


IN THE WILDERNESS

HOW TO GET THERE, WHAT TO TAKE, AND WHAT YOU MUST DO
TO MAKE YOUR BIG GAME HUNT A SUCCESS

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 **T**HERE is a law, I believe, which declares that one may kill when faced by peril of hunger, as long as the "kill" is not human. This I offer in excuse of what happened one day in August, which is not in the big-game season of Ontario, as every hunter knows.

Like many another seeker in the wilderness who has also told his story of misfortune, we had hoped to save ourselves a half-mile lug of our birch-bark and equipment by shooting a "fool's rapids." Now "fool's rapids," in the parlance of the north, are rapids that should never be shot, at least never when a hundred good miles lies between you and any other provision than that at your feet. Of course we lost our beans; we lost our bacon; we lost our flour.

And on this August morning, with the sun just rising over the dew-drenched wilderness on either side of us, we were making time through the Canadian desolation with that peril of hunger at our backs. Suddenly my Indian guide directed our canoe, prow foremost, into a mass of brush and verdure with an unexpectedness that nearly upset me, and with that almost inaudible hiss of warning common to Indian hunters, he turned his face back to me, at the same time doubling himself for-

ward until his shoulders were scarcely above the gunwales of our birch. More thrilling than words, his posture said, "Look—Shoot!"

Not more than twenty yards ahead of us was a spectacle which is seldom the fortune of a hunter to see, unless he invades the wilderness in the mosquito and black fly days of August or early September. A huge cow moose, oblivious of our presence, was contentedly breakfasting on lily pads. Near her were two calves. One was standing inshore, knee deep in the water; the other had bravely followed its mother until it was compelled to stand on its hind legs, its forefeet supported by a mass of brushwood. We had approached thus near without causing alarm because just above us was a rapids, whose turmoil had drowned the sound of our paddles.



A BIT OF TICKLISH POLING THROUGH SHALLOW RAPIDS

I had brought with me a single weapon, a heavy caliber revolver. My experience with it had been short; my guide, from frequent demonstrations he had given, I knew to be an expert, so I cautiously passed it down to him. The brave little fellow, shoulder high in the water, was the sacrifice. I have seldom felt a keener regret than when the mother, after fleeing ashore with her remaining offspring, came out into the river again twenty rods below us and stood gazing fixedly at us for fully two minutes. I will not say she did this because she missed the creature we were dragging out of the water, for fear that some ambitious "sportsman" who has hunted in private gardens will number me among the nature fakirs. Anyway, we had moose veal for breakfast, and for dinner and supper and breakfast after that, and it was good beyond the mere detail of description.

This little tragedy occurred in the heart of what I believe to be the greatest moose country in the world—that country stretching northward from the shores of Superior through the Rainy River, Thunder Bay and Nipigon regions to Hudson Bay; but it is not of the wilderness wastes beyond these regions that I have to say, for there man has as yet scarce set his foot, but of those nearer ones that are possible to men who have no more than three weeks or a month to invest. This country begins at the back-yards of Port Arthur and Fort William. You may strike it by "decking" for passage on a lumber hooker bound for the Nipigon River; you may swing northward to it from Duluth, or approach it from the east over five hundred miles of rail. And when the conductor calls out Mackenzie or McLean or Sprucewood, or Emo or Wabigoon, there may be expectancy in your eyes and fire in your blood, for "over there" is the "bush"; and your guide, whom you have arranged for ahead, and who meets you and your luggage, explains

that "over there" means so far as you may throw a stone, if you have a strong arm. Then he adds a little to the general excitement by stating, in a casual way, that "the west bound killed a bull moose just over the station a bit last night." And he may speak with truth.



COW-MOOSE AND CALVES, FEEDING

That night the moon comes up big over the unbroken wilderness stretching on and on into No Man's Land, as your Indian guide will call it; and if your blood runs right and there is the love of the wild in your heart you will not sleep much, as my own first night has taught me, but hour after hour you will look out and over that wilderness longingly, picturing to yourself all of the things that are happening there, and regretting a thousand times the smallness of the stale and dusty life you have left in the city behind you.

