in my body rushed through my veins, then again my very life was stilled by the emotion.

The lion, after a momentary pause, that appeared to me an age, started again, and I could see the slender tops of a tree, whose base he brushed, trembling as he passed almost within sight. Now no more barrier between me and him but the thick foliage of a single tree.

I glanced at the sight on my gun, it was barely visible; thanks to the lingering day that still hung on the horizon, the transparency of the air, and the stars that were already burning above me. This was enough for a close shot, and I stepped still further ahead that I might have a nearer mark.

But still the animal did not show himself, and I began to fear lest he should have the instinct of my presence, and, instead of walking slowly out, would clear the mastic tree with a single bound.

As if to justify my fears, he commenced growl-

ing, at first with two or three guttural sighs, and then increasing to the full force of his voice.

Fellow-hunter, it is for you I am writing. You only can understand and feel my emotions. There in the solemn forest at night, standing alone in front of a thicket from whence are coming roars that would drown the roll of the thunder. I thought of my single ball to hurl against a foe that has the strength of a hundred men in his single arm, and that kills without mercy when he is not killed himself.

You can truly say that if I had counted on my own strength that my heart would then have been troubled, my eye dim, and my hand trembling. I confess that those roars made me feel my own littleness, and that without a firm will and an absolute confidence founded upon that Arm that is ever around us and supports us, I would have faltered and failed. But instead of that I could hear that roar so near me without a fear, and to the last remained the master of my own heart and the director of my actions.

When I heard the lion making his last steps I moved a little to one side.

His enormous head came out from the dense foliage, as he stepped with a commanding grace into the light of the open glade, and then he halted half exposed, half concealed; while his great eyes dilated on me with a look of astonishment. I took my aim between the eye and ear, and pressed the trigger.

From that instant until the report of the piece, my heart absolutely ceased to beat.

With the explosion of the gun the smoke shut out everything from my view, but a long roar of agony stunned my ear, and frightened the forest. My two Arabs sprang to their feet, but without moving from their places. I waited with one knee on the ground, and my poniard in my hand, until the smoke that obscured the view should dissipate.

Then I saw, gradually, first a paw—and, heavens! what a paw for a living beast—then a shoulder, then the disheveled mane, and at last the whole lion stretched out on his side without sign of life.

'Beware! don't go near him!' shouted Bou-Aziz, as he threw a large stone at the body; it fell on his head and bounced off; he did not move, the lion was dead.

That was the evening of the eighth of July, one thousand eight hundred and forty-four.

Without giving me time to approach my prize, the Arabs sprang upon me like two madmen, and I was nearly thrown down and crushed by their transport of joy and gratitude. After me it came the lion's turn; and they overwhelmed him with recriminations and blows, and then from time to time fired their guns in the air, to spread the glad tidings to the distant douars.

After they had leaped, and gambled, and hurrahed over the animal, I was permitted to draw near him, and examine him at my ease, to look at the size of his teeth, and to measure the strength of his limbs, and place my hand on his tawny mane. I had no difficulty in recognizing him by the Arab description of 'the venerable.'

To give an idea of this lion, it will suffice me to say that the united strength of us three men was not sufficient to turn him over as he lay, and that his head was so heavy that I could scarcely lift it from the earth.

With the echoes from the reports of my companions' guns came the distant sound of musketry; now here and now there, as the signal was rung from douar to douar, around the whole base of the mountain, until at last it was a general fusillade. In about an hour the Arabs came in on foot and horseback, hurrying forward to touch and insult a foe that had chilled their very souls while living.

After great efforts we at length were enabled to put the lion on two mules, placed side by side, and in this manner marched down the mountain. It was about midnight when we reached the douar, and made our triumphal entry by the light of huge bonfires with the sound of music and of guns, and the women chanting the war-song to the clapping of their hands.

The body of the fallen king was laid out in state on a mat between two fires, and the whole population of the country marched in front of him in stately procession, that they might admire and apostrophize the mighty dead, and all night long and until the sunrise of the morrow, high revel and a royal wake was held in all the tents for the lion of El Archioua.

Early in the morning I left for Guelma, accompanied by a thousand heartfelt benedictions. The hatred of the women had fallen with the lion, and now they were more grateful and ardent in their affection than the man, and they all desired to enrich me by gifts of cattle and herds.

A remarkable fact M. Gerard relates respecting the body of this enormous beast. 'The body,' he says, 'had been placed in the barrack, and it was here that it was skinned and cut in pieces; but although the doors were kept carefully closed, yet for several days the horses and mules that were accustomed to be led past this building to water absolutely refused to come near it, and exhibited the utmost signs of terror, and the very horsemen who were coming into the city from the plain, were stopped short by this invisible 'lion in the path.'

