

The Great Cat's Nursery

BY OHIYESA—A SIOUX INDIAN

(CHARLES A. EASTMAN, M.D.)

A HARSH and hateful cry of a sudden broke the peace of a midsummer night upon the Bear-runs-in-the-Lodge. It told many things to the red hunter who, though the hour was late, still sat beside the dying camp-fire, pulling away at his long-stemmed pipe. "Ugh!" he muttered, as he turned his head in the direction of the deep woods and listened attentively. The great cat's scream was not repeated. The hunter resumed his former attitude and continued to smoke. The night was sultry and threatened storm, and all creatures, especially the fiercer wild animals, become nervous and irritable when thunder is in the air. Yet this fact did not fully explain to his mind Igmütanka's woman-like, almost hysterical complaint. Having finished his smoke, he emptied the ashes out of the bowl of the pipe and laid it against the teepee-pole at his back. "Ugh!" the hunter once more muttered to himself, this time with a certain complacency. "I will find your little one to-morrow. That is what you fear."

The Bear-runs-in-the-Lodge is a deep and winding stream, a tributary of the Smoking Earth river, away up at the southern end of the Bad Lands. It is, or was then, an ideal home of wild game, and a resort for the wild hunters, both four-footed and human. Just here the stream, dammed of many beaver, widens its timbered bottoms, while its high banks and the rough country beyond are studded with dwarf pines and gullied here and there with cañonlike dry creeks. Here the silvertip held supreme sway over all animals, barring an occasional contest with the mountain-lion and with the buffalo bull upon the adjoining plains. It is true that these two were as often victorious as he of the big claws and sharp incisors; yet he remained the terror of that region, for he alone takes every opportunity to fight and is reckless in his

courage, while other chiefs of the Wild Land prefer to avoid unnecessary trouble.

Igmütanka, the puma mother, had taken her leave of her two little tawny babes about the middle of the afternoon. The last bone of the buffalo calf which she had brought home on her last hunt had been served for dinner. Polished clean by her sharp teeth, it lay in the den for the kittens to play with. Her mate had left her early on that former hunt and had not returned. She was very nervous about it, for already she feared the worst.

Since they came to Bear-runs they had been together, and their chance acquaintance had become a love-affair, and finally they had chosen and made a home for themselves. That was a home indeed! Wildness, mystery, and beauty combined in its outlook and satisfied every craving of the savage pair. They could scarcely say that it was quiet; for while they were unassuming enough and willing to mind their own affairs, Wild Land is always noisy, and the hubbub of the wild people quite as great in its way as that of the city of man.

The stream was dammed so often that Igmü did not have to jump it. The water-worn cliffs, arching and overhanging every turn of the creek, were dark with pines and cedars. Since her babies came she had not ventured upon any long hunts, although ordinarily she was the more successful of the two.

Now Igtin was gone and she was very hungry. She must go out to get meat. So, after admonishing her babies to be still during her absence, and not to come out of their den when Shunktokecha, the wolf, should invite them to do so, she went away.

As the great cat slunk down the valley of the Bear-runs, she stopped and glanced nervously at every tree-root and grinning ledge of rock. On the way to Black-tail creek she had to cross the divide,

and when she had attained the Porcupine butte she paused a moment for a survey, and saw a large herd of buffalo lying down. But their position was not convenient for an attack. There was no meat for her there.

She entered the upper end of the Black-tail and began to hunt down to its mouth. At the first gulch there was a fresh trail. On that very morning three blacktail deer had watered there. Igmu withdrew and re-entered the valley lower down. She took her stand upon a projection of the bank almost overhanging the stream—a group of buffalo-berry bushes partly concealing her position. Here they will pass, she thought, in returning to the main stream. Her calculation proved correct. Soon she saw a doe with two yearlings coming toward her, leisurely grazing on the choice grass.

The three were wholly unconscious of their danger. Igmu flattened her long, lanky body against the ground—her long, snaky tail slowly moved to and fro as the animals approached. In another moment she had sprung upon the nearest fawn. A shrill scream of agony and the cracking of tender bones mingled with the gladness of satisfying the pangs of hunger. The mother doe and the remaining fawn fled for their lives over the hills to the next creek, knowing well that she would not expose herself in an open chase.

