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Перед вами книга о самом «правдивом» человеке на свете — бароне Мюнхгаузене, который, к слову, существовал на самом деле. Так же как и его книжный прототип, он любил рассказывать своим друзьям не в меру приукрашенные истории из своего военного прошлого. Так появилось произведение, которое завоевало любовь детей и взрослых по всему миру — «Приключения барона Мюнхгаузена».

Текст адаптирован для уровня Elementary (для начинающих учить английский язык), а также снабжен комментариями.

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RUDOLPH ERICH RASPE

The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen

Baron Munchausen is a famous German nobleman. He likes to talk about his wonderful adventures. His exploits focus on his great achievements as a great hunter, soldier, and traveller. Of course, he is the most truthful and resourceful person in the world!

THE CUCUMBER-GATHERERS

We sailed from Amsterdam. A storm tore up by the roots many trees of enormous bulk and height, in an island where we lay at anchor to take in wood and water. Some of these trees weighed many tons, yet the wind carried them so amazingly high, that they appeared like the feathers of small birds in the air. They were at least five miles above the earth. However, as soon as the storm subsided they all fell perpendicularly into their places, and took root again, except the largest tree. When that tree was in the air, it had a man and his wife upon its branches. They were gathering cucumbers. In this part of the globe that useful vegetable grows upon trees.

As the tree descended, the weight of this couple overbalanced the trunk, and brought it down in a horizontal position. It fell upon the chief man of the island, and killed him on the spot.

He was returning home through his own garden when this fortunate accident happened. But this tyrant was very avaricious, the natives of the island were half-starved. The goods were spoiling in his stores, while the poor wretches were pining in poverty. Though the destruction of this tyrant was accidental, the people chose the cucumber-gatherers for their governors

THE CROCODILE AND THE LION

In about six weeks we arrived at Ceylon. We were received with friendship and true politeness.

In a fortnight I accompanied one of the governor's brothers upon a shooting party. He was a strong, athletic man.

Near the banks of a lake, I heard a rustling noise behind. I turned about and I was almost petrified at the sight of a lion. It was evidently approaching and it wanted to satisfy his appetite with my poor body. What to do in this horrible dilemma? I had not even a moment for reflection. My gun was only charged with swan-shot. Though I did not intend to kill such an animal with that weak kind of ammunition, yet I hoped to frighten it, and perhaps to wound it also. But the shot enraged him, for he quickened his pace. I attempted to escape.

I turned about and I found a large crocodile. His mouth was extended almost ready to devour me. I fell involuntarily to the ground with fear, and the lion sprang over me. I lay some time, I was expecting to feel his teeth or talons in some part of me. But I heard a violent but unusual noise. I raised my head and looked. To my unspeakable joy, I perceived the lion jumped forward into the crocodile's mouth! And they were struggling to extricate themselves!

I took my knife. With this instrument I severed the lion's head, and the body fell at my feet! Then I rammed the head farther into the throat of the crocodile, and destroyed it. The crocodile could neither gorge nor eject it.

Soon my companion arrived in search of me. After mutual congratulations, we measured the crocodile, which was forty feet in length.

We related this extraordinary adventure to the governor. He sent a waggon and servants, who brought home the two carcasses. The lion's skin was properly preserved, after which it was made into **tobacco-pouches**¹. I presented

¹ **tobacco-pouches** — кигет

it, upon our return to Holland, to the burgomaster, who, in return, gave me a thousand ducats.

The skin of the crocodile makes a capital article in the public museum at Amsterdam. The exhibitor relates the whole story to each spectator.

THE BARON AND HIS HORSE

I went to Russia, in the midst of winter. I went on horseback, as the most convenient manner of traveling. I was lightly clothed, and I felt the inconvenience **the more I advanced**¹ north-east.

What severe weather and climate! Suddenly I saw an old beggar; he was lying on the road, helpless, shivering. He had nothing to cover his nakedness. I pitied him. Though I felt the severity of the air myself, I threw my mantle over him, and immediately I heard a voice from the heavens:

“You will be rewarded, my son, for this!”

I went on. I saw no village. The country was covered with snow, and I was unacquainted with the road.