But before burying yourself in these regions there are a few things you should know—matters outside of woodcraft and rifle skill, which will make your trip more interesting, and which, at the present, make of this wilderness the most interesting game country in the world. A few years ago in this part of the big-game paradise the wolf and the red deer were practically unknown. Sportsmen seldom encountered them, many Indians did not know what they were. To-day the country swarms with

them. The howl of the wolf has become a common sound of the wilderness; packs steal down in the cold nights of deep winter until they track the roads of settlements; in the hunger days of the deep snows they follow the trails of men.

"They came from over there—the



THE MONARCH YOU ARE HUNTING

deer and the wolf," said my Indian guide. "Over there" in this instance means to the south and west. The wolf and the red deer are mysteries to them. Yesterday there was none—to-day there are thousands. Those who come into frequent contact with white men understand, but the sons of the forest deeper back believe it is a miracle of the Manitou, whose blessing has fallen upon them. Even the great hunters of these regions have not yet outgrown their astonishment—such hunters as "Captain" John Ross, who has trapped in the Thunder Bay and Rainy River regions all his life; Neil McDougall, the Port Arthur Indian agent; George Hodder, Fred Weighart, and John E. Newsome, men of the rifle who are known from one end to the other of this part of the Ontario wilderness. These men have gone back over the trail of the wolf and the red deer, have traced them to the border and over the line into Minnesota and Wisconsin.

From these states, especially from Minnesota, the migratory thousands are

moving into the wilds of Canada. Poorly enforced game laws, indiscriminate slaughter at all seasons, have "put a flea into the red deer's ear," and he is hustling for a safer running ground in the fastnesses of Ontario. Each succeeding year finds the red deer more numerous, while hundreds of moose have joined also in the general exodus.

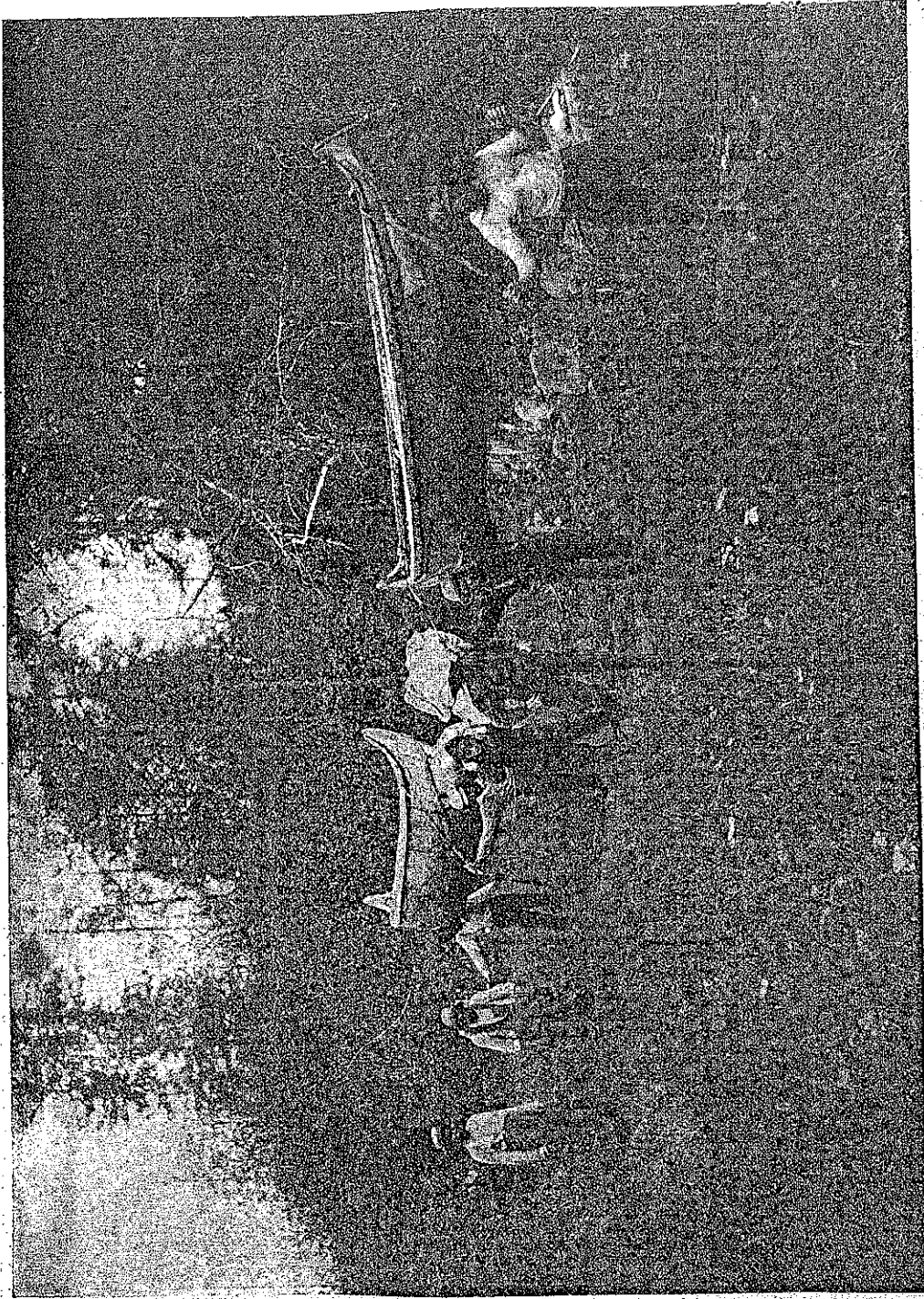
And what would the wolf do without the red deer?