She stood over the lifeless body for a moment, then grabbed it by the neck and dragged it into the dry bed of a small creek, where she was not likely to be disturbed at her feast. The venison was delicious, especially as she was very hungry and had to nurse her babies. Having eaten all she wanted, she put her claim-mark on the deer and covered it partly up. It was her practice to cover her game to season, and also to make it plain to all animals that know the laws of Wild Land that it is her game—Igmutanka's. If any one disturbs it he is running great risk of a pitched battle, for nothing exasperates her family like the theft of their game.

She could not carry any of it home with her, for even while she feasted she had seen an enemy pass by on the other side of the creek. He rode a long-tailed elk (pony), and carried a bagful of those

dreadful winged willows, and the crooked stick which makes the winged willows fly. Igmu stopped eating at once and crouched lower. "Don't you dare come near me," was the thought apparent through her large round eyes. The man passed without discovering her retreat.

"My babies!" thought Igmu. "They are all alone!" The mother-anxiety seized her. It was dangerous now to cross the open, but her desire to get back to her babies was stronger than fear. She ran up the ravine as far as it went; then, seeing no one, ran like a streak over the divide to the Porcupine butte, where there were large rocks piled one upon another. Here she watched again under cover. "Aw-yaw-yaw!" burst from her in spite of herself. There were many cone-shaped teepees, which had sprung up since the day before upon the wide plain.

"There are the homes of those dreadful wild men! They always have many black dogs with them. These will surely find my home and babies," she thought. Although her anxiety was now very great and the desire to reach home almost desperate, she yet kept her animal coolness and caution. She took a winding ravine which brought her nearer to Bear-runs, and now and then she had to run swiftly across the openings to gain more concealed points.

At last she came to the old stream, and the crossing where the Bobtail Beaver had lived for as long as she knew anything about the country. Her dam was always in perfect order, and afforded a bridge. To be sure, they had never come exactly on calling terms, but they had become accustomed to one another's neighbors, and especially whenever there was any danger upon the Bear-runs there was a certain sense of security and satisfaction to each in the presence of the other.

As she passed hurriedly over the dam she observed a trap. Igmu shivered as she recognized the article, and on a closer examination she detected the hated odor of man. She caught the string attached to it and jerked it out upon dry land, thus doing a good turn to her neighbor Sinteksa.

This discovery fully convinced her of the danger to her home and children. She picked her way through the deep woods, occasionally pausing to listen. At



SHE TOOK HER STAND UPON A PROJECTION OF THE BANK

that time of the day no people talk except the winged people, and they were joyous as she passed through the timber. She heard the rushing of water over the cliff, now vibrating louder, now fainter, as she listened. Far beyond, toward the wild men's camp, she heard the barking of a dog, which gave her a peculiar shiver of disgust.

A secret path led along the face of the cliff, and there was one open spot which she must cross to get to her den. "Phur-ur," she breathed, and dropped to the ground. There stood one of the dreaded wild men! No sooner had she put her head out of the woods than his quick eye caught her. "Igmutanka!" he exclaimed, and pulled one of the winged sticks out of his little bag.

Igmu was for once surprised and fear almost overcame her. The danger to her children and the possible fate of her mate all came into her mind in a flash. She hesitated for one instant, and in that instant she felt the sting of the swift arrow. She now ran for her life, and in another moment was out of sight among the gray ledges. "Ugh! I got her," muttered the Indian as he examined the spot where she had stood.

Igmu never stopped until she reached her den. Her wild eyes gleamed as she paused at the entrance to ascertain whether any one had been there since she went away. When she saw and smelled that her home had not been visited, she forgot for the moment all her fright and pain. Her heart beat fast with joy—the mother-joy! Hastily she crawled into the dark cave.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" was the mother's greeting to her tawny babes. "Yaw-aw-aw!" they replied in chorus. She immediately laid herself down in the farthest corner of the den, facing the entrance and inviting her babies to come and partake of their food. Doubtless she was considering what she should do when the little ones had appeased their hunger.

Presently the bigger baby finished his meal and began to claw the eyes of his brother. The latter pulled away, smacking his lips, and blindly showing fight.

"Hush!" said the mother Igmu. "You must be good. Lie down and I will come back soon."

