

MY FIRST BULL MOOSE

By Frederic Chutney Selous

DEVOTED to natural history and delighting in the study of the habits of the wild creatures of the earth in their native wilds, it had always been one of my ambitions to visit some district of the great North American Continent, where moose were still to be found, in the hope of meeting with some of these giant deer and, perhaps, securing the head of a well-grown bull to add to my collection of hunting trophies. For many a long year, however, Fate decreed that my life was to be passed in a part of the world far removed from the great northland, and gradually the hope of ever seeing one of these quaint, ungainly, old-time looking beasts grew somewhat faint, though it, never entirely left me.

However, *"tout vient a qui sait attendre,"* or rather, if I may paraphrase that familiar French saying, "he who really wants a thing will sooner or later get an opportunity

to go after it," and in the fall of last year, 1900, the chance came to me to go on a hunt after moose. Having made certain preliminary arrangements by letter, I arrived at Mattawa, in the Province of Ontario, Canada, on the evening of September 24, bringing with me my rifles and ammunition, blankets and clothing. With the kind assistance of Mr. E. O. Taylor, the manager of the Hudson's Bay Company's store, and Mr. Colin G. Rankin, I had got all my provisions, cooking utensils, etc., ready packed, the day after my arrival in Mattawa, and on the morning of September 27 got off by the train to Lake Kippewa with my guide, George Crawford, and his boy Joe. We carried with us, besides our stores, two small tents and two birch-bark canoes. I must confess that, during my two days' stay at Mattawa, I had been somewhat taken aback by the number of hunting parties constantly ar-



GEORGE, THE GUIDE, AND THE TROPHY.

living there from all parts of the English-speaking world—the British Isles as well as various parts of Canada and the United States—all intent on securing that much-coveted trophy, a fine moose head. However, I reflected that the country in which all these eager sportsmen, I among them, were about to hunt was very vast, and covered entirely, except for its rivers and lakes, with forests of a density which must be seen to be understood, and concluded that there were probably enough bull moose in these primeval solitudes for all of us, if we could only find them.

A three hours' journey by rail brought us to the southwestern shore of Lake Kippewa, where we embarked on a fine steamer—the *Hurdman*—which is employed in carrying stores to the various lumber camps on the Lake shore, and which bore us forthwith across Lake Kippewa, through Hunter's Lake, to an old, abandoned landing stage, distant about a mile and a half from Lake Bois Franc. The passage through the various sheets of water, known collectively as Lake Kippewa, all of which are studded with innumerable islands, amongst which the steamer threads its way often through very narrow channels, would have been a most interesting experience had the weather been only bright and fine, with the sun shining on the forests, with which every island on the lake and every portion of the mainland that was visible is covered; forests in which the dark-foliaged spruce and pine are intermingled with the maple, birch and other deciduous trees, whose leaves were now all glorious with the rich and varied tints which mark the advent of the Indian summer. But the sky was dull and threatening and entirely obscured by rain-charged clouds which hung low over land and water, whilst a cold wind blew from the north, which was far from comfortable.

On the following morning a thick mist hung over forest and lake, but the wind had altogether dropped, and as the sun rose it



THE KIND OF COUNTRY—IDEAL FOR MOOSE

gradually dispersed the mist, and we had a fine warm day. In three trips we carried all our belongings and our two canoes to the shore of Lake Bois Franc, which signifies hardwood lake, the name having been given to it doubtless by some French Canadian lumberman on account of the numbers of ridges around it, on which there grows a large proportion of deciduous or hardwood trees, as distinguished from the soft wood pine and spruce. It was in getting our things across this first portage that I learned the wonderful carrying powers of the Indian half-breeds. In one trip George Crawford carried a bag of flour (100 pounds) on his back and the heaviest of the two canoes weighing probably another 70 or 80 pounds on his head, and he walked with his load the mile and a half without ever stopping to rest. Joe carried about 80 pounds which was quite as much and more than my own loads and I am sure that he carried his packs much more easily than I did mine. The Indian way of carrying packs on the back, the weight being supported by the broad leather strap across the forehead, is a most excellent one, and the easiest method, I think, of carrying a heavy load. After having repacked the canoes, we embarked on Lake Bois Franc, and paddled about three miles to an old



HEAD OF MOOSE FEW HOURS AFTER SHOT, SHOWING NATURAL (NOT USUAL TAXIDERMIST) SHAPE OF NOSE AND SMALL EYE.

lumber camp where we established our headquarters. In the evening George paddled me down to a gamy looking little creek at the end of the lake, and here after the sun had set, I heard for the first time the call of the cow moose, imitated through a birch bark trumpet, but we got no answer.

