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Frank Reade Jr.'s

NEW ELECTRIC VAN; or,
Hunting Wild Animals in the Jungles of India.

By "NONAME."
FRANK READE JR.'S NEW ELECTRIC VAN: OR, HUNTING WILD ANIMALS IN THE JUNGLES OF INDIA.

By "NONAME."

Author of "Frank Reade and His Steam Tally-ho," "Frank Reade and His Steam Team," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE CIRCUS MAN.

"Is Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., in?"

"Deed, sah, I done see him am!"

"I would like to see him!"

"You gib me yo' card, sah, I take it to him!"

"Here it is!"

This conversation took place at the gate entrance to the large yard surrounding the extensive machine shops in Readetown, U. S. A. These shops were the property of Frank Reade, Jr., a wonderful inventor of many curious machines, and whose reputation was world-wide.

The man who applied for an interview with the young inventor was a short, thick-set man, flabby dressed, but yet with an open, honest countenance, and a whole-hearted hearty manner, which at once gave one a favorable impression.

The darky at the gate was short and stout, with a genuine African type of features and gleaming ivory.

He took the card and said:

"'At right, sah! I gib dis to Marse Frank, an' bring back de answer dis evening."

"Hold on, you see of spades!" cried the visitor, good humoredly.

"Don't be so quick. I want to speak with you!"

"Well, sah, what you hab wif me?"

"You're a dandy, ain't you! I've heard lots about you! Ain't your name Pompl?"

The darky grinned.

"Dat am what it am, sah!"

"I thought so. Hain't you got a working companion called Barney O'Shea?"

"Bejibers, an' whut will yez have wif me?" came a voice in a rich brogue from beyond the gate.

There, as Pomp's side appeared a genuine type of the Celt, with broad, grinning mug, and a comical twinkle in his dancing gray eyes.

"Oh, you're there, are you?" cried the visitor in a hearty way.

"Well, I'm glad to meet Barney and Pomp. I've heard of you, as I guess everybody else has in the wide world."

The big man held out his hand, and Barney took it.

"Bejibers, I'm like the looks of yez: but divil a bit do I remember yez at all, at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the visitor. "I reckon yo' don't. Well, here's my card. I'm well known myself!"

Barney took the card and read aloud:

"Walsingham Gladwell, of Gladwell's Famous Four Confront and Intellectual Exposition of Zoological Research, New York City."

Barney and Pomp tried to read the card.

"Begorra, av yew wud talk Irish, shure I'd engage to understand yez!" he cried. "But divil a bit can I mispronounce sich words as thin!"

This Walsingham Gladwell nearly collapsed with laughter.

"Well, I don't know as I blame you!" he cried. "It does hold some big wots. However, you'll understand when I say that I run a large circus."

Barney's eyes snapped.

"Shure it's a circus, is it?" he cried, "then, bejibers, I'm onto yez. But you'll never find a better curiosity thin the nigger here. Share they'd cum from everywhere to look at the holies av him."

"God bless you, Jes' yo' listen to dis child!" protested Pomp. "Dat am de only godwine Irish apie dat am lef' on dis year. It wud be de best card yo' end get."

Well, Nathaniel Gladwell roared.

He knew from report that Barney and Pomp were in their element when engaged in roasting each other.

They were the warmest of friends and yet unspiring in the perpetuation of practical jokes one upon the other.

"Irish apie" roared Gladwell. "That is a good one. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Share yez have insulted me, naggy?" spat Barney. "It's yes! as was a monkey afore ever yez war a man. Whuruow? Tis that yer impudence—am that?"

A pile of dirty water sat upon a platform by the gate. Barney had picked it up and dashed it full at Pomp. Its contents took the darky full in the face and with demoralizing effect.

The dirty water went down the darky's throat, into his eyes, ears, and nose, and all of the other.

"Jes' yo' stop o' dat! Pfft!" he yelled when he recovered his breath. "I jes' had yo' life fo' dat!"

Gladwell was convulsed. He thought it was awful funny.

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"You know that I run a circus?"
"Yes!"
"Well, you and your two men, Barney and Pomp, with one or two of your wonderful machines would be the greatest attraction on earth!"
Frank looked at Gladwell to see if he really was in earnest and then laughed merrily.
"You don't really mean that, Gladwell?"
"Yes, I do."
"But how could I consent to travel with your show? I have too many projects on hand."
"But the money would be in it both for you and me!"
Frank looked serious.
"The money consideration, my dear Gladwell, is no object to me! I am in business that I want. Let me suggest to you a better plan for rendering you a service. You will make almost as well out of it.
Gladwell looked eager.
"What do you mean?"
"I have just invented a new machine for a purpose which will hit your case. You have come along just in the nick of time."
"Indeed!"
"My new Electric Van is specially constructed for the purpose of traveling in parts of the world thickly infested with savages with ease."
"Electric Van?"
"Yes, it is."
"What kind of a machine is that?"
"You shall see it and then I can the more fully explain it to you!"
"But I cannot see in what way it will benefit me if you will not consent to travel with me on a season with my show. Mind you, I am not saying this favor on the score of any obligation you may feel under to me. It is purely a business motive."
"I appreciate the fact," said Frank, quietly, "but no pecuniary consideration would induce me to travel!"
"Then I need not waste further time here?"
"I shall be very glad to render you assistance in another way."
"But I do not seek it in any other way," said Gladwell.
"Come now, Gladwell, old friend, don't be unreasonable."
"Well, in what manner can you help me as well as to travel with me?"
"Sit down here and I will tell you. Then we will go in and take a "look at my latest invention."
Gladwell could not refuse this generous offer.

CHAPTER II.

THE ELECTRIC VAN—EXPERIENCE WITH A CRANK

Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., had just arrived at his hotel a moment before the time set for the departure of his new invention, a magnificent electric van which he had designed and built. He had received a cable from his friend, Mr. Gladwell, informing him of the arrival of the electric van at the hotel, and had hastened there to make acquaintance with the inventor.

"You know, Mr. Reade," said Gladwell, "that I have been working on this invention for many years, and I am glad to say that it is now ready for use."

Frank Reade examined the electric van with great interest, and was soon convinced that it was a wonderful machine. He was especially pleased with the way in which it had been constructed, and was sure that it would prove a valuable addition to the circus.

"Your electric van is a masterpiece," he said, "and I am sure that it will be a great success.

Gladwell thanked him, and they shook hands cordially.

"I am looking forward to seeing it in action," said Frank Reade, "and I am sure that it will be a great hit with the audiences."

The two men parted, but they were soon to meet again, for Frank Reade was determined to see the electric van in action, and he knew that it would be a great success.
The Electric Van was packed in sections and shipped to San Francisco. But just as they were about to take the cars from Rendontown Frank read in a newspaper:

"The engine of a steamboat in the jungle near Turn was blown up, and made its escape."

"Mercy on us!" thought the young inventor. "Can it be possible that that villain really intends to freeze the world?"

But Frank would not entertain the thought. The party reached San Francisco in safety and went aboard the steamer. Soon they were sailing out through the Golden Gate en route to the west. All were in high spirits. Walsingham Gladwell was particularly hilarious, and actually danced a jig in his delight.

But among the passengers was one individual who regarded the party covertly and with an evil sneer. He was dressed shabbily and wore a long, black beard. To a close observer it would have seemed as if this was artificial.

The steamer, however, was two days out from San Francisco before any incident occurred to mar the voyage. Then one moonlight evening all were congregated upon the deck. Barney had his fiddle and Pomp his banjo. The two jokers were entertaining the crowd with alternate songs. Barney sang a ditty, rich voice, and sung sentimental as well as comic ditties.

Pomp had a beautiful tenor voice, and his rendering of some of the old plantation songs was inscrutable.

"Och, Rory, be aye, don't kiss me no more. Shure, it's six tomes to-day ye've kissed me before. Och, there goes another, an' there to make sure. Sure there's no lack in old numbers, says Rory O'More."

Everybody applauded, and then Pomp got in his work in fine shape. It was certainly quite a treat.

Frank Reade, Jr., presently strolled away from the others, going aft.

He was busily thinking of the future, and was in a retired part of the steamer. He never suspected the fact that a dark cloud was creeping up behind him stealthily.

Leaving over the rail, Frank was watching the sea, when he heard a reading second behind him.

He turned just in time to recognize a man springing upon him. It was the man with the whiskers, and he hissed fiercely:

"Ah, I tell ye that Stillman Tree is not to be baffled. This time you die!"

A sharp cry escaped Frank's lips.

But before he could get into position to defend himself, his assailant had hurled him over the rail bodily.

CHAPTER III.

IN CALCUTTA.

Down went Frank Reade, Jr., into the sea.

A great cry went up from his lips. But it did not seem to have been heard.

The songster of a moment, and he realized in an instant how utterly desperate his situation was.

The steamer, of course, was leaving him every instant.

In a short time it would be out of sight.

He was a good swimmer, but he could not hope to keep afloat long.

"My God! I am lost!" he cried. "Help—give me help!"

But there seemed no answer to his prayer.

Those on board the ship either did not hear him, or would not answer.

But no! Suddenly there was a great shout went up.

