

looking at the bear-window for a long time, but she said nothing more.

We drove the sheep out to graze. Sister Ann taking Uncle Henry's rifle as before. She let me carry it for a time, but it hurt my shoulder, so I gave it back. Moreover, I had a warm sense of security in seeing Sister Ann struggle along under its weight. We kept even nearer the house than on the day before, and drove home earlier, Sister Ann saying she had a plan.

We put the flock into the corral and made Shep stay at the opening where Ann had knocked the boards off.

"I'm going to catch that lion," Sister Ann announced, as we walked toward the house.

"Oh, how can you!" I gasped. But in my innermost consciousness I had a vision of Sister Ann leading that lion about, tame as a kitten.

Her smile of pitying indulgence had its effect. For a time, at least, I believed the lion wouldn't dare try it.

Before the sun went down, we again took Shep into the house and locked the doors. Sister Ann said everyone knew that night air was not healthful, but she did not explain why she locked the doors so early. When I wanted to know how we should find out when the lion came, she said Shep would tell us. Then Ann went to cooking. She used up all the condensed milk and all the eggs there were in the house. She kept me busy helping while she made the kind of cookies I liked best and the kind she liked best, and two kinds of cake besides. She said we were not to have any supper at all, but a banquet after we caught the lion; and she was sure he would be around early. She decided she would start a show of her own if

conversation, however, proved only a monologue.

I did not pretend to eat of the feast, but just sat and looked at Sister Ann; and I think she did little more than crumble up her cookies.

"Just listen at him trying to get out," she said calmly. "Well, if he'd ask me, I could tell him he couldn't. Why, you just ought to see the way they keep 'em in circuses—behind little tiny bars no bigger than that!"

I didn't see what her comparison was, but I gathered from her tone that the bars were about the size of hat-pins.

I was just moving closer to Ann, when there came a scream that seemed to freeze my very blood. Ann sat still and listened. Then she went to the window, and for a long time peered through the cracks of the boards.

"Well, I declare!" she said at last. "It's just too lovely for anything; there's another one!"

"O Sister Ann!" was all I could gasp.

"Of course, all lions have mates," said she approvingly. "Everybody knows that. If I could catch that one, too," she continued reflectively, "I believe I would be a lion-tamer. It's just as easy! All you have to do is to wear pink tights with spangles on, and have a whip; and you stand in the cage with your foot on their heads and bow when the people clap."

Idea of lion-taming led to further reflections on the joys of a circus life, and, getting out her precious whip, Ann switched her skirts smartly and went prancing around the room, giving loud and cheery directions to her imaginary steed as he cleared, with a bound, banners and hoops. And I, to be near Ann, went capering after, though half the time tears were running down my cheeks. We kept this up until, when we crawled into bed, I dropped to sleep from sheer exhaustion.

In the morning all was quiet about the barn; but when we let Shep out, he barked so savagely we knew the lion was still there. After breakfast Sister Ann went near enough to look through a crack. She came hopping back on one foot, and said he was beautiful. Then we sat for about an hour on the back steps, watching the barn. I knew Sister Ann was thinking hard, because she didn't talk much.

"Well, I guess I'll catch that other lion," she said presently, with the air she might have used in deciding to indulge in another waltz. "The sheep are not safe while he is free, and he'll just keep coming while the other is here."

I did not ask a single question. I just followed into the house and helped take outdoors all the furniture that we had piled in the bedrooms, stripping the rooms bare. From a stack we fetched hay, heaping it round the empty rooms, and throwing as much into the parlour as we thought the sheep would eat. After Ann had taken another peep into the barn to see where the lion was, we went round and opened the door of the bull-pen.

The sheep were lying down as far from the partition as possible, quietly chewing their cud. In the farthest corner two lay dead, smothered, probably, by the flock piling up in the corner when the lion entered the barn.

We let the sheep out, and Sister Ann closed the door and nailed it up again. Billy Butts wanted to go out to graze; but by coaxing him with sugar, we got the sheep into the bedroom by way of the kitchen. Although they were pretty well crowded, they began to eat hay and seemed not to mind.

Then Sister Ann said she was going to go up in the barn loft and arrange to catch the other lion; and I could go along or stay in the house, just as I pleased. I decided I would rather be near her.

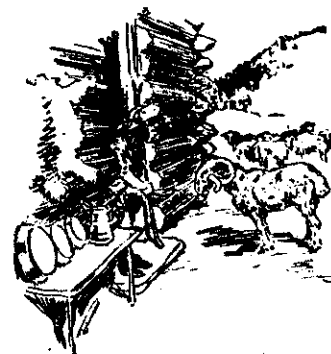
The loft was floored with good strong boards, and was used by Aunt Emma as a store-room.

When we had climbed up, I took one frightened peep through the floor cracks. The lion was crouched in a corner, watching us with his wicked green eyes. He had torn off great splinters from the pole partition and from the logs, and his mouth and chest were flecked with bloody foam. It was a terrible sight, and I stood carefully in the centre of a board.

Sister Ann showed no such timidity. She stamped tauntingly on the floor and, with her mouth to a crack, hurled forth her most scathing vocabulary. She invited her captive to reflect on the sin of stealing sheep, and to behold the fate of lions that "run up against her"; and

she gave the soothing information that she was by no means through with him.

Notwithstanding all that, I stepped cautiously across the cracks when Ann went to open a place to the pole partition, so that she could get the lion into the bull-pen.



"Sister Ann coaxed Billy Butts with sugar."