Starve!

That would be his story in a single word. So, like a Nemesis, he follows hot on the trail.

This is a situation which hunters in the United States and even in eastern Canada know little about. It has not been advertised. The sportsmen of the western Ontario wilderness are willing that the moose and the red deer of Minnesota should come across the border to them, and they are also entirely willing that the knowledge of it should remain among themselves as much as possible. I was let into the secret of their joy three years ago. Each year since then I have watched the increase of game in this sportsman's paradise, and just before writing this article I took an August jaunt up into the Thunder Bay and Rainy River regions to see if another twelve months had changed the 1906 situation. They had. Hunters were worked up to a high pitch of enthusiasm. In a single day's excursion outside the limits of Port Arthur I saw three moose; while I was there a Port Arthurian awoke one morning to see a red deer from his bed-room window. And Port Arthur, it is to be known, is a city of fifteen thousand people, with another fifteen thousand people at Fort William, only four miles away!

In this country bears have become so numerous that many of the old hunters have ceased to class them as "game." They talk of them much as people of Michigan, Indiana or Illinois might speak of woodchucks.

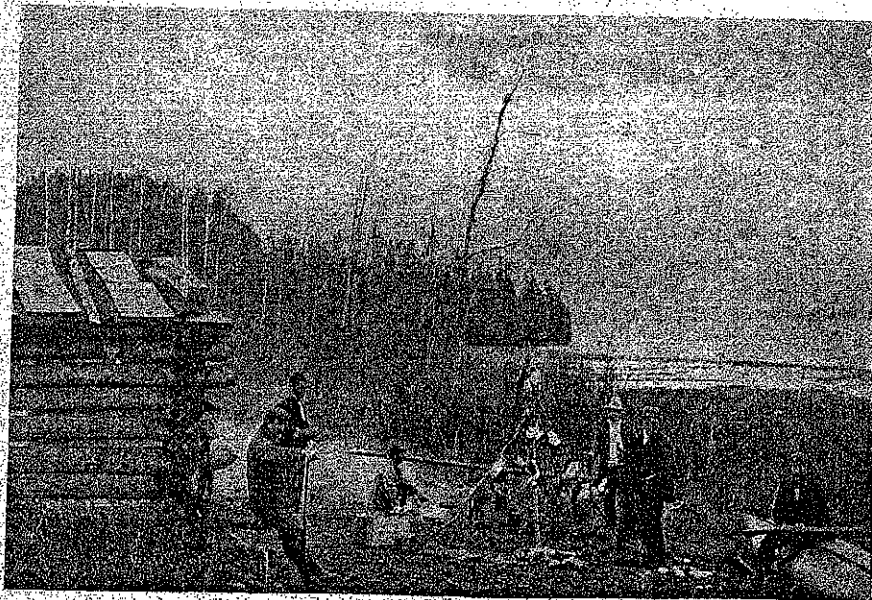


IN SPITE OF THE "MILLION CREEKS AND RIVERS" THE PARTY WILL FIND ITSELF OBLIGED SOMETIMES TO CARRY
BIRCH CANOES AND CAMP EQUIPMENT FROM ONE LAKE TO ANOTHER

There are those in the Thunder Bay and Rainy River regions who are willing to swear that half of the bears that were in Minnesota two years ago are now in Ontario, between Lake of the Woods and Nipigon. Personally I am glad of it, for I am a firm defender of the rights of big game, and I know that in Ontario the moose and the deer, and the bear along with them, will come into their own. There one seldom encounters the "game hog" as we know him in the states. Hunters, instead of evading the law, combine to uphold it. Even the bear, an outlaw who may be shot upon sight, is universally given a right to existence and seldom meets his end during hot weather. It is an open boast of the settlers and lumbermen in Minnesota that they have venison all the year round. At the end of the Duluth, Missabe and Northern Railway, I actually ran across a moose-hunting party in August! While at Sault Ste. Marie I found a guide who engaged to give me "good and safe" hunting for five dollars a day, or twice the price of his services in the legitimate season.

