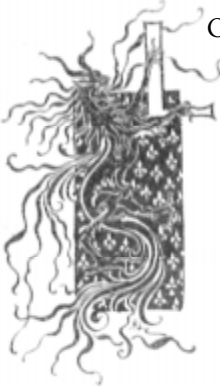


MY ADVENTURE WITH A LION.

BY HERMAN RAVE.



LONG before I became a citizen of A—, I had been a keeper in a menagerie for a season, and successfully bullied the lions and tigers under my care. So it was little wonder that, while we were all gathered at the armory one evening, I should boast a little of my ability to handle wild animals.

The boys laughed incredulously, and one of them suggested that I ought to go to C—, where a circus had been wrecked and the tigers and lions had escaped; it would give me a chance to demonstrate my powers.

"Perhaps he needn't go there," remarked our corporal. "Some of the brutes may stray over this way."

There seemed to be little likelihood of such an event, yet after we had parted and I walked home through the shaded streets, where the electric lights and trees made queer shadows, the corporal's remark insisted upon coming back again and again, and by the time I turned the latch-key and let myself into the house, it seemed not near so foolish a speech as when first heard; indeed, I looked around in quick alarm at a soft pit-a-patting sound behind me, and there was a sense of relief when it proved to be only the footstep of a vagrant dog,

I went to bed, thinking of wrecked circuses, roaming lions and tigers, and it was small wonder that processions of wild animals moved through my dreams.

Once, when I woke up with a start after some unusually disagreeable play of fancy, I wished the corporal's remark and all the circuses at the bottom of the sea. But the vagaries of these dreams were to be topped off by something more realistic.

Shortly after midnight I was startled by loud, urgent knocking, and the sound of some one ringing the door-bell and at the same time pounding upon the door as if trying to burst it open. The people of the house had been awakened, and were running down-stairs to see

what was the matter. I heard the street-door opened and voices talking in the hall; then my name was called, and, hurriedly dressing, I ran down-stairs, fearing some great disaster.

It was the corporal. By the dim, greenish light of the hall-lamp his face looked positively ghastly with fright. His shoes were dusty, as if he had walked along the middle of the street, and his clothing had been hastily thrown on—he was not dressed.

For a moment I looked at him in amazement. There certainly was no fire; the streets were too quiet. Had some crime been committed? But no!

"Those confounded lions of that Van Dander show are in town! They've been seen by a number of persons and the whole town is afraid of being eaten up! Can you catch them?"

Could I catch them? As if it were a matter of a couple of domestic kittens. The question tickled me in its supreme absurdity, and I burst into a fit of laughter. Could I catch them? Of course I couldn't! More likely they could catch me!

"But you said that you had handled lions."

"Yes; in a cage, well-fed, and by daylight. But this is quite a different matter!"

"Oh," exclaimed the corporal in a tone of disgust, "I thought it was all brag, that talk of yours. Then we'll have to hunt them down and shoot them. Good-night!"

"Hold on; where are you going?" I cried, stung by his remark.

"To the armory."

"Well, wait till I get my rifle and I'll go along. Perhaps I may be of some service anyhow."

In a moment I procured the weapon and as we stepped from the house I noticed that the corporal picked up a heavy rifle at the door.

We kept the middle of the streets, reconnoitering carefully and holding our guns in readiness. However, beyond the fantastic shadows cast by the electric light, nothing was to be seen. The streets were absolutely deserted.

At the armory several of the members of the company were gathered, and

as we entered they received us with a volley of questions.

Had we seen anything? Had we heard anything? No? What had better be done then? etc., etc.

The armory was a long, low wooden building. One large room occupied its entire width. At the farther end a couple of dressing-rooms had been partitioned off, and there also stood a billiard-table and a couple of benches.

I walked toward the table and, lying down upon it, with my eyes turned toward the door, called the boys up for a consultation, for they appeared to expect me to act as leader.

They stood around me and listened for what I would say, but before a word could escape my lips our eyes were turned to the door. It was slowly very slowly opening.