The pole protruded into the loft from one to two feet. To hold them at equal distance apart, inch boards had been nailed across the beams between the poles. Sister Ann knelt on the floor and pried up six of these boards, letting the poles fall back to each side. She was pushing the last one back, when there came a crash against the pole and a ripping and tearing of Ann's dress from its belt. The lion had sprung and seized her skirt, which had hung through a crack.

I gave one shriek and sank down, gazing at Sister Ann in speechless horror.

She still held the pole, but here eyes were wide and fixed. For once, I am now inclined to think, I saw my sister paralysed with terror. It was not for long, however.

"See here, Patty Brownlow," she cried, "you're getting me all mixed up by them squawks of yours. Haven't I told you this barn is a thousand million times stronger than circus cages! And just see what you've done!" Sister Ann was gazing below. "You've gone and scared him to death, when I meant to train him myself to jump through hoops."

Sinking on the floor, Ann sobbed hysterically.

I looked down through a crack with mingled feelings of remorse and astonishment. The lion was sprawled limp and motionless on the floor of the bull-pen. Whether he struck his head in springing for Ann's dress and the V-shaped opening she had made in the partition, or whether he injured himself before, we never knew. However, he lay, to all appearances, dead.

Sister Ann soon dried her tears, and, with my help, nailed the boards back between the poles, closing the opening that she had made.

I was begging her not to go down and poke the body with a stick, as she declared she was going to, when the lion stirred, slowly got upon his feet, walked over into a corner, and lay down. Sister Ann expressed such unbounded delight that I tried not to think how sorry I was to have him alive.

When we had securely fastened the loft door and crawled down the ladder, it was dinner time.

The sheep made lots of noise on the bare parlour and bedroom floors, and Sister Ann said she guessed they would have to be watered.

After dinner we went out and set the bear-window first. The lion was lying quietly in the corner of the bull-pen, where we had left him. Sister Ann said it made her ashamed to own such a lion as that.

We then put tubs in the rooms where the sheep were, and Ann said we would ply Indian while we watered the sheep



Sister Ann and Shep.

"Just you do what I tell you, and you'll see," Ann said airily.

We went into the parlour, which was a good-sized room, and stripped it bare of furniture and carpet. Then, to my amazement, Ann took the sheep from the corral and tried to drive them into the parlour. To do this, we had to take them across Aunt Emma's little garden in front of the house. In five minutes it was as bare as a floor. I never saw anything snip and chew so fast as those sheep; but we couldn't get them in the door. Finally Sister Ann coaxed Billy Butts in with sugar, and the rest followed. When the room was full of sheep, I closed the door, and Ann enticed Billy Butts on out through the kitchen, and had him lead the rest of the flock into the bull-pen in the barn.

Then Sister Ann nailed up both barn doors tighter than before.

When she stretched the clothes-line from the bear-window toward the attic window, which overlooked the barn, I began to understand her plan. The line was too short, however, and we pieced it out with the reins from an old harness. To keep it from dragging on the ground, we raised it over the branches of a small pine that stood near the barn. But even then the weight of the line kept pulling out the peg that held up the bear-window. Finally Ann tied the line with a stout string to a branch of the tree. Then we went up into the attic to try how it would work.

Sister Ann was always dramatic, and managed to extract a triumph from every situation. She held up a warning finger while she peeped cautiously from the attic window.

"Now he's in!" she suddenly exclaimed, giving the line a violent jerk. The limb of the pine bent toward us, the peg flew out, and the window slipped down with a bang.

Sister Ann rolled her eyes at me in fine triumph. "See, now!" she inquired tersely.

We went down and re-set the trap. To a hungry lion looking through the bear-window, the sheep in the bull-pen were certainly a tempting sight.

"O Sister Ann," I cried, misgivings suddenly overcoming me, "let's don't do it! He'll break those poles and eat all the sheep, and then he'll get out and be so mad he'll eat us!"

Sister Ann tossed her curls. "So you think that lion could eat me—you really do!"

we caught the lion, and declared that as soon as possible she was going to a country where one could meet elephants and rhinoceroses and tigers, greatly deprecating the paucity of a land where little girls could meet nothing but "a few old mountain lions."

So instilled was I with Sister Ann's views, that I ventured to the window and peeped out through the cracks in the boards. But all was still, and the moon had not yet risen, so I went back to her side.

I think I must have been asleep with my head resting on the table, when I was awakened by Shep's growling. Sister Ann was standing very erect listening. I made a dive for her and seized her skirts. She turned the light low, and, while I still clung to her, we made our way up the ladder to the attic and looked out of the window.

The moon was just rising, and the barn was in shadow; but as my eyes became accustomed to the light, I saw the lion moving softly around the barn, nosing the cracks. As we looked, he seemed for the first time to see the bear-window. He crouched, regarding it fixedly; then he walked up to the window, rose on his hind legs, and looked in, smelling about the frame.

I could feel Sister Ann shaking violently, whether from fear or excitement I did not know. But the lion moved away and again went around the barn. When he came back, without a moment's hesitation he sprang upon the sill, poised a moment, and then disappeared within.

Sister Ann seized the rope and pulled with all her might. We saw the window slide down, but for some reason it did not go evenly. One side remained a few inches above the sill. The moon now shone full upon the barn, and Sister Ann gave a kind of gasp as we saw the lion's paw thrust out through the opening. The window was pushed up a little; then the paw was withdrawn, and the window slipped snugly into place.

"Well," said Sister Ann, "that was done better than I could have done it myself. Nothing like catching lions that have good sense."

She led the way downstairs, turned up the light, stirred the fire, and proceeded to set the table. She did not seem to notice that I kept fast hold of her skirts and followed her every move.

From the barn came terrifying noises, but Sister Ann was not disturbed. Her