I cite these facts to show one of the reasons why the Rainy River and Thunder Bay districts of Ontario form the present sportsman's paradise of North America, not even excepting the Temagami and Nipissing districts, or New Brunswick. So it behooves the American hunter who turns his face to these wildernesses to "hunt fair," first purchasing his fifty-dollar license, and then killing only as much game as the laws of Ontario allow him.

It is good to remember, too, that hunting in what I might call the "Moose Peninsula" of Ontario is considerably different from seeking game in even the wildest fastnesses of Minnesota or Michigan, although the thickest of the Minnesota bush may be less than a hundred miles south. For this reason I will describe a little of what I have learned from experience, and which may be of value to the American planning an excursion into the Canadian moose country. A glance at a map will show you what kind of a country this is. It stretches from Lake of the Woods to Nipigon, and if you take an old hunter's



IT IS THE COUNTRY THE GREAT CREATOR MADE FOR GAME, THE INDIANS SAY

word for it, "is filled with a million creeks and rivers and five million lakes." That mere fact is sufficient to set your heart thrilling with anticipation. It is the country the Great Creator made for game, the Indians will tell you, and it looks it. And it is the "guide country." That is one of the important facts I wish to emphasize. You may hunt in Michigan and Minnesota without a guide—but do not make the mistake of attempting it in Rainy River and Thunder Bay, no matter how much experience you have had in the tamer deer country of the south.

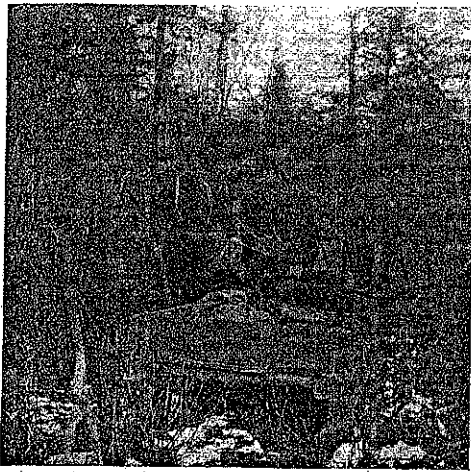
But where and how am I to get a guide? To what particular town or station shall I go? These, I know from experience, are the problems of a hunter about to go into a strange land. From Chicago and the central west one may go to Duluth and thence to Port Arthur and Fort William, where he will strike the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern railroads. Unless one is nearer to Winnipeg, from where he can travel eastward into the Rainy River district, I would advise the stranger to hit Port Arthur or Fort William as a "base." It is easy to make arrangements here, both for guide and equipment. Or he can safely stop at any one of fifty stations along the railroads in the very heart of the big game country. Near Lake of the Woods it is a toss-up between Emo, Stratton or Wabigoon; eastward, on the Canadian Northern, one may jump off at Bannin, Atotokin, Kawene, Windigo and a dozen other places; and along the entire length of the Canadian Pacific, running through the more northerly part of the region, are a score of towns and stations at almost any one of which guides and equipment may be secured. For several hundred miles the Canadian Pacific carries one through an ideal game country, and westward from Fort William one may safely stop at Niblock, Shebandowan, Woonga, Butler or Wabigoon. But per-