I alighted, and fastened my horse to something like a pointed stump of a tree, which appeared above the snow. I placed my pistols under my arm, and slept on the snow. I slept so soundly that I did not open my eyes till full daylight. And I was astonished: **I found myself**² in the midst of a village. I was lying in a churchyard. I did not see my horse, but I heard it somewhere above me. I looked upwards and I beheld the horse hanging by its bridle to the cross of the church.

Oh! The village was covered with snow overnight; then there was a sudden change of weather. I sank down to the churchyard whilst asleep, gently. But what was above the snow? It was not a pointed stump of a tree, to which I tied my horse: it was the cross of the church! And the horse could not go down. What to do?

¹ **the more I advanced** — чем ближе я двигался

² **I found myself** — я оказался

Without long consideration I took one of my pistols, shot the bridle **in two**¹, brought the horse, and proceeded on my journey.

THE BARON AND THE WOLF

The horse carried me well. I was advancing into the interior parts of Russia. I took a single horse sledge, and drove briskly towards St. Petersburg. I remember that in the midst of a dreary forest I saw a terrible wolf. The wolf **was making after me**², with all the speed of ravenous winter hunger. It soon overtook me. There was no possibility of escape. Mechanically I laid myself down flat in the sledge, and my horse ran very quickly. And what happened immediately after? The wolf took a leap over me, and fell furiously on the horse. Then it began to tear and devour the hind-part of the poor animal. I lifted my head up, and with horror I saw that the wolf ate his way into the horse's body. I took my advantage, and used my whip. This unexpected attack frightened the wolf so much, that he leaped forward with all his might. The horse's body dropped on the ground, but in his place the wolf was in the harness. I was whipping it continually: we both arrived safe at St. Petersburg, to the astonishment of the spectators.

FIFTY DUCKS DESTROYED BY ONE SHOT

It was some time before I could join the army, and for several months I was perfectly free. The recollection of my adventures gives me fresh spirits, and creates a warm wish for a repetition of them.

One morning I saw, through the windows of my bedroom, that a large pond not far off was covered with wild ducks. In an instant I took my gun from the corner, ran downstairs and out of the house in such a hurry,

¹ **in two** — надвое

² **was making after me** — бежал за мной

that I imprudently struck my face against the door. **Fire flew out of my eyes**¹; but I ran to the pond. Suddenly, I observed to my sorrow, that there was no flint in my gun. There was no time to lose.

I remembered the effect the blow had on my eyes. Soon my fist was against one of my eyes. A strong blow drew sparks again; I used the sparks for my gun, the shot went off. I killed fifty ducks, twenty widgeons, and three couple of teals!

THE BARON AND THE BLACK FOX

Presence of mind² is very important. In a noble forest in Russia I met a fine black fox. The fox stood close to a tree. In a twinkling I took out my **ball**³, and **placed a good spike-nail in its room**⁴, fired. I hit the fox so cleverly that I nailed its tail to the tree. I now went up to the fox, took out my whip, gave it a cross-cut over the face, and fairly flogged it out of his fine skin. So I took its skin, it was very beautiful!

AMAZING HUNTING

However, I had more amusing experiences. One day I was hunting all day long, and in the evening I came across a large lake in the middle of the forest. It was full of wild ducks.

Unfortunately, I didn't have any bullets left.

I was expecting many friends that evening, and I wanted to treat them well. I am a hospitable and generous person, you know. My dinners and suppers were famous all over Petersburg. How could I get home without ducks?

¹ **fire flew out of my eyes** — из моих глаз посыпались искры

² **presence of mind** — присутствие духа

³ **ball** — пуля

⁴ **and placed a good spike-nail in its room** — вставил в неё хорошую шпиковальную иглу

I remembered that there was a **piece of fat**¹ left in my bag. This fat will be a good bait. I took it out of my bag, tied it to a long string, and threw it into the water.

The ducks saw the food, and immediately swam up to the fat. One of them swallowed it. But the fat was slippery, and it passed quickly through the duck, and jumped out behind it! So the duck was on my string.

Then a second duck swam up to the fat, and the same thing happened.