There had been a sailor on one of the yards, and he heard the splash, and turned just in time to see Frank in the water asthma.

"Man overboard!" he shouted.

The cry went from one end of the ship to the other.

"Man overboard!"

It is over a thrilling cry at sea, and impresses one with horror. In an instant everybody rushed to the rail.

The bell rang in the engine-room to slacken speed.

Down from the davits went a boat, quickly manned.

Sandy tailed away astern, a man and a boy, with a large hookah and a number of large, strong, and most handsome men.

Frank was still afloat, for he was a good swimmer. He shouted to the boat's crew and they were soon by his side.

In a jiffy he was lifted into the boat.

His life was saved.

"Why, Mr. Reade, did you call the boat over?"

"I didn't call. I was thrown over!" cried Frank.

"Who called you?"

"Yes!"

"May the saints save us! How did that happen, sir?"

Frank described the incident.

The boat was crowded with horror.

"I know the scamp ye refer to, Mr. Reade!" cried the boatswain.

"And we've never liked his looks since he's been aboard. We'll put him in jail!"
This extended through a picturesque tract of country. In a measure, it was an agricultural region. Small plantations were seen, and some fine bungalows, or Hindoo temples, were massive.

The natives everywhere dropped their implements and stood agape at sight of the Electric Van. It was altogether a curious sight to them. Never before had so strange a machine invaded the region. It was, therefore, no wonder that they were astonished. But none offered anything like hostile opposition to the Van. In some places superstitious folk flung themselves on their faces, overcome with fear and horror.

Our adventure in the Van enjoyed the situation. Upon every hand there was some new wonder to be seen. The country was wild and picturesque and unlike anything they had ever visited before. Walsingham Gladwell was in his element. He was so much pleased with his experience that he danced and capered and sang lively songs.

"Hurray! I wouldn’t have missed this trip for the price of my show!" he cried. "It is simply grand!"

Barney manipulated the steering wheel, and Pomp attended to the dynamics and to the culinary department. It was easy sailing as far as the highway went, but when this finally terminated it was not so easy.

The division was now encountered of thick forests and dense canebrakes. To penetrate these it was necessary to take narrow paths used by the natives, and often it was imperative to stop and fell trees to make the way broad enough for the Van to pass. In the ordinary canebrakes the knives of the hands would correct their passage through. But, of course, in the forest this could not be done. But the spirits of all were high.

There were the plenty of provisions on board the Van. But at available opportunities Frank sent Barney and Pomp into the woods for game. Rice and corn and other articles of food were also bought of the natives.

Game was plentiful. Deer and bear were in the forests, and ducks and wild geese in the canebrakes. Of course Pomp and Barney enjoyed this.

The fee they had dined on was the deadly cobras and capellio, or hooded snakes. These were very plentiful, and their poison was fatal. But the adventurers had made provision for this before leaving home.

They had provided themselves with long l汲ges of rattlesnake. The longs of the cobras, unlike those of the rattleless, are weak and brittle. Against the rattlesnake they were of no avail whatever.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIANT PYTHON.

So that they were completely safe with regard to the hooded snakes. The reptiles in those districts were very plentiful. In fact, Barney was stricken in the lower part of his legs eleven times one day, while hunting in the canebrakes.

It had been noted for the Impressive character of the rattlesnake it would have been a corpse.

There were other foes to be dreaded. Once of these was the brown python, a monster which frequently attained the stupendous length of forty feet. The party were enjoying a noonday in a shady dell in the forest one day, when suddenly one of these monsters appeared.

Barney was the first to epy his snakishness. Frank Reade, Jr., was aboard the Electric Van.

Gladwell was procuring water as a spring near, while Barney and Pomp were engaged in skinning the carcasses of a fine wood deer. It was no doubt the smell of the blood that had drawn the python to the spot.

Barney heard a rustling in the undergrowth and turned suddenly to behold a horrifying spectacle. The reptile’s head protruded through the green foliage not ten feet distant. Its eyes were fixed with a basilisk-like gleam upon Barney. The Cole for a moment felt sick and faint. An awful horror was upon him, and it seemed as if he was likely to come under the influence of that awful fascination which the serpent is said to exert.

But the Cole knew well what this would mean. With a tremendous exertion of will power he broke away from the snake and cried:

"Och! wou yeg luk at the loxks av it! Shure it’s a fearful craythir. Run, nyayer—run fur yefloors."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pomp, making a dash for the Van.

Both terrified fellows ran for the Electric Van. They were shouting at the top of their lungs.

Walsingham Gladwell dropped his water bucket and also started for the Van. Meanwhile the python very coolly glided out of the undergrowth. It was a literal monster, and its shining brown folds seemed fearful in their length and circumference.

But the python was not incited to head the Van. It was the carcass of the deer it was after. But the scent of blood had brought to the spot another aspirant for a hearty meal.

This was a huge, yellow tiger, which now came leaping gracefully out of the forest. The tiger came down in a crouching attitude upon the opposite side of the deer from the python. It was a tabula.

Between the two gourmands was the dainty prize. The tiger lashed its tail and growled, with its eyes fixed upon the smaller animal.

The latter drew its sinuous coils up and gave a tremendous hiss. By this time Gladwell had reached the Van and all were safely about.

"Bang, it’s a foghight they’ll have!" screamed Barney. "Shure, it’s the snake an’ the tiger!"

Pomp had picked up his rifle and seemed inclined to fire.

But Frank Reade, Jr., called: "Hold on, Pomp!"

"Fright, Marsl Frank!"

"Let us see what they will do. It is likely they will eat each other up."

Indeed, this was likely.

The python’s huge coils were drawn up and its head reared high.

Suddenly it shot forward, the immense coils unrolled like a whip lash.

That moment would have been fatal for the tiger but for prompt movement upon the part of the python.

The tiger did not attempt to dodge the attack. Neither did he retreat.

The python’s coils rolled harmlessly over him. It was impossible for them to close around him. Had the tiger been in an erect posture they would have done so.

But the instinct of the savage beast had saved it.

The python’s coils passed harmlessly over the tiger. Still the python’s coils passed harmlessly over the tiger’s striped body.

The snake gave a fearful hiss and whirled about. Down came the tiger against the python’s body. Once more the huge coils passed harmlessly over the tiger’s striped body.

The python’s coils curled about the python’s body. It was impossible for them to close around him. Had the tiger been in a crouching position there would have done so.

But the python’s coils curled about the python’s body. It was impossible for them to close around him. Had the tiger been in an erect position they would have done so.

But the instinct of the savage beast had saved it.

The python’s coils passed harmlessly over the tiger. Still the python’s coils passed harmlessly over the tiger’s striped body.

Once more the huge coils passed harmlessly over the tiger’s striped body.

The tiger gave a tight and its eyes glared wildly.

"Now shall we see fun!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.

And he was right.

The tiger saw that the snake’s game was to assume the defensive and try to swallow the prey right before his eyes.

It was now the tiger’s turn to try to make the offensive.

This changed the aspect of affairs quite materially.

"I’ll bet on the snake now!" cried Gladwell, excitedly.

The snake’s head slowly worked its way toward the antelopes.

Let its eyes seemed fixed upon the tiger.

That beast growled savagely and began also to creep toward the carcass of the antelopes.

The snake’s jaws seemed about to close upon it.

Now or never! Thus the tiger must have thought, for he swung himself forward and made a blow at the snake’s head with his paw.

But he might as well have made a pass at a shadow.
The snake dodged quick as a flash.

Then out shot those terrible coils.

This time the tiger could not dodge. The coils closed about him with a crunching sound.

Up into the air and over and over went tiger and reptile.

The tiger's claws were flying everywhere and his horse-growls filled the air.

But the python's folds were about him, and crushing vitals, bone and sinew flung ash-all to a pulp.

Around the glands like a huge ball furiously went the combatants.

Then the din ceased.

Slowly the python ceased its revolutions. There was a crushed yellow body in its giant folds.

There was one less tiger in the wilds of Nepal.

The python dropped its victim and now started with a glowing motion for its prize.

Our adventurers each drew a deep breath.

It had certainly been a wonderful spectacle.

It was safe to say that few human beings had ever witnessed its like.

"Begorra, I never saw the loike at that!" cried Barney. "'Share both av thim was dead game to the last.'"

"Golly, but I didn't know I wouldn't like to hain in dat tigah's place!" cried Pomp, with a deep breath.

"No," said Frank; "the python is a hard reptile to handle.

"What a beauty he is!" cried Gladwell. "Oh, if I only had him for a specimens av a show."

Barney had raised his rifle.

"Saare I'll quick shot the ugly mug av him!" he cried.

But Frank interfered.

"Hold on!" he cried. "Did you say, Gladwell, that you wanted that python?"

"Yes."

"You shall have him."

"But—how can we trap him?"

"Keep quiet and I will tell you.""

"I'll do that."

"After he has gorged himself upon the antelope he will go into a kind of stupor. You can then hire a dozen natives for a song to net him. In the net he can be dragged into a cag and taken to Calcutta and shipped home for you by the natives."

"Good!" cried Gladwell, excitedly. "It will be worth a fortune to me."

The python did just what Frank said it would.