A PARTY OF TWO IS IDEAL

sonally, if I were going for the first time into this country, I should stop at Port Arthur or Fort William.

In the moose country I prefer the "one man hunt," or, if not that, the "two man hunt." In other words, the person who goes alone with his Indian guide stands a greater chance of killing his quota of game than do the individual members of a party. The party hunt is a very agreeable institution of the Michigan and Minnesota woods, but it has its disadvantages in a country where the monarch you are hunting—the moose—has ears so keen that on a quiet evening he can hear a splash of your paddle three-quarters of a mile away. If you are taking a "one man hunt" every nerve in your body is keyed to a pitch of expectancy and hope. If you are in a canoe your Indian sits astern, as mute as a stone; not a sound falls from his lips unless it is to call attention to signs of game. With your rifle in readiness you watch the edges of the wilderness you are slipping through; if there is a shot you get it, and you take it in your own way, without excitement or fear of criticism. If you have a good Indian, and I have seldom encountered a poor one in



THERE IS ALWAYS THE PROBLEM OF GETTING YOUR GAME OUT AFTER IT IS SHOT

this region, you will return to civilization with all the law allows, while the results of a "two man hunt" in a birch will, in many instances, prove disappointing. But if you plan to spend most of your time in camp the situation is entirely different, and a party of two is ideal. In this case I would advise that each man hire a guide, for it is obvious that one Indian can not give satisfaction to two hunters, unless they take turns—day on and day off—in their hunting expeditions. As your guide will charge only two dollars or two dollars and fifty cents a day he will not prove very expensive.

Of course there is always the problem of getting your game out after it is shot. In the north woods of the United States, where one can get a team to carry him to almost any hunting spot over logging roads, this matter occasions no trouble, but it must be remembered that along the Forty-Ninth degree one gets into the virgin wilderness, impenetrable at times not only to horse and wagon but to man as well. The prospective hunter should not worry himself over this condition, however. His guide will help him settle the matter before they enter into the "bush." In most places, as at Wabigoon

and the settlements on the Canadian Pacific beyond Port Arthur, one may arrange for the services of a horse, and during the leisure hours of hunting days your guide will knock together a "drag," or sort of sled, for which you will have to cut a way back out of the wilderness. But even this work of getting to the railroad with your game is exhilarating sport, and may prove the most enjoyable part of the trip. If your camp is to be up or down some waterway, matters are simplified at once, for your Indian will then get you back with your game if he has to build a raft to do it.

I feel impelled to say a few words for the benefit of hunters who have never shot moose. Every sportsman knows that for the deer and bear of Michigan and Minnesota woods a rifle of comparatively small caliber is used, and it is also a fact that the hunter going for the first time after moose nearly always thinks that he must take a small cannon with him. In many instances the tenderfoot moose hunter will arm himself with a rifle that will plow a hole as big as his fist from one end of a moose to the other, crushing bones and flesh in a ruinous and entirely unnecessary way. I know of one hunter who destroyed a magnifi-



ONE REASON FOR A RAVENOUS APPETITE



BEHIND YOU IS WILDERNESS UPON WILDERNESS OF SPRUCE AND TAMARACK

cent head because he used a gun of this description, and I know of another who spoiled two-thirds of a caribou by shooting him lengthwise with the same sort of a weapon. Personally I use a thirty-five caliber autoloading Remington, which I believe is better than any heavier caliber I know of. My own gun does moose, caribou and bear work beautifully, has none of the reaction, or "kick," of what I call the "dynamite guns," and will kill game as far as one can easily see it, and without undue mutilation.