All the ducks swallowed the fat and they became like a string of beads. In ten minutes, all the ducks are on it. All I had to do was just to pull out the ducks and take them to the kitchen.

But it was not so easy to carry so many ducks. I took a few steps and was very tired. Suddenly the ducks flew up and lifted me up to the clouds. You can imagine my surprise! I am a brave and resourceful person, you know. I made a rudder out of my coat, and flew rapidly home. But how to get down?

It's so easy! My resourcefulness helped me again. I killed some ducks, and we began to descend slowly — just into the chimney of my kitchen! My cook was very surprised.

WILD PIGS ARE DANGEROUS

Chance and good luck often correct our mistakes. Soon after that, in the depth of a forest, I saw a little wild pig and a sow. They were running close behind each other. I shot. The little wild pig ran away, and the sow stood motionless, as fixed to the ground. It was an old sow, blind with age, which took hold of the little pig's tail. My ball passed between these two pigs. It cut the tail, which the old sow continued to hold in its mouth. The sow's former guide did not draw it on any longer, it had stopped of course. I therefore took

¹ a piece of fat — кысок сала

the remaining end of the little pig's tail, and led the old beast home without any trouble. The old animal was absolutely helpless.

But these wild sows are very terrible. The boars are fierce and dangerous. One of them I had once the misfortune to meet in a forest. I was unprepared for attack or defense. I retired behind an oak-tree just when the furious animal jumped at me, with such force, that his tusks pierced through the tree. So it could neither repeat the blow nor retire. Ho, ho! thought I, I hammered and bent its tusks in such a manner, that it could not retreat by any means. Then I went to the village for ropes and a cart. And I carried the boar home safe and alive!

SAINT HUBERT'S STAG

You heard, I think, of the hunter and the saint and protector, **St. Hubert**¹, and of the noble stag, which appeared to him in the forest, with the holy cross between its antlers. I saw this stag a thousand times, either painted or embroidered. I hardly know whether such ever lived. But let me rather tell what I saw myself.

One day I was walking in the wood and eating cherries. Suddenly I found myself unexpectedly in presence of a stately stag. The stag was looking at me as if it knew of my empty pouches. I charged immediately with powder, and upon it a good handful of **cherry-stones**². Then I shot at the stag, and hit him just on the middle of the forehead, between his antlers. It stunned the stag — it staggered and ran away. A year or two after, I saw in the same forest, and I beheld a stag with a fine full grown cherry-tree above ten feet high between its antlers. I immediately recollected my former adventure, looked at the stag, and brought it to the ground by one shot. It at once gave me the haunch and cherry-sauce; for the tree was covered with the fruit.

¹ **St. Hubert** — св. Герберт (*покровитель охотников*)

² **cherry-stones** — вишнёвые косточки

Who knows but some hunter, or abbot or bishop, could shoot, and fix the cross between the antlers of St. Hubert's stag, in a manner similar to this?

AN AMAZING EIGHT-LEGGED HARE

One day I was chasing an unusual hare. The hare was wonderfully **fleet-footed**¹. It was running on and on, and never stopped to rest. I chased it for two days. I was riding my horse, and could not catch it.

My faithful dog kept pace with the hare, but I could not get closer. On the third day, I finally shot the damnable hare.

As soon as he fell on the grass, I jumped off my horse and rushed to examine him. You can imagine my surprise, gentlemen. That hare, in addition to its usual legs, had spare ones. It had four legs on its stomach and four on its back!

Oh yes, it had good, strong legs on its back. When the lower legs got tired, the hare rolled over on its back, and continued to run using the spare legs.

No wonder I'd **been chasing the hare for three days**² like a madman!

THE BARON AND THE BEAR

What do you say of this, for example? It was in a Polish forest. When I was going home a terrible bear appeared, with open mouth, ready to fall upon me. I searched for powder and ball, but in vain; I found nothing but two spare flints. One I flung with all my might into the bear's open jaws, down his throat. It gave the bear pain and made it turn about. I threw the second flint at his back-door, which, indeed, I did with wonderful success. It flew in, met the first flint in

¹ **fleet-footed** — быстроногий

² **I'd been chasing the hare for three days** — я гонялся за зайцем три дня