The reptile began the process of swallowing the antelope.

This was the most astounding spectacle yet.

To see that mass of flesh disappearing slowly down the snake's throat was a sight of no ordinary sort.

It required fully twelve hours for the python to swallow the antelope sufficiently to go into a torpor.

Then Barney was sent to the nearest bungalow.

A dozen of natives were easily hired for the purpose of netting the huge monster.

They returned to the spot with Barney, and after an interview with Frank Read, Jr., proceeded to bag the python.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE POWER OF A THUG.

This was also a wonderful spectacle. A huge and powerful not, with many folds, was procured. This was thrown over the snake's head, and then spears were jabbed into the reptile's body.

In a few moments the reptile, writhing in pain, wound itself so completely in the net that it was powerless.

Then a native ox cart was procured, and the snake, with its tons of weight, was dragged aboard.

It would require two weeks to get the reptile to Hud Jan.

But there Gladwell had appointed shipping agents, who would see that the snake was safely caged and cared for and shipped by steamer for San Francisco.

The natives departed with the python after being assured that they would be well paid when they reached Hud Jan.

Gladwell was delighted. He had procured a specimen for his show, which for size had never been equaled in America.

"I will nation in my body!" he cried. "Gladwell's Circus will take the lead."

The Van now passed on deeper into the wilds.

The region grew into a vast forest, thickly inhabited.

Thus far Frank had seen nothing of the Thugs, against whom he had been warned.

One day they met a native hunter, who told them that they were only fifty miles from the Bang Chu jungle.

He directed them to go to the northward, where they would come to suddenly large plains and they would be clear traveling.

Frank followed these directions and found them to be true.

The jungle was reached in quick time.

The magnificent Bang Chu jungle lay before them.

None of the natives dared to invade its depths, which were said to literally swarm with wild beasts.

In the midst of the jungle they came upon a village of Hamados, a Hindoo sect.

The head man or prince of the place consulted with Frank.

The young explorer was not favorably impressed with his appearance. Then he had gone, he said courteously to Gladwell:

"There, Gladwell, if you had that fellow in your show, you would have the greatest curiosity of all!"

He put him and musketeer's cloak round the circus man.

But Sado-Dak, which was the ruler's name, gave Frank some valuable information.

His description of the jungle and its terrors was of the lurid, blood-curdling kind.

"Sahib will find many dangers there!" he declared. "There is the white bhunder, the giant bear, and the mighty dragon. In the center of Bang Chu there is a vast lake, in which is a mighty serpent capable of opening its huge mouth and swallowing up a boat with ten men in it."

Many more Munchesnäk tales were rendered Frank.

The young inventor listened with great seriousness.

But when Sado-Dak was gone, he said:

"That is the biggest rogue and most atrocious liar I have met since I have been in India!"

The Hamados were all of a low caste, and beyond all doubt cut-throats and ruffians.

Frank remembered the warning he had received in Calcutta.

Two of these villagers were of the Tung demolition he had to deal with. He warned Barney and Pomp, and preparations were made to resist any attack made upon the Van.

They were obliged to linger for two days at the village of the Hamados on account of a dearth of provisions.

There was, of course, no path into the jungle of Bang Chu.

But Frank felt sure that he would move through the dense grasses with the scythe blades upon the hubs and in front of the Van. Barney and Pomp were wise enough to heed Frank's warnings.

But Gladwell was not inclined to be so distrustful.

The circus proprietor regarded the Hamados as innocent and ignorant natives.

They can possibly mean no harm," he declared. "I am not afraid of them."

"You have heard of the deadly disciples of Thuggas," asked Frank. "If you mean those wretches who come up behind you and garrote you?"

"Yes."

"I am not afraid of them. I can keep an eye out, and it will be a smart man who garrote me."

It was of no use to argue with Gladwell. The circus magnate only laughed and puffed-poohed the subject delicately.

So it happened that when Frank and Barney and Pomp were not looking, he slipped out of the Van and paid a visit to the town. He was received with the greatest of courtesy.

The Hamado merchants threw open the flaps of their tents, and invited him in to partake of hainshech or smoke a weed allied to tobacco, or drink wine.

Gladwell went upon a kind of spree, as it were. He joked with the Hindoos flirted with their women, and incantations showed that he had money with him.

He had spent some hours in the town, and was having a high old time when a native approached him.

He had a smattering of English, and, bowing low, said:

"Sahib, I greet you. Great prince of a mighty nation, I pay you homage."

"Go easy, friend!" cried Gladwell, with a laugh. "I ain't used to taffy. What do you want? A ticket to my show?"

"Sahib is looking for wonderful animals to cage and curious things?"

"Yes, please," cried Gladwell. "Have you got a six-legged rhinoceros to sell?"

"Ah, come with me, sahib. I will show you the most wonderful vy."

Gladwell was usually a sharp man.

In his own country the buncos would have had no show whatever to him. But here in the heart of ignorant India he allowed himself to be victimized.

The native, a villaneous-looking fellow, who gave the name of Mahabir, led the way to the nearest town.

He pretended that in this belt of trees there was kept a wonderful animal the like of which existed nowhere else.

Soon they had reached the forest and entered a narrow path.

This was thickly beset with overhanging vines, which in places nearly shut out the light of day.

Mahabir led the way into this path.

Gladwell had not proceeded ten yards when a fearful sense of appalling danger came over him.

He suddenly remembered with a thrill Frank Read, Jr.'s warning.

The instinct was upon him to turn back.

They were just passing under an overhanging limb of a tree, when Mahabir suddenly paused.

"Ah, sahib, look!" he cried. "Behold the wonder of Bang Chu!"

In that instant Gladwell heard a noise behind him.

Before he could turn to see, there flashed his finger past his head, and a sinewy coil was about his neck.

The Thug flashed across his horrified vision, then there was a rending, a wrenching, a great tug and then silence followed.

Gladwell's form lay in the path, and two villainous Hindoos were over him.
They quickly rid of his person.
"Ah, Malakian, you found an easy victim!"

"Ay, but feel of his heart?"

"Is he dead?"

"Allah be praised! Now, away!"

And they vanished like shadows, taking with them the deadly cord which had done such fatal work.

Frank Reede, Jr., was much distressed when he learned that Gladwell had left the Van.

"Is it a piece of folly?" he declared. "I gave him credit for more sense!"

Barney and Pomp shared the fears of their employer.

"I done fink some ob dem villains will pick him up!" declared Pomp, "and best to do, Marse Frank!"

"I declare I don't know!" growled the young inventor.

Frank waited in vain for Gladwell to return to the Van. Hours passed, and he didn't come. Then he appealed to the young inventor to take heroic measures.

He sent a native runner into the town to look for Gladwell. The fellow returned with the report that he was not there. Gladwell had been seen to leave the town, going toward the jungle with two of the natives.

He had not been seen since.

"It is as I thought!" growled Frank, with horror. "He is doubtless a dead man long since."

But Frank decided to make a desperate move.

He did not venture to leave the Van. Closing the doors, he started the Van through the town. Barney and Pomp waited near it, ready at a moment's notice.

There was much excitement in the town. The report had spread that the white sahib had been enticed into the jungle and had not returned.

Prince Sado-Dak was a villain of the deepest dye. From the first he had kept vengeful and covetous eyes upon the Electric Van.

It had occurred to the native prince that the Van would make him an excellent coach of state.

As for scruples in the matter of gaining possession of the Van, Sado-Dak had none.

He would use complication butcher the whole gang to gain his desired ends.

With this thought he had secretly called together a few hundred of his warriors and instructed them.

The report of Gladwell's fate was the spark which kindled the fire.

As the Van went thundering down through the streets of the town suddenly a perfect legion of Hindoos sprang into view and opened fire.

Frank saw the situation and its peril at a glance. Quick action was necessary, or the hands would surely succeed in getting away with their prey.

Frank was at the wheel, and he said to Barney and Pomp:

"Steady now! Give them the Winchesters as fast as you can load and fire!"

The two faithful servants needed no second bidding. They sprang to the loopholes.

In that moment a thrilling battle was begun, which was to prove a memorable occasion for all.

CHAPTER VI.

REFUSE OF THE HAMADIS.

The Hindoos fired a volley at the Van. It had been their belief that the bullets would penetrate the steel network. They expected at once to see the inmates of the wagon riddled with bullets.

But the leaden missiles only fell harmlessly against the steel netting.

Barney and Pomp now opened fire.

Both were excellent shots.

The Hindoos fell beneath their aim, and as the Winchesters could be fired with amazing rapidity, the volleys had a most telling effect.

Frank sent the Van charging into their ranks.

It was utterly impossible for the wretches to stand before such an attack.

The heavy wheels of the Van crushed them, and the knives upon the sides made fearful work.

Down through the gang like a thunderbolt went the Van. It was utterly impossible for the Hindoos to stand before it.

Cruising the villainous crew, Frank turned the Van about and made another charge at the foe. This time the Hindoos seemed determined to stop him.

The young inventor smiled.

He opened the key wide and sent the Van ahead at railroad speed.

Like a meteor it went down into the midst of the dusky hordes again.

Barney and Pomp kept the Winchesters popping.