She came out of her den, still carrying the winged stick in her back. It was only a skin wound. She got hold of the end between her teeth and with

one jerk she pulled it out. The blood flowed freely. She first rolled upon some loose earth and licked the wound thoroughly. After this she went and rubbed against pine pitch. Again she licked the pitch off from her fur; and having applied all the remedies known to her family, she re-entered the cave.

Igmú had decided to carry her helpless babes to a den she knew of upon Cedar creek, near the old Eagle's Nest—a wild and remote spot where she felt sure that the wild men would not follow. But it was a long way to travel, and she could carry only one at a time. In the mean time the hunters and their dogs would certainly track her to the den. In her own mind she had hit upon an expedient. She took the smaller kitten in her mouth by the skin of the back and hurried to her neighbor Sinteksa's place down on the creek. There were some old tumble-down houses which had been long deserted. Without ceremony she entered one of these and made a temporary bed for her babe. Then she went back to her old home for the last time, took the other kitten in her mouth, and set out on her night journey to Cedar creek.

It was now dark. Her shortest road led her near the camp of the red people; and as she knew that men and dogs seldom hunt by night, she ventured upon this way. Fires were blazing in the camp and the red men were dancing the coyote dance. It was a horrible din. Igmú trembled with fear and disgust as the odor of man came to her sensitive nostrils. It seemed to her at this moment that Igtin had certainly met his death at the hands of those dreadful people.

She trotted on as fast as she could with her load, only stopping now and then to put it down and lick the kitten's back. She laid her course straight over the divide, down to the creek and then up toward the sources of the stream. Here, in a wild and broken land, she knew of a cavern among piled-up rocks that she intended to make her own. She stopped at the concealed threshold, and after satisfying herself that it was just as she had left it several months before, she prepared a bed within for her baby, and having fed him, she admonished him to be quiet and left him alone. She must return at once for the other little cat.

But Igmú had gone through a great deal since the day before. It was now almost morning and she was in need of food. She remembered the cached deer on the Blacktail creek, and set out at once in that direction. As usual, there were many fresh deer tracks, which, with the instinct of a hunter, she paused to examine, half inclined to follow them; but a second thought apparently impelled her to hurry on to her cache. The day had now dawned and things appeared plain. She followed the creek bed all the way to the spot where she had killed her deer on the day before. As she neared it, her hunger became more and more irresistible; yet, instead of rushing upon her own, when she came within a few paces of it she stopped and laid herself prone upon the earth, according to the custom of her people. She could not see it, for it was hidden in a deep gully, the old bed of a dry stream. As she lay there, she switched her tail slowly to and fro, and her eyes shot yellow fire.

Suddenly, Igmú flattened out like a sunfish and began to whine nervously. Her eyes became two flaming globes of wrath and consternation. She gradually drew her whole body into a tense lump of muscles, ready to spring. Her lips unconsciously contracted, showing a set of fine teeth—her weapons; while the very ground upon which she lay was deeply scarred by those other weapons, the claws. Eagerly she listened once more—she could hear the cracking of bones under strong teeth!

Her blood now surged beyond all discretion and control. She thought of nothing but that the thief, whoever he might be, must feel the punishment due to his trespass. Two long springs, and she was on top of a wicked and huge grizzly, who was feasting on Igmú's cached deer! He had finished most of the tender meat, and had begun to clean his teeth by chewing some of the cartilaginous bones when the attack came.

"Waw-waw-waw-waw!" yelled the old root-digger, and threw his immense left arm over his shoulder in an effort to seize his assailant. At the same time her weight and force knocked him completely over and rolled him upon the sandy ground.

Igmú saw her chance, and did not for-

get the usage of her people in a fight with his. She quickly jumped aside when she found that she could not hold her position and there was danger of Mato slashing her side with either paw. She purposely threw herself upon her back, which position must have been pleasing to Mato, for he rushed upon her with all the confidence in the world, being ignorant of the trick.

It was not long before the old bear was forced to growl and howl unmercifully. He found that he could neither get in his best fight for himself nor get away from such a deadly and wily foe. He had hoped to chew her up in two winks, but this was a fatal mistake. She had sprung from the ground under him and hugged him tight by burying the immense claws of her fore paws in his hump, while her hind claws tore his loins and entrails. Thus he was left only his teeth to fight with; but even this was impossible, for she had pulled herself up close to his neck.

