



Sure Shot, Lion Hunter

By WILLIAM EDGAR GEIL

Explorer, Author of "The Great Wall of China," etc.



"BIG WHITE CHIEF, me wood fire?" asked a stalwart savage as he came up with an armful of wood.

"Yes, Chief Iron Spear, you may 'wood' the fire."

"Now, uncle, with the fire burning brightly, please go on with your story of what happened when I wasn't there," pleaded Billy.

"Well," said the Explorer, "we slept heavily, like those who had been long on the watch, but not more than three hours had passed when a loud voice outside the hut awakened us. It was an old chief of the mountains who had come to pay the pale faces a visit.

"Are you awake?" he called out, after the manner of the salutation of his tribe.

"To which I replied, as I came out, rifle in hand, 'How old are you?' for that was the question he would expect to be asked.

"I do not know how old I am," he answered, 'perhaps ten, perhaps five.'

"He wore three earrings—two on his starboard and one on his port side; his eyes were aslant, and he had a tuft of hair which he continually felt. He told us that he had five wives, and later on we visited him at his hut for the purpose of photographing them, but only one was there—the youngest, prettiest, and fattest.

"Where are your other wives?" I asked.

"Last night a warrior died in a village near by," he said; "four of them have gone over there to mourn. The warriors of the village have dug a grave at his door and

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buried him. They have placed a stone to mark his head. There will be mourning for six days, and on the seventh day all the mourners will get drunk. At the end of the moon the mourning will cease!

"I invited the old chief to bring round his three-legged stool to the side of Sure Shot's hut where we would be protected from the cold wind, and there he told us a wonderful lion story. In the village of Rami, he said, a lion stole a cow, and every warrior was called out to hunt the beast. They tracked the lion to its lair, surrounded it, and shot it full of arrows. Then a native rushed upon the lion and got hold of its tail, for which feat he was ever afterward called *Mwishimba*, which means *The Man Who Got a Lion*. It was a big beast, the old chief said, so big that it took ten men to roll the

carcass over. They cut the heart into small bits, ran a string through them, and roasted them. And every warrior who wishes to be fortunate in battle wears some of the bits upon his arm. 'His arm will kill just as the lion kills a man,' said the chief. His eyes shone with conviction as he told us that the bit of lion heart will make a man as fierce as a lion. As we ourselves have queer ideas about chicken livers, I asked him whether a lion's liver would also make a man brave. 'Oh, the liver is no good at all; only the heart,' said the old chief.

"What effect would it have on me?" I asked, 'to wear a part of a lion heart on my arm?'

"It would make you a good shot, so that anything you hit would be killed, and when you fight your enemies they would run; it is not a joke, it is true," he said, seeing that I did not believe him. 'The lion's tongue, too, is good for medicine; it makes a warrior able to shout so terribly that he will frighten his enemies,' he added.

"But, chief," I said, 'suppose my enemies also wear lion hearts and lion tongues, what then?'

"In that case," he said, 'you would fight and they would kill you and you would kill them, and that would be the end of the war!' It reminded me of the *Kilkenny cats*."

"What were they?" asked Billy. "Were they different from ordinary cats?"

"They were the famous Irish cats that fought so hard and so long that there was nothing left but a bunch of tails.

"TO resume my story—the chief wore two bits of sheep bone fastened to a string around his neck. These are supposed to bring good luck. We asked him why he had a tuft of hair on the top of his head. 'It is our custom; it prevents us from having headaches. I often feel to find out if my tuft is still there as I do not want to die of headache!'

"When he arose to go he shook hands, saying, 'Good-bye; go in peace and I will return in like manner. Go in peace and I will meet you again.' He is a good sort of heathen, that old chief of the mountains, with the tuft of hair on his head and the sheep bones at his neck.

"No sooner had I finished talking with him than the Lion Hunter came up and suggested that we go on a hunt for the man-eater we had heard prowling around the night before. I gladly



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agreed, for I had heard so many wonderful stories at the Isle of War about Sure Shot, that I wanted to judge for myself whether they could possibly be true.