As a rain of bullets fell upon the Hindoos, many of the rifles of the Electric Van.

They might as well have tried to stop lightning in its course.

Scores of them went down under the destructive wheels.

"Give it to them, Marse Frank to Barney and Pomp."

Once again the Van reached the end of the street, and turned to once more charge through the village.

But the Hindoos had enough.

Sado-Dak was a sly and treacherous prince, but he was not reckless or utterly devoid of sense.

He saw that this dreadful invention of the white man could cut him down his back.

In fact, it was in Frank Reede, Jr.'s power to destroy the town.

So Sado-Dak threw out a white flag and called his men back.

Frank Reede, Jr., accepted the truce.

"I sought to destroy this new invention," he declared. "It would be a mercy to do so. I thought they would come to terms!"

One of the Hindoos now came up the street with the truce flag.

In a few moments Sado-Dak came up with his retinue.

Frank Reede, Jr., did not come out of the cage to talk to them. He knew enough of the Hindoo nature to know better than to trust them too far.

Treachery was an inherent trait of their natures.

The prince made a freezing bow, and said:

"This great prince of an which he did not come, I come to offer peace. Will you not come to my palace and partake of hashoo?"

This, of course, was conveyed to Frank through an interpreter.

Frank replied contemptuously.

"I decline your offer!" he replied. "I do not trust you, treacherous princes, and there shall be war between us until you restore to me my friend, whom your-Thugs-destroyed away and whom I fear they have slain!"

Sado-Dak made reply:

"I know not the fate of your friend, sahib. I am not a Thug and cannot be responsible for their deeds!"

Frank replied in a voice of thunder:

"My God!" he exclaimed. "He is dead. They have murdered him!"

This seemed the truth.

The body of Gladwell was brought up to the Van. Frank Reede, Jr., sprang out and bent down over his friend.

He saw the tell-tale mark upon the circus owner's neck.

"The work of Thugs!" he groaned.

There was not the slightest hope in Frank's bosom that Gladwell was alive.

Yet he knew that it sometimes happened that the garrotter failed to disconnect the spinal column.

In such a case the victim was known to have come to life after hours of utter unconsciousness. Mechanically Frank lifted Gladwell's head and turned it.

The neck seemed to act freely and naturally. There was no indication but that the spinal cord was complete.

A thrill pervaded Frank's heart.

"He may not be dead!"

He listened to his heart and felt the pulse.

He fancied he could detect a faint beating. This was enough to revive his sanguine hopes.

"Barney," he said, "bring me an electrode and a coil of wire with a disc. Connect the wire with the dynamo!"

"All right, sir!"

The order was quickly obeyed.

Frank arranged the electrical appliance by a method of his own.

The disc, heavily charged, was placed at the spine of the unconscious man.

Then slowly but firmly the current was turned on.

At first no effect was noticed.

Then there was a contracting of the muscles and a quivering of the eyelids.

Frank Reede, Jr., watched these signs of returning life carefully. He waited till he saw certain muscles in the face relax and the lines of life creeping into the white cheeks did give vent to his feelings.

Then he cried:

"He lives! Frank Heaven he is not past help!"

"He lived? Frank Heaven he is not past help?"

Frank's face lighted up with extraordinary amazement.

They regarded the young inventor as a man of more than ordinary gifts, and possessed of a wonderful fetish.

Gladwell opened his eyes now and murmured:

"Where am I? O God! help me! What an awful dream!"

"You are with friends," cried Frank. "Brace right up, old man. For once in your luck, your life is saved!"

"Ah, I remember," muttered Gladwell to Barney and Pomp.

Gladwell was soon sufficiently recovered to get upon his feet.
He was weak, as might naturally be supposed, but a more thankless
person was never seen.

The experiences had effectually cured him of anything like recklessness.
He was prudent, and used good sense.

"I'm a fool," he declared. "In the future, Frank, I will
do just as you say.""I am glad to hear you say that," said Frank. "I will not advise
you for your injury, depend upon it." "I know that well." This ended the epilogue.

Gladwell was saved and all on board the Van were overjoyed.
Sado-Dak had been given a rich lesson and stood in fear of the
Electric Van.

But this very fear made him crafty and treacherous.
He was determined to get square with Frank Reade, Jr., in some
way.

On the other hand, the young inventor was determined to get out
of Sado-Dak's way as quickly as possible.

Accordingly, without so much as wishing the treacherous prince
speedy return to the northward.

Along the verge of the great jungle for twenty miles the Van
travelled.

Frank selected a good spot and drove the Van into the jungle
at full speed.

The monster carriages went crashing through the dense grasses,
and soon came into an open space in the very heart of the wilds.

It was a picturesque spot, and Frank, impelled by some motive,
pushed the lever and brought the Van to a stop.

He had not been done this thing since a great cry went up from Barney.

"Beegorr maiz, Frank, wev yev like the lioks at that!"

At that instant a wild scream came from the depths of the jungle,
and out into the open came a Hindoos.

He was out of breath and panting with terror.

Behind him, with long strides, came a powerful tiger of the man-eating
species.

"Help, sabih, help!" shrieked the unfortunate Hindoos.

"Give him a shot!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.

But before anyone could get their rifles or make use of the tiger
was upon the Hindoos.

The fierce beast charged the helpless fellow to the ground.

His fleshed his powerful jaws in the Hindoos' shoulders.

Barney had got his rifle just in readiness to fire when out of
the open sprang another tiger.

"Don't fire!" cried Frank Reade, Jr. "You'll hit the man."

"Beebars, i'll kill the other beast!" cried Barney.

So the Celt drew aim at the other tiger and loosed away.

The bullets went to a vital spot.

The huge beast rolled over in the death agony.

But no sooner had this been accomplished, when, with deep, cavern-
ous roars, two more tigers sprang out of the jungle.

They were powerful specimens, and descended into the open with
most savage mien.

The place seemed a regular tigers' den.

"Beegorr, paws we have we strick now!" cried Barney, excitedly.

His voice seemed toadden the man-eaters. With hoarse roars,
they sprang for the cage and the next moment came against its sides.

CHAPTER VII.
ELICUTING THE TIGERS.
The force with which the tigers assailed the cage was tremendous.

But the fine steel netting was by far too strong.

It successfully resisted their weight and pressure.

In vain they tried to force their way through the netting.

They clawed and tore at the netting fiercely.

Up onto the top of the cage they climbed and tried their best to get
at the occupants of the cage.

Of course they were in perfect security and did not need to fear
the ravenous beasts.

But yet it was impossible to get a shot at them, as they were not
within range of any loop-hole.

But Frank Reade, Jr., quickly conceived an idea.

Two live wires handled insulated gloves were brought from the
dynamo room.

Barney took one and Frank the other, while Pomp turned on the
full force of the current.

Then Frank thrust one of the wires up through the netting until it
routed a paw of one of the tigers.

Barney did the same with the other paw.

They made a circuit.

They were the hinder paws of the beast. Frank cried to Pomp:

"Turn off the current. Give it the full force."

Pomp did as requested.

The circuit was instantly made.

The effect was startling.

In an instant a terrible throe went through the body of the tiger
and it sank down dead.

Death had come instantly.

The state of the tiger seemed amazed at the fate of his companion,
But even while he was apparently marvelling thereat, he suffered a
like fate.

On the other hand, Gladwell had got a shot at the tiger that had the Hindoos
in its clutches.

The shot wounded but did not kill the beast, and it went limping
off into the jungle in a weak.

Gladwell and Barney left the Van and went to the side of the
Hindoos.

But the fellow was dead.

"Well," said the circus manager, as he returned, "if this is a
sample of the kind of animals we are to meet in the jungle, we shall
have our hands full!"

"We gazed regretfully at the dead tigers.

"What a fine showing they would have made in my menagerie!" he
declared. "It was a pity to kill them!"

Everybody laughed at this.

Once more the Van started to enter deeper into the jungle.

Progress was slow but safe.

At length nightfall came and found the Van deep in the heart of the
Bang Cho jungle.

It was a thrilling position.

Wild animals of all species were numerous in that place.

With the setting in of darkness the distant howl of the hyena was
heard.

Some of the shadows were filled with the forms of these ferocious
animals.

Of course our friends were all safe in the Van.

Yet it was not always pleasant to sit so near to such a frightful
array of foes.

Only the this nightwork separated our explorers from death.

They were fortunate enough to escape.

"Is all my life I never saw so many wild beasts?" declared Frank
Reade, Jr., "Boo-hoo, it is appalling. I don't wonder that the
Hindoos never dare to go out of their jungle."

"Beegorr, it's the worst I ever saw!" cried Barney; "this beats our
thrip to Central Africa."

"Did the chile am not pascal to lione a's much they?" said Pomp.

"De Bibes see dai de lamb shall lay doun wif de lion, but I done kill
de po' lamb wouldn't staan much show yer longside of dese yew!"

"I reckon they wouldn't, Pompey?" declared Gladwell. "But I've
got an idea?"

"What am it, makin'?"

"Suppose you get your ganjo and play a tune. Let us see what
effect it will have upon the beasts."

Barney and Pomp went after their instruments with alacrity.