Our hunter's second lion was less troublesome to find than the first. While lying in wait for it one night, he heard from the lips of his Arab comrade a most thrilling lion story. The written tale—he says—will lack to the reader the wild dress and gesture of the speaker, the curious circle of listening figures, with the women in the background, the white tents of the douar, and the flood of moonlight that bathed all in beauty, and lent a double interest to the young Arab's words.

Thus ran the story:

On the desert, when an Arab, the owner of a large tent, marries a wife, he bids all the

world to the wedding, and the guests all go to the bride's tent to conduct her to her new home. The girl is carried in a palanquin, and the guests march by her side, making the night gay with music, and a general fusillade.

But as all men do not herd the same number of cattle, so all marriages are not alike. If one is honored by a great cortege, and gay cavaliers, rich in trappings and well-earned name, caracole by the side of the future spouse, another groom may not have the means even to pay the fiddler that makes the music.

Smail, a young warrior of our tribe, belonged to this latter class, and his last crown had been spent to endow his bride. His retinue was confined to his near relatives, and on the auspicious day he came on foot to the tent of his future father-in-law, like a very peasant.

Here the brave couple and their friends feasted on mutton and couscoussou, and when the repast was done they fired away with powder and ball, taking care to reserve enough to use, in case of need, on their way home. They did not take the precaution to sign the marriage contract, for not one of the party could write even his own name, and the evening coming on, they separated with mutual good fellowship, and well wishes for the future.

The douar of the husband was only a league and a half away; it was a bright moonlight evening, and the party numbered nine guns—what was there to make them afraid? But is it not when the tent is the gayest, that trouble draws the curtain and steps in at the door?

Truly, the good people were gay, and as they returned, in merry mood, they sang as they frolicked over the sand,

Allez-vous-en, gens de la noce,  
Allez-vous-en, chacun chez vous.

Smail walked at the head of the procession, with his dark-eyed wife, and his head was bent, and his voice was low, whispering soft promises of the pleasures that were awaiting them under his tent. His friends were behind, discreetly loitering at a little distance, and from time to time their guns awoke the echoes among the distant hills. All went merry as a marriage bell.

But on a sudden, the devil, who had not been bidden to the wedding, presented himself before them, in the shape of an enormous lion, and crouched down in the very path of the procession.

What was to be done?

They were half between the two douars, and it was equally dangerous to return as to advance. The occasion to win the devotion of his wife forever was too tempting to Smail to allow it to pass.

The guns were all loaded with ball, the bride was placed in the middle of a hollow square formed by the guests, brave men all, and the escort marched on, led by the bridegroom. They came to within thirty paces of the lion, and yet he had not moved.

Smail ordered the party to halt, and then saying to his wife, 'Judge if you have married a man or not,' he walked straight up to the wild beast, summoning him in a loud voice to clear the road.

At twenty paces the lion raised his monstrous head and prepared to spring.

Smail, in spite of the cries of his wife and the entreaties of his friends, who counseled a retreat, bent one knee to the earth, took aim, and fired.

The lion, wounded by the shot, sprang on the husband, hurled him to the earth, and tore him in pieces in the twinkling of an eye, and then charged the group, in the middle of which stood the bride.

'Let no one fire,' shouted the father of Smail, 'until he is within gun's length.'

But where is the man who is strong enough at heart to await, with a firm foot and steady hand, this thunderbolt of hell that is called a lion, when, with flowing mane, blazing eye, and open mouth, he charges on him with immense bounds? All fired at once, without regarding whither their balls went, and the lion fell on the group, dashing them hither and thither, breaking the bones and tearing the flesh of all he found within his reach.

Nevertheless some escaped, carrying with them the bride half dead with terror. In a moment more, and the lion was after them; there was no refuge and no defence, and the wounded beast seized and tore to pieces one after the other, until but one was left of all the party. He, more fortunate than the others, reached the foot of a steep rock, on which he placed the woman, and then began climbing up after her. He had already reached twice the height of a horseman, when the lion gained the foot of the rock as furious as ever.

With a single bound he seized the unfortunate man by the leg, and dragged him backward to the ground, while the woman reached the summit of the rock from whose inaccessible height she watched the horrible spectacle—the death agony of the last of her defenders. After one or two unsuccessful bounds the lion returned to the dead body of his last victim, and commenced mangling and tearing it in small pieces, in revenge for the loss of the poor wife that looked down at him from above.

The rest of the night passed slowly away to the lonely woman. When the morning dawned the lion retired to the mountain; but he departed reluctantly, and not without stopping and returning more than once with a covetous whine for the cowering bride he left behind him. A few moments after he had gone, a group of cavaliers appeared on the plain.

The widow of Smail, without any voice to call, waved her bridal veil as a signal of distress. They came to her at a gallop, and carried her to her father's tent, where she died the next night at the hour of the wedding.