A strange spell held us bound, gazing at the moving door. No one spoke.

Suddenly the black and yellow muzzle of a gigantic lion was thrust through the opening. There was a cry of terror from the men, a scampering flight, and I was left alone to confront the terrible brute.

There was absolutely no chance for flight had I wished it, though I did not. A strange, horrible fascination was upon me. The blazing eyes of the brute seemed to hold me with a mesmeric influence, from which I could not withdraw.

He had now come entirely inside, and stood eyeing me steadily. What a magnificent animal he was! His maned front grand and kingly, his body and limbs massive, yet supple, his lashing tail sinuously graceful.

For a moment—what a moment!—he stood thus facing me, as if taking my measure and in evident doubt whether to attack me forthwith or first to explore the place.

He seemed to conclude that I was securely penned, and his fierce eyes left mine to look curiously at the flaming gas-jets. It was but a second, yet it saved me, for my will-power reasserted itself, and everything in me rallied to the contest for life, which was sure to come, and which must utterly depend upon my nerve.

I raised myself slightly, and the movement attracted the lion's attention. Slowly his gaze dropped from the contemplation of the gas-jets. His eyes

sought mine, and with catlike caution and certainty he crawled forward quivering, with a slow, sinuous movement of the body, till he crouched within three yards of me. But I had shaken off that fearful numbing influence, and had steadily met the blazing fury of his eyes with the cold, stern assertion of human will. His quivering ceased. He crouched motionless. In silence we gazed at each other, how long I cannot tell, for in that terrible and supreme battle of human will against brute instinct every sense in me was merged in the silent, intense effort to compel my foe to lower his eyes and acknowledge me his master. I felt that I should conquer. Fear gave way to a savage feeling of recklessness and exultation.

My eyes did not waver, and the tawny fire of his orbs tried at last to shrink away from me, but in vain. I had won, and now I would not let the cowed brute drop his eyes, but held him with a power as inexplicable to myself as it was to him.

His limbs relaxed their rigid tension, and awkwardly he tried to back away from a fear he did not understand. Had I let him go he would have slunk into the street like a whipped cur; but I, thought of the sleeping town.

Without changing my attitude or removing my eyes, I called softly to the corporal. He answered, and I heard a door creak behind me. The lion started, but the authority of my look still held him.

"Quick, corporal!" I whispered, "take true aim—straight into the lion's eye. Shoot, and shoot true; for heaven's sake, shoot true!"

For answer there was the sharp click of a gun-lock. It broke the spell which had held the brute, and with a terrific roar he raised himself to meet the new foe, then crouched for the spring. Vainly I tried to catch his eyes. Would the corporal never shoot! I felt then the fearful agony of suspense and death!

Ah! A sharp crash, a reverberating roar, the hurtling of a tawny mass against and over me—and I awoke from the most awful dream of my life to find my mastiff cuddling his affectionate head against my face.

The Van Dander lions never came to our town.

HILDA'S RACE.

HY H. F. P.



I WILL introduce you to Hilda through the letter that made her known to me. It is from my friend, Frank Hunt, who was visiting cousins of mine at a country

house near a little village in Northern Pennsylvania. My business in New York detained me all that lovely spring-time, and Frank's many well-intended letters only made my fate all the harder to bear.

"Well, old fellow, now you will hear at length what has happened to me here. You know I'm not much good at losing my heart, but by Jove, I'm mightily afraid I shall be done for if I stay the extra two weeks your dear aunt has asked me. And who do you suppose is the unlucky thief? Why, the eighteen-year-old daughter of a kind of gentleman farmer down here. Joseph Brown his name is; you may have heard of him. You are grinning with delight at the idea of my not being as proof as I have boasted, but when I tell you of the first time I met her, you will see that I have reason to be vanquished. Excuse all this enthusiasm; she is worth it, you know.