Barney came out with his giddle and Pompey with his banjo.

They struck up lively tunes and played for some moments.

The effect was magical.

Singularity enough, the hyenas ceased howling, and the tigers ceased
their loud roarings.

The beasts seemed to be spell-bound by the music.

They appeared to listen intently. But the moment the music
stopped they began to howl again.

"Who can say that music hath not charms to soothe the breast of
savage beasts?" quoth Gladwell. "I think you two chaps could charm
some of those animals so that I could get them into my menagerie."

Everybody laughed at this.

But suddenly a peculiar thing happened.

The hyenas seemed to divide and slink away.

Some powerful influence seemed to have assailed the beasts.

Frank was the first to perceive the meaning of this. He
saw a white form suddenly emerge from the depths of the
jungle.

There was something so majestic and so dignified about the
appearance of this white figure that he could not help but
note it.

"Look!" he cried. "As I live, it is the white tiger!"

Instantly the occupants of the cage seemed to partake of the same
species of awe as had prevailed the beasts.

All gazed in silence for a moment at that grand white figure.

Then Gladwell broke the silence.

"By the great horn-spoon!" he cried. "I must have that for my
menagerie!"

Frank Reade, Jr., sprang to the search-light and turned it full upon
the object of their interest.

The effect was sublime.

There, fully revealed, was the white tiger, and a beautiful specimen
he was.

He stood gazing at the Van, holding his long tail slowly.

The glare of the electric light did not seem to disconcert him in the
least.

"Magnificent!" cried Gladwell. "I must have him for my show!"

"What shall we do with him?" asked Barney, picking up his rifle. "We
can get him dead but I fear not alive!"

"Wait! Don't shoot him. There may be a way to get him!"

"Yes, yes, I'll think of it!"

At this moment the white tiger gave utterance to a tremendous
roar.

It was so powerful and sonorous as to seem to make the ground
tremble.

Then down across the intervening space came the beautiful
monoceros.

Straight for the Van he came.

As his white body was hurled against the steel netting Frank tried
a shot at him through one of the loop-holes.

But the tiger was clinging to the netting and this was impossible.

Frank thought of the electric wires and called to Barney.
The Celt came, but just too late. The tiger was up over the top of the Van and then away into the jungle at full speed.

Frank was gone from sight almost instantly. That was the last seen of the white tiger that night. The beasts were beds of good sleep, and yet our explorers were so extremely tired that they were glad to see the sky to the horizon. When morning came the hyenas disappeared. But three huge tigers were crouched upon the top of the cage. pomp and Barney wanted to give them an electric shock. But Frank said: "We will give them a ride."

Away went the Van, crashing through the jungle. It was no trial to the tigers, and evidently not a pleasant one, for they leaped down from their perch and vanished into the jungle.

At every turn wild beasts were encountered. There was no doubt but that our adventurers were now right in the heart of the jungle.

Frank had begun to look for the large lake which had been described to him by the natives.

He had seen nothing as yet of the fearful hyena-headed dragon said to exist in these parts. But he had no doubt as to the existence of huge snakes. Indeed, as the Van was going through a dense part of the jungle, one of the mighty monsters threw its huge folds completely about the Van.

"The python tried to crush the steel structure."

But its own pressure did not even make the frame-work creep. This python seemed even larger than the one which had been captured and sent home.

Gladwell was consumed with a mighty desire to secure this new specimen.

"I tell you he would be worth five thousand dollars in America!" he declared.

"We ought to have him." But Barney cut the monster in two through one of the loop-loops. This spoiled him for a specimen.

Suddenly the Van came out upon a huge open tableland in the center of the mighty jungle.

This table land was dry and arid, and seemingly devoid of anything to support life. Yet, as the Van glided out upon the level expanses, a wonderful spectacle was presented. There, not a hundred yards distant, stood an animal which, for size and peculiar shape, our adventurers had never before seen the like of.

It was a near approach to the elephant, though much larger and heavier. Its body was covered with a long growth of thick brown hair. Its head was of tremendous proportions, and huge tusks were curving outward from its jaws for the length of full fifteen feet.

"What on earth is that?" gasped the circus man.

"Begorra, yez ought to have that for yer show!"

"Golly! I done fink dat beast Jumbo sky high!"

But Frank Reade, Jr., was the first one to hit upon the character of the animal with any degree of accuracy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAKE SERPENT.

"What is it, Frank?" asked Glenn.

"It is a specimen of the megatherium family!" said Frank, positively.

"An animal for centuries believed to have been extinct. But here before my eyes!"

The explorers gazed with wonderment most intense upon this specimen of the supposed extinct mammal.

It was an animal of certainly monstrous proportions. Jumbo, the famous giant elephant, was not to be compared with this monster.

The megatherium, for such it must be called, seemed to be cropping some stunted grass which grew upon the plain.

It appeared to take no notice whatever of the adventurers.

Indeed, the Van glided quite near to the monster, hardly attracting its attention.

The explorers were given a good opportunity to study this monster specimen of an extinct race.

Whether the megatherium had a mate or not they had no means of knowing. None was seen.

"What would not scientists give to be here at this moment?" cried Frank Reade, Jr., with excitement.

"You are right, old Gladwell. It would be a discovery of value to them. Oh, how I would like him for my show! There'd be a million dollars in that fellow."

Everybody laughed at this.

Frank did not venture too near the mammoth, for he did not know what sort of freak the animal would take.

A slight how of its trunk must have been enough to have demolished the Electric Van.

The creature kept on for some time feeding.

Then we started away along with long strides into the jungle. Its course made a literal runway through the dense growth.

Frank turned the Van across the plain, and suddenly a cry escaped Barney's lips.

"Do you see it, Misher Frank?" he cried.

"What?" "Sure it's watehers!"

Frank saw at a glance that Barney was right. A long line of silver was visible in the south. It was beyond doubt a body of water.

That was the lake mentioned by the natives there was little doubt. Frank headed the Electric Van towards it.

"Now for the serpent of the lake, as described by the Hindoes at Calcutta," cried Frank. "I believe it a myth!"

"So do I!" cried Gladwell, rubbing his hands; "but if it is a reality, I hope we can rig up some scheme to capture him and run him into my show!"

The Van every moment drew nearer to the body of water. It was easy to see that it was a large lake. Also it was dotted with islands, a fugitive to the eye.

Tropical foliage lined its shores, except where they broached upon the plain.

Then they were sandy and shelving and a broad bench extended from the water's edge.

The Van was brought to a halt here. No wild animals were in sight and it was deemed safe to alight.

The water looked tempting, and Barney and Pomp proposed a swim in it.

It was quite a relaxation, after having been confined in the Van for so long.

There was no fear of the dreaded serpent described by the Hindoes, for our adventurers believed in a myth.

Barney and Pomp threw off their clothes and leaped into the warm waters. Both were expert swimmers, and this was a rare treat for them. They dived to the sandy bottom of the lake, and brought up beautiful shells and pebbles.

Barney, in diving, saw a brilliant, flaming light in the sand, and picked up the pebble which was in it.

When he came to the surface he held it up triumphantly.

"Begorra, it's the purtiest wan yet!" he cried. "Sure, there's all colors at the rainbow in it."

Frank Reade, Jr., laughed at the sight of it, and cried: "Hold on, Barney! Let me look at the stone!"

"All roggit, sir!"

The young inventor took the pebble in his hand.

One glance was enough.

"Upon my word, Barney!" he exclaimed, exultingly, "you have found a treasure! This is a genuine diamond!"

"Wharroon!" cried the astonished Celt. "Yez don't mean it, sorr?"

"Yes, I do!"

"A diamond, sorr!"

"Sure!"

"Begorra, wud yes luk at the look av me! Shure, an' is it worth much?"

"Four or five thousand, I should think."

It was a delightful discovery. He could hardly control himself.

Gladwell was the most excited of all.

"Surely, we are in good diamond diggings!" he cried. "Oh, how I wish I could swim!"

The circus manager went to digging in the sands, in the hope of finding a vast treasure.

But though Pomp and Barney dived repeatedly and explored the bed of the lake, they found nothing.

This beautiful specimen seemed to have disappeared.

There was nothing in the appearances of the soil or the locality to suggest the possibility of its being a diamond region.

But it was a beautiful spot bordering the lake, and Frank pictured it as just such a spot as Adam and Eve might have sought in the limy days of Eden.

The day was spent upon the shores of the lake, and everybody thoroughly enjoyed it.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the only one aboard the Van. Barney and Pomp had dressed and were having a friendly wrestle in the sand, when suddenly there was a commotion in the waters of the lake.

A strange-looking object arose from the water. It looked at first like the head of a huge monster or the turtle species.

Frank was the first to see it, and he was petrified with astonishment at the spectacle which ensued.

The waters of the lake seemed to boil, as if some huge body was disporting itself there.

Then up into the air to the height of fully a dozen feet reared the head and coils of a monster snake.

It was truly a frightful sight.
The snake’s body was dark with a reddish tinge upon the belly. Its head was a frightful sight for fangs.

Barney and Frank tumbled over each other in their excitement and horror.

"Golly, fo’ glory!" screamed Pomp. "We’re gwin to be swallowed up in the creek like as you’m’n’t.