When Mato discovered his error he struggled desperately to get away, but

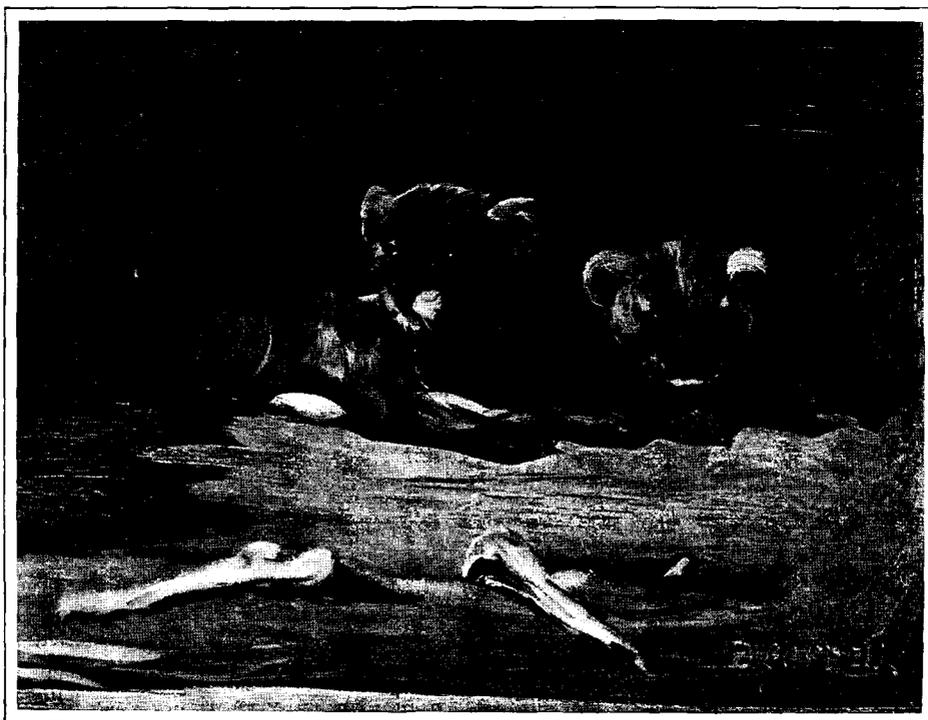
his assailant would not let go her vantage hold.

"Waw - waw - waw!" yelled the great boastful Mato once more, but this time it was the tone of weakness and defeat. It was the cry of "Murder! murder! Help! help!"

At last Igmutanka sprang aside, apparently to see how near dead the thief might be. She was all the time lashing her long, snaky tail in slow, dignified indignation.

"Waw-waw, yaw-waw!" moaned and groaned the grizzly, as he dragged himself away from the scene of the encounter. His wounds were deadly and ugly. He lay down in sight of the spot, as he could not go any farther. He moaned and groaned more and more faintly; then he was silent. The great fighter and victor in many battles is dead!

Five paces from the remains of the cached deer the victor, lying in the shade of an immense pine, rested and licked her blood-soaked hair. She had received several ugly gashes, but none of them necessarily mortal. Again she applied



THE CUBS LAY AWAITING HER RETURN

her soil and pitch-pine remedy and stopped the hemorrhage. Having done this, she realized that she was still very hungry; but Igmu could not under any circumstances eat of the meat left and polluted by the thief. It was the custom of her people and she could not break it.

So Igmu went across from Blacktail to the nearest point upon Bear-runs-in-the-Lodge, her former home, hoping to find some game on the way. As she followed the ravine leading from the creek of her fight, she came upon a doe with her fawn. She crouched down and crawled up close to them, then jumped upon the fawn. The luscious meat—she had all she wanted!

The day was now well advanced, and the harassed mother was growing impatient to reach the babe which she had left in one of the abandoned homes of Mrs. Bobtail Beaver. The trip over the divide between Blacktail and Bear-runs was quickly made. Fear, loneliness, and anxiety preyed upon her mind, and her body was weakened by loss of blood and severe exertion. She dwelt continually on her two babes, so far apart, and her dread lest the wild men should get one or both of them.