"The first day it let up raining last week your cousin asked me to try a new horse of hers, and I rode out next morning, taking fence and ditch in spite of the mud. No one was in sight, until from out the woods not far off, came a horse, mounted, I shortly discovered, by a young girl. The beast seemed decidedly restive as he came from the woods. He reared and kicked about a good bit, then came across the field in my direction, toward a pretty high fence. For a second I was alarmed for I am not in the habit of seeing unattended females riding cross-country, and thought the rider might have lost control over him, but in another second I saw how much I was mistaken. The

horse took the fence like a bird, and was coming toward the field where I stood unobserved. I looked at the next fence; it was more than four feet high, with an ugly ditch on this side that the girl might not see. On they came at a gallop, slowing up as they reached the fence. 'Look out for the ditch,' I called out. The girl either heard not or heeded not. The horse rose to the jump, and a moment more was down in the ditch. I was by them in an instant, but the girl was up even sooner. When the horse was on his feet unhurt I looked at the young Amazon by my side.

"She struck your poor smitten pal as being the finest girl he ever looked on. Her habit was covered with mud, her hat off, and her hair blowing about in the most charmingly curly disorder. It is, by the way, a golden brown, and always looks prettiest when a trifle mussed. She is tall and graceful as Diana. (Heavens, how poetical we are growing!) She looked at me with great dark eyes, and a slight smile of the reddest and most tempting lips you can imagine. Her clear skin was slightly dabbed with mud, which showed the delicacy of her coloring more plainly. 'Thank Heaven you are not hurt,' I said. 'No,' she laughed carelessly, 'I never am.' 'Didn't you see the ditch?' I said. 'Yes, but I hoped Lorna could take it. Thank you,' she added, as I helped her into the saddle, and without another word she was gone. Quite evidently she cared for my assistance no further, and I rode slowly home, seeing only that fair, mud-bespattered vision.

"To my delight I found from Miss Miller that the young Amazon (who was Miss Brown) was to be at the dinner Mrs. Billy Earl was giving the next night. And there she was, another sort of a vision, dressed simply and very artistically in a rather original style,

"Since then, as you may imagine, I have seen her often, especially when riding. She is a perfect horsewoman, but frightfully reckless, a queer girl, and decidedly original. She adores her father, who spoils her. She lives alone with him, and he is her only relative. They tell me she has refused many

proposals, and is firm in her determination always to enjoy her present independence with her father. She is awfully clever, of course, and teaches a little school composed of poor country children, all for the love of humanity, though love for the adult male, portion seems to be lacking. She does not object to our companionship, apparently, on occasions and in a *bon camarade* sort of way, but is horribly indifferent to us unfortunates individually.

"Apparently one of my lady's favorite maxims is 'Early to bed, early to rise.' Imagine me scouring the country three mornings a week at seven o'clock in search of her. You see I have it with a vengeance. She is all independence, none of the flirt in her, and yet at times she is charmingly coquettish, and there—Oh, well, you may be tired of my rhapsodies, so, dear old man, *au revoir*.

"Frank H."

After his two weeks at my relatives' Frank spent two more at Mrs. Earl's, who was a firm friend of his, and then one day he walked in upon me and told me his tale of woe. He had been refused, poor fellow. I knew that at a glance, but the story of his refusal was unusual.

He had seen Miss Brown constantly; she had grown very friendly with him, and they rode and drove together nearly every day. Finally she even let him come to her little school and play with the children. One day she gave a picnic for "her children," as she called them, and Frank did not have to beg long before she consented to let him come. That day he felt encouraged, and almost thought she loved him. After the picnic was over he drove her home, and then they sat together on the veranda, and he told her he should probably leave in a few days.

"But you will come back soon, surely?" She said it hastily, and he saw her color rise suddenly as she looked away from him.

"Not this year," Frank said. "Will you promise to miss me a little?"

Hilda had recovered herself, and laughingly said, "Of course! What a question! I shall miss you very much."