"Bejabers, not if I know it!" roared Barney, making a break for the Van.

Gladwell, terrified at the appalling spectacle, had also made a dash for safety.

Frank threw open the doors of the Van and called to his companion.

There was little need of this, for they were coming with all speed.

A moment more and Barney and Pomp came clashing into the wagon.

Gladwell followed them.

Barney sprang to the motor and Frank was at the wheel.

The gase of all was upon the monster of the lake.

It was an appalling sight.

Those who beheld it never forgot it to their dying day.

The huge serpent seemed to fill the bowy of the lake, so huge were its proportions.

Indeed, it would have easily passed for the fabled sea serpent, famous in the lore of sea captains.

Its length Frank could not accurately estimate, but he guessed it to be fully seventy feet.

The reptile appeared to be a monster specimen of a species of water snake, not uncommon in some parts of India, and which are said to reach the length easily of thirty and forty feet.

Water pythons, so-called by the natives, and, indeed, it would seem that they well merited the name.

The explorers watched the movements of the reptile with a peculiar dull horror and fascination.

The water python did not seem to notice them.

At least it made no movement toward them, but continued to disturb itself in the lake.

Finally it took a long dive and came up fully a mile away and was seen to pull its monster body out of the water and crawl into the jungle.

All drew a breath of relief.

"Well," averred Frank Reade, Jr., "that beats all the snakes I ever saw.

"The natives were right," declared Gladwell; "the monster serpent is no myth. Oh, if I only had him for my show!"

"It is lucky that the monster did not attack us."

"You are right.

"It would have crushed the Van with its ponderous weight."

"Bejabers, I’d a good mind to take a shot at it," cried Barney.

"Not I! I done fire no bullets will kill that snake!" declared Pomp.

"Pwaw do ye know about it, naggurn?" demanded Barney.

"Pomp is right," averred Frank Reade, Jr. "No ordinary bullet would have killed that snake. It is lucky that you did not fire, Barney, or the reptile might have turned on us, and much to our sorrow!"

"That’s right," cried Gladwell. "I don’t believe we will be able to capture that monster for my show, Mr. Reade!"

"No, I think not!" said Frank, dryly. "We will draw the lion at snakes every foot!"

What new wonders the Bang Chu jungle held our explorers could only imagine.

But now that the monster snake had disappeared the courage of all returned.

As it was getting near dusk it was decided to remain upon the spot for the night.

There was no longer any fear of the monster serpent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MONSTER TURTLE.

The reptile might not return, and even if it did, there was no actual harm that it was likely to do so long as our adventurers took care not to trouble its slumber.

It was a more desirable place to camp than in the forest.

So Frank decided to spend the night upon the spot.

Camp-fires were made in the sand, and things made shift-shape.

But Barney and Pomp were possessed of a powerful desire to take one more dip in the limpid waters of the lake.

Of course there was the risk of the return of the serpent.

But they finally overmastered their fears and repaired to the lake shore.

Out in the lake they now espied what looked like a black, round, crowned rock above the water’s surface.

It seemed a bit curious to them that they had not espied this before.

But they attached no significance to the fact.

"Well, I cried Pomp, with a comical grimace, "I done like to make one lolly bit ob a wager wif yo’, sah."

"Yes would, eh?"

"Go’ sah."

"Well, pwaw is it, naggurn?"

"I like to bet wet yo’ dat I swim out to dat rock fast."

"Yes man, sah, you say that yes kin best me to that rock?"

"Yo’ am got it."

"Well, bejabers, I’ll take yo’ up on that!" cried Barney.

Into the water they leaped.

Away they swam like two terrible ducks.

Nearer the supposed rock they drew every moment.

But Pomp was the better swimmer.

He was far ahead of the other.

He had to reach the rock long before the Celt.

The latter splashed and spluttered in the water in a vain attempt to catch up with the darky.

Now, Pomp reached the rock and crawled upon it.

He was about to turn and wave his arms descriptively to Barney, when an astonishing thing occurred.

The supposed rock suddenly moved beneath him.

Up it went out of the water higher and presenting a broader surface.

Then, to the darkey’s amazement, he saw that he was upon the back of a giant turtle, the like of which he had never before seen.

The turtle evidently felt this weight upon its back, for it started at full speed across the lake.

Pomp was so bewildered that for a moment he could not act.

Barney saw the situation and started for the shore full tilt.

The Celt had no desire to remain longer in waters which held such monsters.

Pomp recovered himself and made action.

With a yell of terror he made a leap from the turtle’s back.

Down into the water he went, and coming up also struck out for the shore.

The terror of the darkey and the Celt was comical to witness.

But the turtle was fully as terrified as either.

The reptile struck out in a mad, wild, impetuous course, and made great speed for the middle of the lake, where it went below the surface.

Barney and Pomp emerged from the water and made for their clothes.

They donned it and returned in post haste to the Electric Van.

It was their last swimming excursion in the jungles of Bang Chu.

Neither could be induced to enter the lake again.

Duskiness was now set in, dark and fast.

Barney and Pomp were elected to take turns keeping watch.

They sat up until a late hour, however, playing the banjo and singing jolly songs.

At length, however, all retired to rest but Barney.

The night was clear and moonlit, and the Celt could see objects very distinctly across the plain.

He remained by the key board and steering wheel ready to start the dynamos at a moment’s notice.

The night hours were passed slowly.

Barney was drowsy, but he still felt too much at a sentimental to give way to sleep.

He kept a good watch of the lake and plain, and after a time became impressed with a queer feel.

The surface of the lake seemed suddenly to become alive with wriggling curvatures.

To all appearance they were snakes of various lengths not exceeding six or seven feet.

They appeared to permulate about upon the lake’s surface.

"Bejabers, that’s queer enough," muttered Barney. "Am I drunk or is it an optical illusion?"

But Barney soon became convinced that it was neither.

He turned the electric search-light about in such a position that its rays fell upon the water.

The wriggling forms were squirming thickest in the glare of the lights.

Then a comprehension of the truth burst upon Barney.

"Bejabers, I have it!" he cried; "the place is alive with eels!"

The Celt had hit upon the truth.

Attracted by the electric lights of the Van an immense number of eels had risen from the bed of the lake.

Hundreds of them could have been netted with ease upon the shores of the lake.

Barney scratched his head.

"Shure there’s no harpoon in eels," he muttered, "but pwaw else is shure there lives in that lake! Shure, I wonder how we ever came out av it alive!"

One thing the lake seemed free and this was crocodiles.

But while Barney’s attention had been claimed by the lake he had failed to keep an eye upon the plain.

From that direction there now came a hoarse, thunderous roar.

Barney turned and saw what appeared like a mighty black billowing down upon the Van.

In an instant the Celt sprang up.

"May the Vaggin save us!" he cried; "pwawifter is coming now!"

It was the huge mammoth the explorers had seen in the afternoon.

The monster was coming straight for the Van with a treat which shook the earth.

It was swinging its huge trunk and bowing lovingly. Barney was imbued with an awful terror.

But yet the Celt had sufficient presence of mind to press the dynamo key.

The Van giddy forward and out of the path of the mammoth.

Barney let the Van run ahead for one hundred yards and then stopped.

The danger was passed.

The megalith had not attempted to pursue the Van.
Then Frank said:

"Now when the tiger comes out, be sure and pull hard on the net. When once he is in the meshes, don't be afraid of him, but rush up and wind him up in it. Do you see?"

"All right, sir."

"We'll get 'em!" replied Frank.

"Well," said Frank, sarcastically, "perhaps you can advocate a better way?"

"I can!"

"What?"

"We can make a trap of the Van, but it will wait until the tiger is inside and then close the doors."

Frank Reade, Jr., was disgusted.

"I gave you credit for more sense than that, Gladwell!" he said.

"You should have known better."

Then he proceeded to bring out a quantity of oiled waste and rags.

This he placed in the mouth of the cavern.

"It was a moment's work to ignite them. In a jiffy they were ablaze, and then Frank threw a blanket over the mouth of the cavern.

This sent the smoke and fumes down into the cavern.

Some little time passed.

The pile of oil waste burned and smoked intensely.

Certainly the tiger was getting a fine taste of it.

Frank believed that the smoke would be more than the beast could stand, and that he would soon seek more congenial quarters.

In this he was right.

After a time there came a loud roar from the cavern.

"Look out, boys!" cried Frank. "He is coming."

This proved true.

Out into the enter air sprang the white form of the tiger.

But right into the net he went and was instantly entangled in its meshes.

With a cheery Barney and Pomp rushed up.

They ran around the entangled and struggling tiger, winding the meshes closer and closer.

The huge beast snarled and howled and struggled.

In vain its powerful claws strove to tear away the net.

It was futile.

The powerful strands held, and the tiger was effectually entrapped.

Like a fly in the web of a spider, the powerful beast was helpless.

All tearing about and roaring was of no avail.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, "we have his tiger-ship!"

Then he turned to Gladwell:

"Now what do you think of my plans for trapping tigers?"

"I haven't a word to say," declared the circus proprietor. "You are too much for me as well as for the tiger."

"Then you acknowledge that?"

