



Painted for Oursing by H. S. Wagon.

"TAKING UP THE TRAIL OF THE NIGHT BEFORE WE WERE IN THE HABIT OF FOLLOWING IT WITH THE UTMOST CAUTION."—P. 420.

TRACKING THE WAPITI.

WAPITI OR ELK HUNTING IN MANITOBA.

BY CERVUS.

IN the days when countless thousands of buffalo ranged over the northwestern portion of this continent, Pembina, on the boundary between the United States and Canada, was the rendezvous of the half-breed and Indian hunters from the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Starting at this point there is a range of hills many miles in width from east to west and extending northwesterly as far as the Duck Mountain up near the forks of the great Saskatchewan River. The Assiniboine and the Pembina rivers wind through these hills; there are valleys of meadow land where the sharp-tailed grouse breed; lakes and ponds where the geese and ducks congregate; bluffs of scrub and heavier woods of birch, poplar, oak, balsam, etc., where the ruffed grouse, moose, wapiti, deer, bear, wolf, fox, lynx and marten have their habitat.

The Pembina River cleaves the southern portion of the range in a deep valley, the upper and widest rim of which probably stretches four miles from side to side, at an elevation of one thousand feet above the water. The present river flows in a channel about one hundred yards wide, in the centre of a valley, evidently the old bed of a broader river, about a mile in width, but now overgrown with alder, willow and coarse grasses. All through the region are muskegs or bogs, as well as elevated plateaus and rolling prairie, and, before the strong hand of advancing civilization had changed the face of nature, here were all the conditions favorable to the production and maintenance of game.

When the earth was many hundreds of years younger than it is now these hills formed the western boundary of a lake whose waters rolled over the site of the present city of Winnipeg, and in fact over nearly all the country from Lake Winnipeg as far south as St. Paul.

When I reached this region in 1882 the buffalo had vanished, but all the other game was there, though not to the extent which characterized the country during its earlier history. Though very fond of sport I knew little of hunter's craft or the chase of such game as the wapiti.

The month of December was selected

for my debut in these hills, and the point was near their eastern boundary, where a band of about twenty wapiti or elk, as they were called, sought food and shelter. On the day of my arrival four Sioux Indians, a remnant of Sitting Bull's band, who had taken refuge in Canadian territory, had also invaded the district, with their ponies, squaws, papooses, tents and other impediments? for the purpose of trying conclusions with the wapiti.

Taking up my quarters at the cabin of a settler convenient to the woods in which the elk were supposed to be, after a good night's rest I started in the early morning to look for the game, the exact location of which was neither known to me nor to the Sioux.

I wonder if any of your readers have ever tramped over a Manitoba muskeg? The long grass growing in the soft, spongy soil is a non-conductor of frost, and the winter winds pack the snow on the surface so firmly that the whole weight of the body must be thrown on one foot before it breaks through. To do this the other foot must be lifted out of the cavity in which it is buried; then down you go with a jerk, the process being repeated at each step and the only variety in the exercise is an occasional immersion in the water, which never wholly congeals owing to the protecting grass already mentioned. I had enjoyed (?) one such experience, but this time wore snowshoes.

On these I toiled along as best I could until nearly sunset, but saw no signs of the wapiti nor of the Sioux, though I had heard the yells and shouts of the latter as they mustered for the hunt in the gray dawn. At last I wheeled in the direction of home, and shortly afterward surprised a large covey of ruffed grouse on some oak scrub. Resolving to secure a few of the birds, I commenced pumping lead rapidly with the 44.40 Winchester which I carried, and, after decapitating several, returned home. That night, with one of the settler's sons, I visited the Indian camp, and there learned that they proposed giving up the hunt, because, as they alleged, at the critical moment when one of their party was stealing upon wapiti the latter were

startled by my fire. This was untrue, as we afterward discovered from the tell-tale impressions of their moccasins in the snow nowhere in the proximity of the hoofprints of the game. But the Sioux had been within sound of my rifle, and the real reason for their decision was an Indian hunter generally wants the woods to himself, that he may hunt in his own way, and they had some reason to conclude I was a reckless hunter and likely to frighten away the game.

