

I stood on a table at the corner of the house, where I could see up and down the valley and mountain side, while she carried water from the river and poured it into the tubs. If I saw a suspicious movement of any kind, we were to run for the house.

Every time Ann came up with a bucket of water, she would make faces at me until I nearly fell off the table from hysterical laughter. She had carried ever so many buckets, and was dipping up another, when Shep began to growl. Ann dropped her bucket and ran toward me. I jumped from the table; and, with Shep at our heels, we rushed into the house, locked the door, hurried up into the attic, and looked out of the window.

It was not more than five o'clock, and the sun was shining brightly. At first we could see nothing. Then came a piercing scream from the mountain side. Following the direction of the sound with our eyes, we saw above the bushes a tawny head glaring down upon the ranch. Instantly there came an answering scream from the barn. The lion came bounding down the hill. He did not even pause at the sheep corral. As frightened as I was, I noticed the beautiful ease with which he took the six-foot fence, and then, crouching, cleared the other side in a flashing yellow curve. He made straight for the bull-pen side of the barn, which was out of our sight; but we could hear the lion on the inside biting and clawing the logs.

"That's the lady lion," said Ann breathlessly, a conviction which proved to be true. "He wouldn't be brave enough to come right in daylight."

Presently the lioness came creeping and crouching round the barn, her sinewy body twitching with fury. The open bear-window was before her. Without an instant's hesitation she sprang into the barn.

Sister Ann seized the line, and jerked with all her might. The old rein must have been more rotten than we thought. The window had settled upon it, and it broke, the outer part dropping to the ground.

We looked in consternation at the bear-window. The lioness was crouched on the sill. If the window had fallen it would have struck her on the back. We watched the creature come out, suspiciously regard the rope, and then go round the barn.

"Now, Fatty Brownlow," Ann said severely, "when she goes in again, I'm going out and pull that rope. I can do it just as easy as anything. All you've got to do is to keep the door open and shut it tight the minute I get back."

I was long past remonstrating with Ann. We crept silently downstairs. She made Shep lie down and threw a quilt over him to keep him quiet. Then she unlocked the door, softly opened a tiny crack, and peeped out. Suddenly she threw the door back and dashed into the yard; and I knew the lioness had again entered the barn. As she stooped to grasp the rope, Ann tripped and plunged headlong. Numb with horror, I stood where I was, expecting to see her torn to pieces. But she fell on the rope where it rose from the ground to the tree branch. The weight of her body pulled the branch down, and the peg was jerked out. I heard the impact of

the lion's body against the window as it struck the sill.

Sister Ann was pale, but she walked into the house with a little swing of the body that gave a faint to her skirts, a sure sign of triumph. She even disdained to shut the door immediately; and, ignoring the pandemonium that reigned in the barn, calmly got supper, chatting and singing by turns.

I know now that if she had shown the slightest symptoms of fright, I should have utterly collapsed. As it was, I could not eat a mouthful. When we went to bed, I dropped into the sleep of absolute exhaustion.

The following morning was the fourth of Uncle Henry's absence. With two lions on her hands, besides the sheep,

had sent to us. By some misunderstanding the man had gone to Uncle Henry's valley ranch.

When the house was cleaned and arranged, Aunt Emma put me to bed, where I stayed for two days, while Sister Ann capered on her circus horse and audibly sighed to meet a real, true Bengal tiger.

Uncle Henry tried to sell the lions alive, but there was no buyer, though the whole country came to see them, and incidentally to look at Ann. Finally an Englishman, who was hunting in the mountains, made arrangements to ship the lions to a London dealer in wild animals. The morning he was to do so, the lion died. He decided, however, to send the lioness, and a stout wooden cage

and she vaulted lightly to the back of a horse.

"Why, Henry!" expostulated Aunt Emma from the door, with disapproving eyes on Ann.

"Oh, just to the top of the hill," Uncle Henry said indulgently. "And, with Ann's feathers waving, the 'procession' started.