"I do!"

"That settles it," said Frank, with a laugh. "But there is your tiger. He may struggle some, but he can't get away."

"Equal," exclaimed the delighted Gladwell. "I can hardly believe my good luck. That I should have gained possession of the greatest drawing attraction in the world makes me very happy."

"You are the only showman in the world who can exhibit a white tiger."

"It is a great card."

"It ought to be."

"But—what will we do with the beast?" asked Gladwell.

"What we did with the sunsco. Cage him and ship him to America."

"Ah, but how will we get him to Calcutta?"

"Easy enough," said Frank. "Put him aboard the Van and carry him to Hudi Jan. There charter a freight car and ship him to Calcutta as he is. Your agents there can cut away the nets, make a suitable cage, and send him home by your partner by the first steamer."

Gladwell rubbed his hands in glee.

"The only white tiger!" he exclaimed. "Ah! that will draw the world!"

All now laid hands on the tiger. Frank was a monster, but they finally dragged him aboard the Van. Then Frank Reade, Jr., declared his intention of returning to Hudi Jan.

"We can do nothing more until this fellow is shipped!" he declared.

"We may return to the jungle later!"

Nobody was averse to this.

Indeed, Barney and Pomp were more than willing to get out of the jungle for a time.

So, with the white tiger securely bound by the meshes of the net, the Electric Van started on the back trail.

It did not require a great length of time to return to the open country.

The Van came out not far from the village of Sado-Dak.

It was good clear going now, and Frank sent the Van tearing along toward Hudi Jan.

In due course the Van reached the small railway station.
The natives there were astounded at sight of Frank's captive. It was the first time that they had ever known of the capture of a white tiger.

Their religion taught them that the white tigers were under the protection of Brahma, and they never imagined to hunt them.

But Frank Reade, Jr., did not care for this.

His faith was never of the superstitious order. Therefore the white tiger was not sacred in his eyes.

But men were found to prepare a box car with iron bars.

Into this the supposed violent and dangerous wild beast was placed.

Then the white tiger was biled to Gladwell's agent in Calcutta, with directions to ship to America.

All this had been done, and our explorers were about to re-enter the Van and return to the jungle for fresh adventures when a new incident occurred.

Suddenly a loud shouting was heard at the lower end of the village. Frank Reade, Jr., saw a large gang of the natives coming, armed with spears and guns.

They were evidently in a very excited frame of mind, and the Van seemed to be the object of their spite.

"What's up?" exclaimed Gladwell, in surprise. "Something is wrong with the natives."

"So it seems!" replied Frank, in surprise. "I don't understand it."

"They are coming toward us!"

"Yes."

"What have we done to displease them?"

"I don't know."

"Begorra, Mister Frank!" cried Barney. "I'm thinking we must have sent them rascally speeches."

"Right you are!" cried Gladwell. "They evidently mean us harm."

"Golly fo' massey takes all!" cried Pomp, "does yo' see 'em comin' on?"

"Not me," said Frank.

"Everybody get their rifles," cried Frank. "But don't fire until I give you orders."

"All right, sir!"

The natives now came rapidly.

They made menacing gestures as they neared the Van. But the sight of the rifles seem to numbly prostrating from the Van was the means of bringing them to a halt.

Then one of their number advanced with his hands held up as a token of amity.

Frank went to a loophole.

"Well," he asked, tersely, "what do you want, sir?"

"Great prices, we salute you," said the fellow, obsequiously.

"Great prices!" said Frank. "That's no harm, but we come in the name of Brahma, to warn you that one of our gods chosen has been placed by you in danger."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise. "Will you explain what?"

"The white tiger, most noble prince."

Frank saw the point at once.

The white tiger was regarded by the natives as a sacred beast.

It was akin to the sacred ox and was worshiped as a deity.

Frank, with his own countrymen were known to have thrown themselves in the way of the white tiger, and considered it as a rare bit of good fortune to be devoured by the white deity.

Therefore, the attitude of the white man in capturing the tiger was desecration, and they could not permit it.

Frank was disgusted with their ignorance, but he saw at once that no words of oratory would dissuade their minds of the idea.

"Upon my soul!" he muttered. "What are we going to do with these fellows?"

"Shoot them," said Gladwell. "What is it?"

"It begins to look as if you would not succeed in getting your white tiger out of the country."

"Indeed! Why not?"

"These natives regard it as a deity, and demand that you set it free!"

Gladwell was angry.

"Never!" he fumed. "Tell them we will fight them first. After all our trouble to capture him we will not give him up now!"

Frank was of Gladwell's mind, but before he could say anything to the natives matters were precipitated.

Some of the Hindoos made a break for the car in which the tiger was shut up, and made an effort to break into it.

They would no doubt have succeeded had they been allowed to proceed.

But Frank Reade, Jr.'s anger was up and he called to Barney:

"Shoot straight, sir, the car, Barney. Fire a volley over their heads!"

CHAPTER XI.

FIGHTING THE HINDOOS.

Matters were getting exciting.

Frank Reade, Jr.'s blood was up and he was incensed at the blind ignorance and stupidity of natives who would consider the white tiger a deity.

"I'll fix them!" he muttered.

As the Van bore down toward the car Frank went out on the platform and shouted:

"Get away from there! Let that car alone!"

But he might as well have talked to empty air.

The natives kept on hacking at the car.

In a few moments they would have succeeded in cutting their way, but the volley fired from the Van over their heads was not without effect.

Part of them recoiled.

Again Frank Reade, Jr., shouted:

"Get away from there or it will be the worse for you!"

In reply the natives ceased yelling towards the Van.

Sons were fired, and Frank narrowly escaped them.

The young inventor dodged into the cage.

The Hindoos, like a pack of savage wolves, were coming down upon the Van with great fury.

There was no use in further delay.

It was a question of self-preservation, and Frank cried:

"Give it to them!"

The rifles flashed and bullets sped through the air.

The volley was given with deadly effect. Too. A number of the Hindoos fell.

Frank set the Van going forward at full speed.

The Hindoos in vain tried to check its course.

I showed a path through them, and destructive volleys were given.

In less than three minutes the Van was master of the situation.

The natives were fleeing for their lives and did not return.

Now the employes of the railroad came out in terms of most sincerity they pressed their regret to Frank that such a thing had occurred.

Frank was abashed enough to hold them responsible.

"We are not responsible, sahib, for the acts of a lawless mob," declared the head chief of the railroad.

"We can have no control over such a crew!"

"Do you mean to say that you are not in sympathy with that gang?" asked Frank.

"I assure you of that, sahib!"

"Then you will oblige me by protecting that car."

"Sahib, an engine shall be brought up and it shall be carried a once to Calcutta," declared the railroad official.

"Very well!"

And this was carried out to the letter.

The Van had no more trouble with the natives in Huli Jan.

Indeed, they rather affected good friendship for the Americans.

A few hours later one of the peasant class came to the Van in a agony of grief and tears.

"Oh, sahibs!" he cried. "I humbly pray thee to help me. The mustrah has carried away my youngest child to the jungle. I know not what the beast has done to it, yet I would fain go to its help!"

"And it is a worthy man who saes thee!" cried the railroad official.

Frank Reade, Jr.'s sympathy was at once aroused.

The story was quickly told.

The child had been playing in the grove of palms near the bungalow when a huge tiger had pounced upon it and bodily carried away.

A party of armed men had pursued it to the Bang Chu jungle, but they dared go no further.

The child had not been taken to the tiger's lair.

It was probable that the innocent one had been devoured long before that.

But there were cases on record in which the tiger had kept its prey alive in its den even for days.

This hope remained in the agonized parent's breast.

Of course the Americans had all enlisted in his sympathies.

"Begorra, we'll thrash down the baste, anyhow!" cried Barney. "Right!" cried Frank. "Show us the way, sahib, and we'll by and by put your dear one right."

The Hindoo father was overjoyed, and showed profuse expressions of gratitude upon the young inventor.

He led the way to the spot in the jungle where the tiger had entered.

Frank sent the Van crashing through the reeds.

But it was not necessary to go far or make an extended search before the trail was struck.

In a clearing in the heart of the jungle the man-eater's tracks were seen.

They extended into a part of the jungle too dense for the Van to go.

Frank, however, was not to be baffled.

He returned to Gladwell and said:

"You will oblige me by remaining on guard aboard the Van Barney and Pomp and I will go in quest of the tiger."

"All right, sir!" agreed Gladwell. "I will do my duty."

Barney and Pomp were delighted with the idea of a hunt in the jungle.

They procured their weapons and hastily joined Frank.

But the young inventor now produced what was really one of his most wonderful inventions.

This was a coat of mail made of the finest and toughest steel at which was capable of resisting a rifle ball.

From head to foot this coat of mail covered the wearer.

Barney and Pomp each took one as well.

"Are you zonl to put on this, Mister Frank?" asked Barney.

"Yes," replied the young inventor. "Get into them lively!"

The two servants quickly obeyed.

The costs of mail would certainly be a great protection against the tiger's teeth and claws in case either was assassinated.
FRANK READ JR.'S NEW ELECTRIC VAN.