Frank regretted her regained self-possession, and asserted that he really must leave in the first train the next morning, and must say good-by. Then, Frank assured me, though it was dusk

and he could not see plainly, he could almost swear there were tears in her eyes as he held her little hand and said good-by. And wonderful fact, that little hand remained quite quietly in his for several minutes, as with a trembling voice—Frank did swear it trembled—she said good-by.

On account of this unusual submissiveness, Frank took courage and said, "Aren't you a bit sorry I'm leaving, and for so long?"

There was a whispered "Yes," and Frank continued:

"Do you know that though I ought to leave to-morrow, yet, I am sorry to go that if you would only tell me to stay I would wait another week. Do ask me to? Please say just one word?"

"Stay," she said, softly.

Frank impulsively kissed the hand he still held, but Hilda quickly recalled her independence.

"That is really too gallant, an old fashion I never could bear; but I am glad you will wait another week. We can have some more racing. But it is very late, and I ought to dress."

"That, I suppose, is a dismissal for me," said Frank, very much piqued, and taking the hint, he left the veranda and drove away.

The week that followed poor Frank was very much teased by this young lady of many moods. One day she was enchantingly sweet and gracious; the next she was a merry, laughing child, treating him as a favorite playmate; another, she would be serious, almost sad, and yet kind; again she would quiz him unmercifully, and on other unhappy days for Frank she would be absolutely disdainful.

But the day before he left she was in a pleasing mood, and Frank decided he must know his fate. So as they rode along together he told her (and he did it eloquently, I am sure) that he loved her, and asked her if there was any hope.

What did this strange and changeable girl do then? She laughed lightly, and with a roguish look in her dark eyes, turned to Frank and suggested they should have a race (the road was straight and soft) to the red barn he could see at a distance.

"If you win," she said, "I am the prize!"

Frank told me this in a fury. She did

it, he said, only to provoke him, knowing how much the better horse she had.

He was preparing a dignified refusal, he said, when the wretched flirt gave him such a beseeching look, and said "Do try!" so prettily, that all he could do was to consent, and away they went.

Then Frank dramatically described the race: he was suddenly seized with a wild feeling that if he killed his horse he would win, and cheat this cruel maid.

He tore on, belaboring his poor steed, and making him run faster than he ever had before, or ever should again. "On, my beauty, on!" he whispered. "We will win her yet! On, faster, faster still!" and the horse seemed to understand, Frank said, and quickened his speed.

But, alas! Hilda was several yards ahead, and her favorite horse, Fleet, who seemed to wish to save his mistress, flew faster and faster. Then, when Frank had gained a little, Hilda looked over her shoulder anxiously her face flushed with excitement, and urged her horse still more. As they neared the barn the dust was flying and the wind whistling in their ears. Hilda was gaining at every long bound, until of a sudden Fleet stumbled, tried vainly to recover himself, and a moment more was lying in the dust. Almost before he lay sprawled on the ground Frank had down past and reached the barn. Then he hurried back to where Hilda was vainly trying to make Fleet get up.

She looked at him, her dark eyes blazing.

"I have won," he exclaimed joyfully, "and won fairly! Have I not?"

"Certainly; but perhaps before you gloat over our victory you will help me. See what has happened to Fleet." Her voice was icy, her glance still more so, and Frank said he then realized disconsolately that she did not love him.

It proved that Fleet had broken his leg. Poor Fleet, he had disappointed his mistress for the first and last time. Hilda was broken-hearted. She sat by the horse while Frank went for help, and waited until the veterinary had decided that nothing could be done, and that poor Fleet must be shot. Then Frank took her home, but she was absolutely silent all the way and rushed to her room without, a word, leaving him standing in the hall.

The next day Frank went to see her, thinking that after all perhaps he had been mistaken. and that her conduct was amply accounted for by the fact of her losing her favorite horse. So with heightened spirits he waited for her to come down.

In a few moments she appeared. She had been crying, and was quite pale. "My poor darling," said Frank softly, going up to her.

This was stupid of him, and I told him so, but he said nothing would have made any difference to that heartless flirt.