"With a few trusty blacks we started off after breakfast for that part of the mountain where the brute had been last seen. He had seized a native out in the fields, mauled and mangled him frightfully, and then made a meal of him.

"After a long and watchful tramp, we approached the village of Ka-ya. On the outskirts we stopped and Sure Shot raised his rifle in the air. I asked: 'What are you going to shoot?'

"He laughed and replied, 'The atmosphere,' and a rifle shot rang out on the still mountain air. In fifteen minutes, by my bull's eye watch, eighty armed warriors had come together, and for a solid hour they listened intently to what Sure Shot had to say. His words held his listeners like magic; it was marvelous. Never before had I seen savages so completely gripped by the words of a white man. At Mombasa I had been told that this fearless man would go to a village with a few mountaineers and fire off his rifle; the savages would quickly congregate and listen for an hour to his teaching. I was studying savages, so I wanted to see whether this were true; and here it was done in my presence.

"I asked Sure Shot whether it was always so. 'Always, but once,' was his reply. That word 'but' wrought my curiosity up to a high pitch. 'Tell us about the but,' I asked. And this is what he told us.

"'Always, but once,' repeated the Lion Hunter, and he pointed with his rifle to a village tucked away in a little valley far up on the mountainside. 'I went to that village while I was out hunting, fired a shot, and waited. Nobody came. After waiting for a time I fired another bullet. Nobody came! I was almost discouraged, and said to myself, 'The jig is up; my power over these people is gone!' His heart, he said, went down into his boots. In despair he fired a third shot and waited and waited. At last a solitary native hove in sight and running toward him, called out: 'We cannot come now! A huge lion is in the thicket over there! The tribesmen have surrounded the bush, and the chief has sent me to ask you to come and shoot the brute.'

"It was an invitation many people would have hesitated to accept, but not Sure Shot. He carefully examined his cordite repeating rifle. There might be time for only one shot. He threw a shell into the breech, set the weapon, and followed the lead of the savage.

"SURE SHOT looked the thicket over, and knowing the ways of lions felt sure the brute would emerge at a certain opening. In front of that opening he stationed himself, and signalled the natives to set fire to the bamboo thicket. Now if there is anything in the wide world a wild beast does not like it is fire in bamboo. (One of the most startling experiences I have ever had was in Burma when we went out to hunt boars, and fired the thicket to drive the game into the center.) So when that lion, powerful and adroit though he was, heard the hiss of the flames coming near him, his wrath and fear were roused to the utmost. He rushed for the opening that Sure Shot had guessed he would choose, and there came face to face with the fearless Lion Hunter.

The creature paused and then gave a great roar like the sound of distant thunder, growing nearer and louder. His eyes were two balls of fire, terrifying indeed. Those awful eyes; that terrifying roar; the spitting of the flames as they crept nearer, seemed enough to compel any man to fire. But no, Sure Shot stood as cool as if he were in a drawing room, with a steady aim awaiting the moment when he should let go his bullet.

"He watched the angry monster crouch, give a final blood-curdling roar, and then spring at him! It was not till the lion's four feet were off the ground—the beast really in the air—that Sure Shot pulled the trigger—one shot—and the tawny body, tense in mid-air, fell a limp and lifeless mass at his feet. . . . He had taken a terrible chance, one would think. But his method has never failed him.

"With an exultant shout the natives rushed up and stood around the prostrate form of that king of beasts, feasting their eyes on his frightful carcass. Then they looked up into the face of the Lion Hunter with awe. He stood there perfectly cool, holding his rifle. He did not even look at the lion, but chose that moment for telling those savages the wonderful story of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. For the famous Lion Hunter, you should know, is also a missionary, and there are many missionaries much like him. They are not all lion hunters, but they are just as brave and heroic. On my many journeys in half-civilized parts of the world I have met hundreds of missionaries and I have yet to find a coward or a lazy man among them."

"That is saying a lot," said Billy. "But, oh, uncle, I never want to have a fever again. I want to be with you and see and hear everything. Gee! but I'd like to see Sure Shot!"