If Igmu had only known it, but one kitten was left to her at that moment. She had not left the cave on Cedar creek more than a few minutes when her own cousin, whom she had never seen and who lived near the Eagle's Nest upon the same creek, came out for a hunt. She intercepted her track and followed it. When she got to the den it was clear to Nakpaksa (Torn Ear) that this was not a regular home, so she had a right to enter and investigate. She found to her surprise a little Igmutanka baby in there, and he cried when he saw her and seemed to be hungry. He was the age of her own baby which she had left not long before, and she was not sure but that he was her own and that he had been stolen. He had evidently not been there long, and there was no one near to claim him. So she took him home with her. There she found her own kitten safe and glad to have a playmate, and Nakpaksa decided, untroubled by any pangs of conscience, to keep him and bring him up as her own.

It is clear that had Igmu returned

and missed her baby, there would have been trouble in the family. But, as the event proved, the cousin had really done a good deed.

It was sad but unavoidable that Igmu should pass near her old home in returning for the other kitten. When she crawled along the rocky ledge in full view of the den, she wanted to stop. Yet she could not re-enter the home from which she had been forced to flee. It was not the custom of her people to do so. It is only the home that they vacate by chance that they may re-enter and even reoccupy—but never the home which they were forced to leave. There are evil spirits there.

Hurt and wearied, yet with courage unshaken, the poor savage mother glided along the stream. She saw Mrs. Bobtail and her old man cutting wood dangerously far from the water, but she could not stop and warn them, because she had borrowed one of their deserted houses without their permission.

"Mur-r-r-r!" What is this she hears? It is the voice of the wild man's coyotes! It comes from the direction of the kitten's hiding-place. Off she went, only pausing once or twice to listen; but it became more and more clear that there was yelling of the wild men as well.

She now ran along the high ledges, concealing herself behind trees and rocks, until she came to a point from which she could see the trouble. Quickly and stealthily she climbed a large pine. Behold, the little Igmu was up a small willow-tree! Three Indians were trying to shake him down, and their dogs were hilarious over the fun.

Her eyes flamed once more with wrath and rebellion against injustice. Could neither man nor beast respect her rights? It was horrible! Down she came, and with swift and cautious step came within a very few paces of the tree before man or dog suspected her approach.

Just then they shook the tree vigorously, while the poor little Igmu, clinging to the bough, yelled out pitifully, "Waw-waw-waw!" Mother-love and madness now raged in her bosom. She could not be quiet any longer. One or two long springs brought her to the tree. The black coyotes and the wild men were surprised. They fled for their lives.



TWO LONG SPRINGS, AND SHE WAS ON TOP OF THE GRIZZLY

Igmú seized and tore the side of one of the men, and threw a dog against the rocks with a broken leg. Then in lightning fashion she ran up the tree to rescue her kitten, and sprang to the ground, carrying it in her teeth. As the terrified hunters scattered from the tree, she chose the path along the creek-bottom for her flight.

Just as she thought she had cleared the danger-point, a wild man appeared upon the bank overhead and quick as a flash sent one of those winged willows. She felt a sharp pang in her side—a faintness—she could not run. The little Igmú

for whom she had made such a noble fight dropped from her mouth. She staggered toward the bank, but her strength refused her, so she lay down beside a large rock. The baby came to her immediately, for he had not had any milk since the day before. She gave one gentle lick to his woolly head before she dropped her own and died.

“Woo, woo! Igmútanká ye lo! Woo, woo!” the shout of triumph resounded from the cliffs of Bear-runs-in-the-Lodge. The successful hunter took home with him the last of the Igmú family—the little orphaned kitten.

False Impression

(A Prison Poem from Paul Verlaine)

BY ARTHUR SYMONS

LITTLE lady mouse,
Black upon the gray of light;
Little lady mouse,
Gray upon the night.

Now they ring the bell,
All good prisoners slumber deep;
Now they ring the bell,
Nothing now but sleep.

Only pleasant dreams,
Love's enough for thinking of;
Only pleasant dreams,
Long live love!

Moonlight over all,
Some one snoring heavily;
Moonlight over all
In reality.

Now there comes a cloud,
It is dark as midnight here;
Now there comes a cloud,
Dawn begins to peer.

Little lady mouse,
Rosy in a ray of blue,
Little lady mouse;
Up now, all of you!