She flushed deeply and remarked in as icy a tone as she had used the day before, "Don't pretend you sympathize with me, Mr. Hunt. Give me credit for enough intelligence to understand that of course you can only rejoice at Fleet's death, since it gave you your horrible victory."

Now Frank is one who has always been made much of by women, and this, pride and anger rose as Hilda said this. He told me that he then understood she hated the thought of marrying him, and had been only amusing herself at his expense all those weeks. He said to her quite calmly and in a much icier tone than hers, he assured me, "I beg your pardon most humbly, Miss Brown, I did not think you would regret my victory so deeply, but do not imagine that I will take our agreement seriously; the horrible victory was, after all, an unfortunate accident, and I might have understood you intended to refuse me definitely yesterday, Good morning."

That was the end of poor Frank's story. He had since taken passage for Europe.

In December Frank came back. He imagined he was entirely cured of his broken heart, and that all that was left was a great bitterness toward all the fair sex, and toward one in particular. I saw further. He still suffered, in spite of his feigned indifference.

In the spring I had the luck to have a month's vacation given me. I say in the spring, but my vacation did not begin till the first of June, and I was going to stay with the Millers. It would be my turn to make Hilda's acquaintance.

One day, to my astonishment, as we were lunching at my club, Frank said, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you, I have half a mind to go to the country

with you—Lillie Earl has asked me to stay with her. She says it's very gay there now and will be all summer." I guessed what was in his mind, and advised him to go, for, after all, he would have to go some time and might as well get it over with. So the first week in June we set off together, Frank in a gay enough mood at first, but growing decidedly quiet toward the end of our journey.

For some days Frank and I did not meet. My cousins spoke to me of Hilda, and said Frank had had a tremendous flirtation with her. She had not been away from the country but once all winter, and did not seem to care at all for the present gayeties, so they had almost thought it serious. "But she is coming to our dinner party next week," Mamie added.

The next day Frank and I rode together. On our way home we saw a horsewoman coming toward us. Before I could distinguish the rider I saw from Frank's face that it must be Hilda.

As she drew near I saw she was as charming as Frank had said—in fact much more charming. She flushed all over at recognizing Frank, and how her eyes shone as she smiled her welcome! He only gave her a very civil bow and passed on.

"That is she," he said indefinitely, as we rode along.

"Miss Brown, I suppose you mean," I answered. "I knew that at a glance. Your taste was good." He scowled so angrily that I said no more.

They met oftener after that, and Frank seemed to desire rather than shun meeting her, though he showed her not the slightest attention. He was civil, and coldly so at that. If she cared at all for him he was having his revenge in full, for as I watched the girl I grew more and more to feel that she probably did care for him.

I set myself to make friends with Miss Brown, and I was more successful than at first I dared to hope, perhaps because she knew I was Frank's greatest chum. It was a delightful, perhaps even a dangerous occupation, for she had almost more fascination than I have ever seen in any woman. At times she seemed pleased to hear me talk of him,—I was careful not to make him the topic of conversation too often,—and again she would wear a bored air and say rather cold things of him.

I found she was fond of being sarcastic when she spoke of men. Was not that a sign of a sore heart? I watched carefully. Dear little Hilda! Those were hard days for her. How often have I seen her among a party of horsemen, cast furtive glances at Frank riding ahead with another girl whom he, poor fellow, talked to more earnestly perhaps because he knew Hilda might be regarding him.

Frank was miserable, too, in those days. At last he told me he was tired of the country, and would remain only till the end of the week. "I have accomplished what I came for," he added.

"You have made her believe you are indifferent," I said, "but you are not indifferent, and neither is she. Take my advice and try once more."

"Rubbish!" he said angrily. "If you are my friend you will not speak of her again."

He left at the end of the week to spend the rest of the summer at Bar Harbor. One day when I was calling on Hilda I happened to mention this.

"What! Gone?" was all she said.

He had never called, not even to say good-by.