The next morning it rained continuously till after midday but as soon as it had cleared up a bit, George and I crossed the lake and threaded our way through the dripping woods to a small lake. Here we saw a good many moose tracks, some of them evidently those of large bulls, so we determined to fetch one of our tents as quickly as possible and then hunt the surrounding country. Accordingly on September 30, we carried a tent, the smaller of our two canoes, together with our blankets and a few days provisions to this promising looking hunting ground. In the evening George again called for moose until long after dark, but we had no reply, nor heard any sound in the forest, save the cry of an owl. The next day was the first of October, the opening day of the hunting season in the county of Pontiac, Province of Quebec, and as soon as we had finished breakfast George and I followed an old lumberer's trail which after a mile or so brought us to a small swampy lake about 500 yards wide by 600 or 700 long. Here George gave a call—the call of the cow moose—and shortly afterwards we heard a real cow moose bel-

lowing. She repeated this cry several times, apparently in the woods not very far beyond the end of the lake. Thinking there might be a bull with her, we now commenced to skirt the lake within the edge of the forest, and when about half way down George walked out along a large pine tree that had fallen into the water and called again. After waiting a short time and having heard the cow bellow again, we continued to make our way around the lake through the thick forest. We had not gone far when George's sharp ears heard something behind us and we stood still and listened. At first I could hear nothing,

as African malarial fever or the large quantity of quinine I have taken to counteract that malady has somewhat dulled my sense of hearing. However, I soon heard a distinct rustling in the bushes and then the sound as of some large animal walking through shallow water. "It's a bull that heard me call," whispered George; "he's coming towards us along the edge of the lake." There was apparently no wind at all, but we were afraid that the moose might scent our tracks; so we commenced to cautiously retrace our steps just within the edge of the forest. We could now hear quite distinctly the noise made by some large animal walking in the water and on getting back to the half submerged log, where George had given the last call, my eyes beheld and flashed upon my brain a picture which I shall never forget. A great bull moose was coming slowly along towards us, walking knee deep in the water, and just skirting the forest. In very truth he was a splendid beast to look upon, huge in bulk and with broad palmated antlers showing up well above his uncouth head, and as I gazed at him longingly, brief visions of many a picture I had seen in works descriptive of sport in the Canadian forests flitted rapidly across my brain. He was not then more than two hundred yards away from me, but as it seemed as if he would come right up to us, I did not think of firing at him at once. However, after he had come a little nearer

in full view, he suddenly left the water and turned into the forest, after first passing through some bushes growing in the lake and above which only his head and horns had been visible.

We now again advanced cautiously through the forest to intercept him, and heard him give two or three low grunts. Then he came dimly in sight again amongst the trees which here grew very close together. He was not more than fifty yards off when we once more caught sight of him, but the stems of the trees hid him to such an extent that, moving as he was, I think I should probably have hit a tree had I fired hurriedly. So I possessed my soul in patience, and waited for a chance of a clear shot. Although we were motionless both George and I were in full view, but the doomed moose never turned his head toward us nor seemed in the least suspicious of danger, moving steadily forward without any of that appearance of alertness or timidity usually noticeable in all wild animals which live in a country where they are either hunted by man or preyed on by carnivorous animals. The bull had now changed his course, and was advancing in a line that, had he kept it, would have brought him past us almost broadside on, at a distance of perhaps thirty or forty yards. I was however afraid to wait any longer, lest an eddy of wind should betray our proximity, so getting the sights of my rifle on his body just behind the shoulder, I fired. He was just at that moment in a dip of the ground, so that the lower portion of his body was hidden and I had therefore to shoot him a little high, though well through the lungs below the backbone. Immediately I fired, I ran in, pushing another cartridge into my single shot rifle as I ran. The ground rose rather steeply from the lake, and the wounded moose went straight up hill, but after going some twenty yards stopped, and turning broadside, looked back, giving me a splendid second chance. This shot hit him just right, a little behind the shoulder, not too high up, and made a large

hole through the middle of his heart, as the bullet had expanded before getting there. He gave a spasmodic plunge forward and then rolled over dead, and I was soon standing over the huge form of my first moose.

George pronounced him to be a five-year-old bull. He seemed to me to have a very pretty even head of moderate size. It had a spread of forty-nine inches and eighteen points. A few fortunate sportsmen will doubtless get better heads this year, but others may not get as good. He stood over six feet in perpendicular height at the shoulder, but as I had left my measuring tape in camp I could only get his height roughly. I, however, had my small Austrian scale with me, and I weighed him carefully. After having taken the whole of his inside out of him, including heart and lungs, I skinned and quartered him, and then weighed him in sections with the following result.

Head, with neck skin attached	43 kilos
Rest of hide	30 "
One forequarter, with greater part of neck	100 "
The other forequarter	90 "
One hindquarter	66 "
The other hindquarter	60 "
Total	<u>394 kilos.</u>

Or taking the kilo at 2 lbs. 3 oz. 862 lbs.
This is the weight of what my guide pronounced to be a fair-sized moose bull of about five years old. He was, however, about as poor as any animal I have ever seen, being much run down by the rut, and when in high condition might easily have weighed I should think another forty pounds or say nine hundred pounds clean, which would have given him a live weight of about twelve hundred pounds, since the paunch, intestines, liver, heart and lungs of an animal weigh about one-fourth of its total weight. An exceptionally large moose bull would, I imagine, scale a great deal more than the specimen I had the opportunity to weigh, but such as he was, I was well content with him, nor am I ever likely to forget the memorable day on which he, my first bull moose, fell to my rifle.