

FRANK WILDMAN'S ADVENTURES ON  
LAND AND WATER.

*Frank Wildman's Adventures on Land and Water.*

London: Geo. Routledge and Co.

We have perused the adventures of the hero of this story with much pleasure, and can recommend it without hesitation to the novel-reading public. The style of the book is excellent, and the description of men and things is sketched off with apparently a practised hand. We are presented with a view of piratical life along the American coasts and south of Cape Horn, until eventually we obtain an introduction to the Dyaks of Borneo. The book also contains an interesting account of the amusements of the Javanese, and some spirited descriptions of the customs of that people, which may prove attractive to those who would not waste their time in the perusal of a mere work of fiction. The following account of the operations of a Malay enchanter, who has undertaken the punishment of an unruly alligator, may serve as a fair illustration of the author's powers of delineation:—

"The magician lost no time in long preparations, for, advancing along the sand bank, in such wise that he always kept ten or twelve paces of dry ground between himself and the water (and he had chosen ebb time for this ceremony), he uttered a long-drawn peculiarly yelling or shrill cry, and then began singing a low monotonous song, to which he beat the time with his hands. From time to time he repeated the cry, which quivered with the most peculiar effect across the water, and then he bowed his head to east and west and commenced his incantation anew. There was a movement in the water—a couple of dusky bodies emerged; they lay like pieces of charred wood on the surface, and drifted slowly up without any visible movement. Others came up from the other side, opposite the willow swamp; four or five raised themselves slowly from the depths, and every time that the peculiar cry was heard it almost seemed as if these dark bodies were held by wires, for they moved forwards simultaneously as long as the cry lasted, and when it ceased they fell back more and more into their old position. It was evident that the man exercised an extraordinary, and at the first blush inexplicable, influence over the animals, for they unmistakably obeyed his call, then gradually approached the beach, and lay there drawn up in rank and file, and as if waiting further orders, with their heads projecting above the water, while here and there some very large brute raised half its harnessed back above the surface of the water. But the old enchanter was not disposed to initiate his audience immediately into the *arcana* of his proceedings, for he now began a slow and solemn dance before the brutes, commencing with the last in sight, and while the spectators drew nearer slowly and timidly, to understand the words which the enchanter muttered rather than sang, he appeared to pay no further attention to them, but devoted himself exclusively to the alligators. Frank did not understand a syllable of the whole incantation. Tji-kandi, however, who drew as near the magician as he could, which infringement of regulations was conceded as the European was standing by his side, explained to him that the old man was praising all the virtues and qualities of each individual animal, and telling them that Allah was satisfied with them, and would allow his sun to shine upon their backs, and that they should remain such respectable, temperate alligators, and not let themselves be seduced by evil examples, though he would not mention any name. 'You are the best,' he sang, as he walked up to a tremendously large fellow, who lay there with half-closed eyes, and looked up sleepily at him, 'You are the best of all; you keep them in order, and I know that you assisted my son against the vagabond whom we killed last year.' 'You are still young,' he then continued, addressing another, 'but I fear no good will come of you; I have heard bad things about you—very bad. Repent, repent.' 'And you are good too,' he sang to the others, 'and shall have presents, which your father will bring you—huh, eh, hu!' And the lengthened yell again sounded over the waters, so that the beasts held up their heads and looked around; it seemed as if it came from every quarter at once. But now the dance assumed a different character—it became more animated and expressive, and was executed almost exclusively round a rather large alligator with a remarkably broad head, which lay with nearly half its body projecting from the water, and regarding the old man with its glistening, cunning little eyes: this was the criminal, and the magician now expressed his opinion about the brute's conduct in unsparing terms. Good Allah! how he assailed the alligator—for this was not the first lapse from virtue; twice already, once for a well-founded suspicion, the second time caught in the very act, the animal had been reproved, and warned of the inevitable consequences of such conduct; but now the measure of its iniquities was full, and punishment must ensue. The alligator, as if it understood the conversation, and was certainly tortured by an evil conscience, first raised its gigantic upper mandible, and shut it again, as if it was troubled by *ennui*; but gradually it commenced to retire slowly into the water—it did not feel quite comfortable at this summing up. The old man scarcely perceived the movement, for he had not taken his eye off the animal, ere he again uttered his huh-i-uh, far more piercingly than on any previous occasion, and the crocodile lay quiet and immovable. The old man now made a sign, and several Malays with baskets came up, and brought food for the crocodiles—for one a piece of meat, for another a fish, for a third a lump of rice, and it was, in fact, a regular feast. For the criminal, however, a special dainty had been prepared, which consisted of a large piece of meat, with a powerful shark-hook concealed in it. This the old magician himself took—and this portion of the incantation was natural enough—to the broad-headed crocodile, and first casting a large lump to his neighbour, to excite the animal's appetite, he then offered him the hook. Meat and hook disappeared together, and the up-raised arm of the enchanter was the signal for the Malays to give a slight pull at the rope to which the hook was attached. The old man stood by the beast's side, and when the captured brute began to perceive that it had swallowed something out of the common, and grew restless, he recommenced his lecture, told the other crocodiles to notice how they could witness with their own eyes the consequences of disobeying Allah's commands, and then let go of the rope with a peculiar cry, very different, however, from the preceding. In a second, some twenty Malays were hanging on the rope, and the immense captured brute, so suddenly torn from its native element, lashed the water with its tail, and made a furious noise. But it was of no avail, the hook was secure; and the old man, quite forgetting his former solemn movements, jumped to the head of the alligator, and drove his kris into its throat; then retiring, he left the animal to be despatched by the others, who soon with their daggers separated the head from the body, which quivered for a while on the sand."