I left the country after more than a month's stay, parting great friends with Miss Brown. I believe she liked me sincerely, and yet there was something in her regard for me that made me pity her with all my heart.

One September day as I read the paper my eye came across a passage telling of the death of a Mr. Brown, a horse fancier, of Pennsylvania. I read it hurriedly, and it proved as I feared. Hilda's father had died suddenly, leaving her alone in the world. As soon as I could collect my thoughts I wrote to her. How I pitied the girl, left without one near relation or friend. As I thought of her more and more, I decided to get away somehow and go to her. Any friend would be better than none at this time; and besides being her friend, I was Frank's.

I found her even more prostrated with grief than I had imagined. She was entirely alone. She had had an elderly lady with her, a friend of her father, for two weeks, and when she was obliged to leave Hilda would have no one.

She seemed glad to see me. "You are my best friend, I really believe,"

she said—"I know how hard it was for you to come." How simply she said it, and how sad her pretty face was!

She was much changed. She seemed crushed, and bore it in a dazed way I could not bear to see. "If Frank were only here," I thought, and then it occurred to me to ask Hilda where he was, for I thought he must have written her.

The tears rushed to her eyes when I asked her, though she brushed them away, and her voice was hard as she said: "He has never written me, or even sent me a word. He is not my friend, and yet once I knew him so well."

I was astounded; it was unlike him; his heart must have softened toward her in her sorrow.

One day when I was with her I saw her grow very ugly and lose her temper entirely toward a farmer's wife who had been too interfering. After the woman had left, Hilda turned impulsively and said: "I am ashamed—ashamed to have you see me lose all self-control. I thought I was growing stronger. My horrible temper once changed all my life—I am lonely." She burst into tears, unnerved and beyond all self-control.

It was the first time I had seen her unable to restrain her grief. I tried to comfort her, and ended by saying, "I understand. It is about Frank you spoke but I will make it right."

"What are you saying?" she said, rising before me, her face filled with anger. "As you are a man of honor, I command you never to breathe what I said in a moment of weakness. Never breathe it to any one—to him above all." Then the tears again came to her eyes, as she added humbly: "I beg of you, dear friend, as you value my friendship, promise me you will never speak of it." What could I do but promise?

Another week and I was again in New York, and on the first of October Frank again put in an appearance. A bright idea flashed across my mind. I would ask him why he had never written; I could at least tell him how his rudeness—I would call it abominable rudeness—had hurt Hilda's feelings, and with all the eloquence I could muster

I would describe her grief. At a lucky opportunity would tell him of my need of a horse, and how I should like to get one of Hilda's, and say I wished he would do me the favor of getting it. It would only take him a day or two. The horse business must, of course, be warily done; not mentioned in the same breath as Hilda's grief and his rudeness.

Strange to say, my sly scheme finally succeeded. After a time I received a hasty note from Frank saying he was off for the country to get me my horse, and to apologize to Miss Brown for his rudeness.

It seems that Frank waited only a few hours after his arrival in the country before starting to accomplish his mission. He waited in the library only a moment or two before Hilda came in, very pale and looking lovelier than ever, of course, he thought, in her black gown. She greeted him coldly, but how that hand that he had not held for so long trembled in his! Frank's excuses were well given, but Hilda received them coldly, and Frank was awed both by her sadness and her coldness—so completely awed that for a few minutes there was silence.

"You must be lonely."

How tender Frank's voice was as he said that, and how filled his eyes were with sympathy as he looked into hers.

"I am," she said, withdrawing her gaze, and her voice shook slightly.

"But you will not be lonely always; you will marry."

"Never," said Hilda, but not as firmly as she meant to.

"I am glad of that," Frank said hurriedly, "for there is only one man I should be willing to see you marry, and you would not marry him. But why are you so determined?"

Hilda's cheek was no longer pale, and her voice was more unsteady than ever as she answered: "Because the only man I ever loved I lost through my horrible temper." She looked up at him—and there is no need to follow them any further,

Frank forgot to buy my horse.