Frank soon had the little Hindoo child in his arms. It was just opening its eyes as he picked it up. After a long period of insensibility, the little one was returning to consciousness. Frank assured it and prevented its giving way to greater terror. The child in a few moments was prattling away happily in its native tongue.

The return was made to the Van. But before they reached it shots were heard. When they suddenly came in sight of the vehicle, a thrilling sight was beheld. Two huge tigers were clinging to the cage and clawing fiercely, trying to get into it.

Gladwell was tremendously excited and was trying to get a shot at the tigers.

At sight of his returning companions he gave a shout.

"Give them a shot!" he cried. "I can't get at them!"

"Steady all!" cried Frank Read, Jr. "Now give it to them!"

The three rifles cracked.

One of the tigers dropped.

The other bounded from the top of the cage and away into the woods.

A second later the three tiger hunters were clambering aboard the wagon.

Gladwell was overjoyed at their safe return.

"I beg the firing," the Hindoo father, "and I feared for you all."

"Hurraah!" cried Barney. "As we kape on, shure we'll make the record of the world on tiger hunting!"

"You are right," agreed Frank. "We might hunt tigers all our lives in this jungle, and then not succeed in clearing them out utterly."

"Then you think it best to give up the idea of cleaning out the Bang Chu jungle?" asked Gladwell.

"I consider it an impossible feat," replied Frank. "But was not that one object of your mission to India?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"And you will abandon it?"

"Of necessity!"

"And will you soon return home?"

"No," replied Frank. "I shall explore a part of Indo-China before I am done with this excursion."

"And may I accompany you?"

"Certainly!"

A thousand thanks, Mr. Reade!" cried the circus manager, rubbing his hands with great delight.

"You will do no doubt find some animals there worth shipping home."

"I am sure of it."

The Van was now headed for the return to Ruil Jan.

In a short while it emerged from the jungle at the spot where it entered.

A large crowd of Hindoos were there in eager waiting.

Among them was the Hindoo father. Frank restored his child to him and the fellow's gratitude was beyond expression.

He clasped his child to his breast and then fell down and kissed Frank's feet in his deep gratitude.

But the young inventor broke away and sprang into the Van.

"One more trip into the jungle," he cried, "then for Indo-China!"

The Hindoos gave loud cheers of good feeling for the travelers.

Frank sent the Van once more into the jungle and all began to look now for more thrilling interest. These were at hand, and in good store, as the near future revealed. For some hours the Van was kept at work cutting its way through the jaws of the tigers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE JUNGLE FIRE.

It was a plucky fight and a commendable victory for our heroes.

Two tigers lay dead upon the ground. There seemed to be no more in the vicinity, or if so they did not come to the attack.

Frank Reade, Jr., pulled himself together, as did Barney and Pomp.

"Begorra, did you ever see the better or a better as that?"

"And the Colt. He was a real machine gun, I'm sure."

"It was a powerful beast," agreed Frank.

"Golly! I done feel as if I had been run over by a train on oars!"

Barney chuckled, lugubriously.

But now all thought of the object of the quest.

Frank said they left the Van. It was an easy matter to follow the tiger's trail through the deep grass.

For some distance it was followed. Frank looked apprehensively for blood marks. He would not have been surprised to have found the marks of the beast in pieces of the victim. But nothing of this sort was discovered. The trail finally led from the deepest part of the jungle into an open space.

Suddenly Barney clutched Frank's arm tightly.

"What! Moses!" he gasped. "Wud you lok at that!"

Indeed the spectacle was one well calculated to chill one's blood. For a short distance from the place where the track had turned was a sight to be seen in all the greatness of its effect. In the monster's jaws was the form of the Hindoo child held suspended by its dress.

The tiger was crossing the open slowly and lashing its tail. It did not seem aware of the presence of its foes.

"Pshaw! What shall we do, Mister Frank?" cried Barney. "Wud you get a shot?"

"Wait a moment," said Frank.

He crept cautiously out into the long grass. The result was startling.

Suddenly from another copse near a second tiger bounded forth.

With a hideous roar the brute seemed about to throw itself upon the young inventor. But Barney and Pomp's rifles spoke sharply.

The tiger was struck but not fatally wounded. With a dazed stare the brute turned and dashed for the two servants. Frank gave one glance in that direction. He saw that Barney and Pomp were well prepared.

Therefore, he did not offer to go to their aid.

He was thinking of the child in the grip of the other tiger. The effect of the melee upon the other tiger was surprising. To Frank's surprise he dropped the insensible child and turning and faced Frank in seeming anger.

This was just what the young inventor wanted. He knew that if he could divert the tiger's attention now the child might stand a chance of being saved. So Frank raised his rifle, took steady aim and fired.

He aimed directly for the beast's eye. It was a capital mark and Frank was a dead shot.

Under certain circumstances he could have dropped the animal. But the bolt moved its head just a little bit. It was enough to save the beast.

The leaden missile struck into the brute upon the hard bone just under the eye and glanced off the skull.

It stunned and maddened the tiger to a great extent.

The beast staggered for a moment.

Then with a maddened roar it started for Frank.

The young inventor had just time to get out of the way.

The beast, with a long stride, cleared the intervening distance, but Frank dodged behind a banyan tree.

The tiger passed him with the force of its impetus, but quickly halted.

This was Frank's opportunity.

He fired again.

This time the bullet struck a vital spot.

It penetrated the beast's hide just under the forearm. The tiger staggered, and with a terrible struggle, Barney and Pomp, however, were having a more perilous time.

The tiger which attacked them was indeed a monster, and their bullets seemed to have no more effect upon him than pellets from a blow gun.

At such close quarters they were unable to avoid a close encounter.

The tiger sprang upon Pomp and crashed him to the ground.

The monster's huge teeth grated upon the dainty mail-clad shoulders.

But they were not powerful enough to penetrate the flesh.

Pomp drew a long knife and began jabbing it into the tiger's body. It was a terrible struggle.

Barney and Pomp, however, were having a more perilous time.

Barney was knocked down by the tiger's powerful paws half a dozen times.

But the beast was getting weak, and as Frank Reade, Jr., now came up and put a bullet through him at short range, the battle was ended.
Then there was a crashing in the undergrowth and an antelope went bounding by.

In another moment several more followed.

Then came tigers, leopards, bears, and all manner of beasts and reptiles.

All seemed flying before some dread foe.

"Begorra, phwat the devil all thim anyhow?" cried Barney.

Indeed, this was a mystery.

But it was suddenly explained.

To the nostrils of all came a distant odor. It was unmistakably the smell of smoke.

"Fire!"

The adventurers exchanged startled glances.

It required no effort to convince them of the magnitude of the danger which threatened them.

A fire in a jungle is a matter of no light sort.

A prairie fire is bad enough, but a jungle fire is much worse.

It is almost impossible to tell from what direction it comes, as the flames and smoke cannot be seen until almost upon one.

But in this case the course pursued by the beasts and reptiles told the tale.

If there is one thing the coons fear it is fire.

If a jungle is of the kind that will burn, then composed of canes and light reeds and dry grass, is fired, every coon in the place will swarm out.

Our explorers well knew the consequences of being overtaken by the fire.

Of course it would mean the destruction of the Van, if not death to themselves.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew this well, and at once headed for an open ground.

He took the return trail, but had not gone half a mile when he saw flames and smoke ahead.

It would be madness to go in that direction, of course.

To turn the other way was just the same.

He leaped upon all three sides, and there seemed no way but to run.

There was no time to lose.

The faces of the explorers plainly showed their great apprehension.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew well that it would be a close pull at best.

He headed the Van directly before the fire, and sent it forward as fast as was possible.

It was a fearful race.

Many obstructions were encountered and overcome.

Felled trees had to be avoided, also groups of standing ones.

On rushed the Van.

But the fire gained.

Nearer it drew.

"My God!" cried Gladwell, in despair; "we shall be burned up alive!"

But just at that moment a ray of hope went up.

The air cooled the undergrowth and came out into an open space.

It was a low plain, heavy with thick, dry grass.

The moment the fire struck it the grass rolled up in one mighty cloud of flame.

Close after the Van came it.

Frank put the lever down and let the full current on.

Fortunately there were few obstructions of any account in the way.

On went the Van at a terrific speed.

And now a great cry went up from the voyagers.:

Dead ahead of them they saw the shimmering waters of a lake.

At once they realized where they were.

All looked familiar about them.

They could even see the spot where Barney and Pomp had bathed.

But alas, this was upon the opposite shore of the lake.

To make the circuit of the lake was impossible.

The flames had already shut in on either side.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw that they were in a fearful position.

The grasses here ran down into the waters of the lake.

There was not a spot of clear land anywhere in sight.

The Van could not cross the lake certainly.

The flames were howling in the rear and upon both sides.

What was to be done?

It was a tremendous problem, and Frank Reade, Jr., felt keenly his inability to solve it.

"My God!" he muttered, "we are lost! Death is upon us!"

Indeed, so it seemed.

Straight down to the water's edge went the Electric Van and came to a full stop.

Chapter XIII.

The next number of the Frank Reade Library will contain another thrilling story, entitled—"Frank Reade, Jr., and His Steam Wonder."

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