From Charles Waterton, *Wanderings in South America, the North-West of the United States, and the Antilles, in the Years 1812, 1816, 1820, & 1824* (London: B. Fellowes, 1828).

*In a letter to Mary Howitt sometime before leaving England, Alderson wrote enthusiastically about Waterton's work, with its "grandeur of effect" in depicting the "interminable wilds of South America of its grand and majestic forests its broad savannahs [sic] and its mighty rivers" (Ht/7/1/40, Correspondence of Mary Howitt [1799–1888], Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham). When the children find a black snake, Alderson writes that they 'went to fetch it a la Waterton (*Writing Home *326). Howitt further embellishes the incident in her telling of it, with a song as the children bring it home and a funeral for it afterward (92).*

There was a person making shingles, with twenty or thirty negroes, not far from Mibiri-hill. I had offered a reward to any of them who would find a good-sized snake in the forest, and come and let me know where it was. Often had these negroes looked for a large snake, and as often been disappointed.

One Sunday morning I met one of them in the forest, and asked him which way he was going: he said he was going towards Warratilla creek to hunt an armadillo; and he had his little dog with him. On coming back, about noon, the dog began to bark at the root of a large tree, which had been upset by the whirlwind, and was lying there in a gradual state of decay. The negro said, he thought his dog was barking at an acouri, which had probably taken refuge under the tree, and he went up with an intention to kill it; he there saw a snake, and hastened back to inform me of it.

The sun had just passed the meridian in a cloudless sky; there was scarcely a bird to be seen, for the winged inhabitants of the forest, as though overcome by heat, had retired to the thickest shade: all would have been like midnight silence, were it not for the shrill voice of the pi-pi-yo, every now and then resounded from a distant tree. I was sitting with a little Horace in my hand, on what had once been the steps which formerly led up to the now mouldering and dismantled building. The negro and his little dog came down the hill in haste, and I was soon informed that a snake had been discovered ; but it was a young one, called the Bush-master, a rare and poisonous snake.

I instantly rose up, and laying hold of the eight-foot lance, which was close by me, “Well then, Daddy,” said I, “we’ll go and have a look at the snake.” I was barefoot, with an old hat, and check shirt, and trowsers on, and a pair of braces to keep them up. The negro had his cutlass, and as we ascended the hill, another negro, armed with a cutlass, joined us, judging, from our pace, that there was something to do. The little dog came along with us, and when we had got about half a mile in the forest, the negro stopped, and pointed to the fallen tree: all was still and silent: I told the negroes not to stir from the place where they were, and keep the little dog in, and that I would go in and reconnoitre.

I advanced up to the place slow and cautious. The snake was well concealed, but at last I made him out; It was a Coulacanara, not poisonous, snake, but large enough to have crushed any of us to death. On measuring him afterwards, he was something more than fourteen feet long. This species of snake is very rare, and much thicker, in proportion to his length, than any other snake in the forest. A Coulacanara of fourteen feet in length is as thick as a common Boa of twenty-four. After skinning this snake I could easily get my head into his mouth, as the singular formation of the jaws admits of wonderful extension.