But now all of your troubles, your plans, and your fears are at an end and you are in the "bush." You find that this word so commonly used in the Canadian North is a misnomer. Around you is the wilderness that you have read

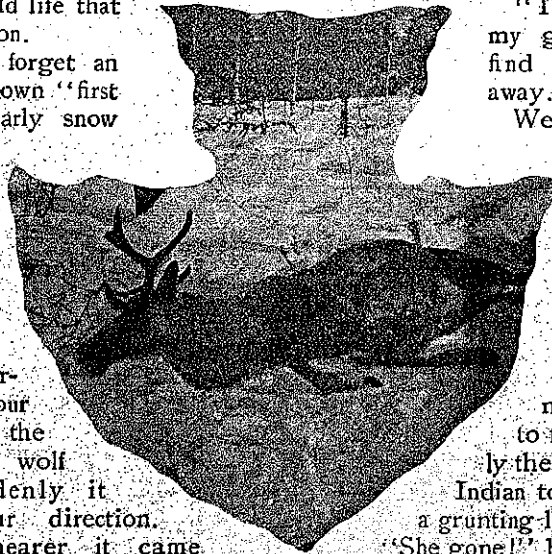
about, and dreamed of, and longed for. Just behind you is your small tent, pitched with its face against a great rock that even now, as the sun goes down, reflects in the evening chill the heat and light of the newly-made camp fire. Over this fire your Indian is preparing supper. Beyond you, stretching in a shimmering, failing light until it is lost against its dense, black rims of balsam and spruce, is the lake; behind you, thrilling you in this first hush of night, is wilderness upon wilderness of spruce and tamarack. Cautiously you go down to the edge of the lake, and there in the recently frozen earth your blood thrills at the sight of great hoof-prints, and you steal back a little later, every nerve in you tingling, to tell your guide about them.

"Moose!" he says, and you two sit down there in the warmth and glow of your fire and eat your supper of bacon and beans and baked meat-cakes hot from a crackling stone, by all odds the happiest mortals in the whole wide world! And after it is done you settle back with your pipes, for the day's jaunt to the camping ground has been a long and a hard one, and your Indian tells you strange tales as the night grows deeper and blacker. Then, over the edge of the Canadian wilderness, you catch sight of the rim of the moon, and as it rises higher and higher your soul rises with it, and there falls, by mutual consent, a mysterious and beautiful silence, while your ears are keyed to catch some sound of the wild life that fills the desolation.

I will never forget an incident of my own "first night." An early snow had fallen, and every water-way was frozen. It was a clear, still night, bright with the luster of a million stars. For a quarter of an hour we had heard the hunt-cry of a wolf pack. Suddenly it turned in our direction. Nearer and nearer it came



VIRGIN WILDERNESS, IMPENETRABLE AT TIMES NOT ONLY TO HORSE AND WAGON BUT TO MAN AS WELL



until an eighth of a mile away we saw an object shoot out on the snow-covered ice of our lake. Ten rods it came—fifteen—twenty—a red deer, racing with death close behind; and by the time that twenty rods had been covered we could see black spots tumbling fast after. It was a thrilling sight and we stood mute, scarce breathing for fear of making a sound. They passed a score of rods abreast of us, and then my Indian whispered that the deer was nearing exhaustion. I could see the wolves gaining—saw the poor creature ahead stumble as it plunged up the bank of the lake, and then, and not until then, did I remember that I held a gun in my trembling hands.

"They catch her," said my guide. "She come find water—swim—get away. Nowater—all ice!"

We heard them circling around a quarter of a mile behind us. Then again they headed for the lake. This time I gripped my rifle and led in the direction of the sound, my sympathy fired to fever heat. Suddenly the sounds ceased. My Indian touched my arm with a grunting laugh. "She gone!" he chuckled.