The waggon had almost reached the summit of the mountain, and was at the only really dangerous place in the road, when a sudden gust of wind flapped sharply forward a loose end of the sack covering of the cage. It must also have carried a strong scent of the lion, for the steady-going team snorted, swerved suddenly, and crowded up the steep side of the mountain. Ann seized the points of the harness and held her seat, but the waggon was turned on its side, and the heavy cage went crashing down the steep mountain side. The boards were shattered, and I saw the lioness, apparently unharmed, flash away amongst the undergrowth—the last seen of her.

Sister Ann came flying down the road, her circus manners forgotten.

"Did you see?" she panted. "Well, I'm just glad that lion is free—she is such a splendid fighter!"



"The open bear-window was before her."

Sister Ann decided to make an effort to get help. She sailed some empty condensed milk cans to broad pieces of boards, and in them set adrift on the creek this somewhat formal appeal:

Dear Sir,—Two ladies are annoyed by lions at Mr. Henry Brownlow's ranch. You are cordially invited to be present.

Your obedient servants,

Ann and Patricia Brownlow.

P.S.—Please hurry.

This was as near an appeal for aid as Sister Ann's proud spirit could endure.

She was sending the last of these messages on their turbulent way, when I saw Aunt Emma on horseback, coming down the trail. I rushed to meet her, but could only sob and tremble in her arms. Ann came up on a hop, skip and jump.

"Why, children, what is the matter?" Aunt Emma asked in alarm.

"Oh, we've just got some lions in the barn is all," Sister Ann explained composedly.

When Aunt Emma finally understood the situation, she took me on her lap, Ann climbed up behind her on the horse, and we started for the nearest neighbour. Over the first hill we met Uncle Henry. We all returned with him to the house, where we found the man he

was placed on a waggon and backed up to the bear-window. For a time all efforts to cage the beast were unavailing. She became wild with anger, chewing prods into splinters and striking savagely at their wielders.

Sister Ann wanted to be on the immediate scene of action, but we were limited to looking from the house windows. Even then I stayed close beside Aunt Emma, shivering at the terrifying sounds; but Ann leaned at perilous angles from the attic window, an advising spectator.

"Good land!" she called. "If she wants to fight so bad, why don't you put something in the cage for her to fight! She'll go right in."

In response to this advice, an old coat was dragged through the bear-window, and the day was won. Burlap sacks were then tacked over the cracks of the cage, and preparations were made to start for the railroad right after dinner.

I was sitting on the back step, watching a man hitch the horses to the waggon, when Sister Ann brushed by me and tripped up to the dead lion, where he had been dragged from the barn. She had on a short, spreading white skirt, and tights made from material that had originally been flour sacks. Faint blue letters on her legs proclaimed that they were made by "roller-process" and were "best for biscuits." Ann had basted the flour-sack material on her legs and cut off the surplus, so her tights were somewhat wrinkled. Her arms were bare, her neck was adorned with Aunt Emma's watch-chain, her lips and cheeks were stained with choke-cherry juice, and two cock feathers waved above her flowing curls. She carried her precious whip and a bouquet of wild flowers. Lashing the dead lion smartly, Ann raised her foot to his head and struck a proud and graceful pose.

At that moment Uncle Henry and the Englishman came round the barn. They paused in astonishment.

"This is the little girl that trapped the lions," said Uncle Henry, looking hard above my sister's head.

"Fawncy now," said the Englishman, gazing at Ann.

A languishing smile parted Ann's cherry-stained lips. She pressed the bouquet to her heart and blew a kiss from her finger tips. Then she turned and started for the waggon on that skittish little lope seen only in the circus ring. The driver, who stood beside his team, was evidently acquainted with circus etiquette; for when Ann raised her foot, he gallantly extended his hand,

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"She invited her captive to reflect on the sin of stealing sheep, and to behold the fate of lions that 'ran up against her.'"