That was the Arab's story; but I will omit the exclamations, taunts, and reproaches, that were

hurled at the murderer after it was finished. One after the other they told their different tales, and it was not until late that the party broke up, the Arabs to return to their tents with many God's blessings for my success, and I to remain on the watch, with a native corporal of the spahis, named Saadi-bou-Nar, whose brother was Sheikh of this country.

M. Gerard continues the narrative of the encounter with his second lion in the following language:

At about one o'clock in the morning, Saadi-bou-Nar, but little accustomed to these night watches, plead guilty to being very sleepy, and stretched himself out behind me, where, to do him justice, he slept most soundly. I know a great many men who, in spite of their greater pretensions to bravery, would not have done as much in such a place at such a time as this.

I had taken the precaution to have all the dogs tied up under the tents so as to quiet their customary clamor, and now in the midst of the dead silence around me I could detect the faintest noise or motion. Up to this time the heavens had been serene and the moon clear; but soon clouds gathered in the West, and came scudding past before a warm sultry wind; a little later, the sky was all overcast, the moon was gone, and the thunder rolled around us in heavy peals, announcing a coming tempest.

Then the rain fell in torrents, and drenching my companions they awoke, and we consulted for a moment about returning to the douar. But while we were talking, an Arab called from the camp, 'Beware! the lion will come with the storm!'

It is needless to say that this decided me to remain at my post, and I covered the locks of my gun with the skirts of my coat, while Saadi-bou-Nar draped himself in his burnous with the heroic resignation of a beaver.

Soon the rain ceased, like all rains that accompany a thunder gust, and we only saw its passage by the lightning that tracked the distant horizon, and the moon, more brilliant than ever, came in and out from the fleecy clouds over our heads. I took advantage of every one of these short instants of clear sky to survey the country about me, and to sound each clump of trees or fallen log, and it was in one of these brief moments that all of a sudden I thought I saw the lion.

I waited breathless till the moon came out again. Yes, by Jove! it was he, standing motionless only a few paces from the douar.

Accustomed to see fires lighted at every tent, to hear a hundred dogs barking in terror, and to see the men of the douar hurling lighted brands at him, he, without doubt, was at a loss to explain the rather suspicious silence that reigned around him.

While I was turning slowly around in order to take better aim, without being seen by the animal, a cloud shut out the moon. I was seated with my left elbow on my knee, my rifle at my shoulder, watching by turns the lion that I only recognized as a confused mass, and the passing cloud, whose length I anxiously regarded.

At last the scud passed, and the moonlight, dearer to me than the most beautiful sunshine, illuminated the picture, and again showed me the lion still standing in the same place.

I saw him the better as he was so much raised above me, and he loomed up proudly magnificent, standing as he was in majestic repose, with his head high in air, and his flowing mane undulating in the wind, and falling to his knees. It was a black lion of noble form and the largest size. As he presented his side to me, I aimed just behind his shoulder, and fired.

I heard a fierce roar of mingled pain and rage echoing up the hills with the report of my gun, and then from under the smoke I saw the lion bounding upon me.

Saadi-bou-Nar, roused the second time that night from his slumbers, sprang to his gun, and was about to fire over my shoulder. With a motion of my arm I pushed aside the barrel of his gun, and when the beast, still roaring furiously, was within three steps of me I fired my second barrel directly in his breast.

Before I could seize my companion's gun, the lion rolled at my feet, bathing them in the blood that leaped in torrents from his throat.

He had fallen dead so near me that I could have touched him from where I stood.

At the first moment I thought I was dreaming, and that it was impossible that the huge bulk that lay motionless before me was the same animal that, endowed with superhuman strength, and vomiting peals of thunder, was just before leaping through the air.

But the cries of Saadi-bou-Nar calling the Arabs of the douar proved to me that it was no dream. I can not explain the reason, but the death of the lion did not give me the same pleasure as that of my first victim; but how could it be otherwise?

In looking for my balls I found the first one, the one that had not killed, just behind the shoulder where I had intended it to hit, and the second, that had been fired in haste, and almost at hazard, had been the one that was mortal. From this moment I learned that it does not suffice to aim correctly to kill a lion, and that it is a feat infinitely more serious than I had at first supposed.

But slowly my preoccupation became dissipated, and little by little, as I contemplated the lordly grace of my victim crouched at my feet in death, and heard the reports of musketry carrying the fame of my victory from camp to camp, I became less thoughtful, and drank with pleasure the intoxicating cup of success.

Nevertheless I wondered at the lethargy of the Arabs, who had not yet come out from their douar; but Saadi-bou-Nar explained this apparent indifference by saying that they were afraid the lion was not yet dead.

It took about half an hour for them to decide to come outside of the hedge to bring me a vase of water I had called for; and when three of the boldest had decided upon risking the attempt, the following was the order of procession of this pru-