A little reflection convinced me that when pursuing such large animals the "proper caper" was to let the small game alone.

Sure enough the next morning the four bucks, with all their worldly possessions, took their departure. Then for three days we explored the woods in every direction, far beyond any spot where the footprints of the Indians showed, and on the third day fortunately discovered the "yard" of the wapiti. And what a sight for an enthusiastic sportsman was there! In many places we could travel some distance continuously stepping from one resting place or bed into another, while trail after trail wound in every direction as far as the eye could reach up and down the hills and through the scrub. From the "sign" a novice would think the elk were there in hundreds, but as near as I could afterward judge there were only about twenty animals in the yard. It did not take me long to discover that the fresh trail was the most likely to form connection with its author, and from the fact that the sign was always visible and the elk invisible, though my range of vision often extended half a mile, I inferred that most of this sign was made at night or in the early morning and that as the day advanced the wapiti sought the seclusion of some thick hazel scrub and briars impassable to any white man without his making sufficient noise to alarm the game.

Taking up the trail of the night before we were in the habit of following it with the utmost caution, until just as a tangle of hazel and other scrub was entered a prolonged whizz and rush would greet my ears. Following a little further I would reach the spot where the wapiti had decided to receive visitors, and then the main trail where all the animals converged to run on in single file. If the whole band broke away they generally kept on about a mile in advance, and when I stopped

they obligingly halted also, but by some mysterious instinct were always able to keep well out of sight. If only one or two were surprised and detached from the main herd after running about half a mile or so, they generally cut across an open glade in the woods perhaps a quarter of a mile wide, and then kindly halted just within the cover of the scrub on the far side and there awaited further developments. When following the trail I innocently appeared in the open, the elk watching on his back track, evidently noticed something in my appearance he did not regard with favor, for he would make a few vigorous bounds and then settle down to his long, swinging stride, and I generally found that one such experience was sufficient to satisfy his curiosity. This was the story that the hoofprints told, for it must not be inferred that the elk were sufficiently condescending to allow me to witness all these manoeuvres.

My experience on one occasion was somewhat different from the foregoing. In the evening, after an all-day chase, I caught sight of the band about four hundred yards away on the summit of a thinly-wooded hill. The shooting was across a valley; but the difficulty lay not only in the great distance, but in avoiding collision with the trunks of trees which could not be distinctly seen in the bad light.

I fired at the leader of the band, but even as I hurriedly adjusted the sights of the rifle to the range, the keen eyes and acute ears of the noble fellow had turned in my direction, and the only effect of the shot was to materially expedite the movements of the whole family.

Three weeks passed by, and success had not crowned my efforts nor had my enthusiasm abated.

Experience having taught me something as to the habits of the game, a plan was laid to circumvent them. Taking up the trail of the night before one cold, stormy day, I followed it until the open space appeared, with the trail leading directly across it. I then halted suddenly, as if another step would have carried me over a precipice; the elk trail in that position was dangerous ground, and I cautiously left it and circled to leeward, keeping in the cover of the scrub with my weather eye bearing on the far side of the glade in the direction in which the elk had gone. Presently I sighted one of the great wapiti. His head was down, and quietly he nib-

bled at the grass still piercing the snow. He suspected no danger. Far as he could see along his trail nothing appeared. He fed broadside on about one hundred yards away. Kneeling in the snow I opened fire. There was a strong wind blowing and the air was intensely cold. Owing to the atmospheric conditions the explosion sounded only faintly, but there was a sudden spring and a few bounds took the wapiti out of sight in the woods. But the bullet had penetrated both lungs, and about one hundred yards farther on the great beast fell. Grand, noble, majestic animal that he was, even as his prostrate form pressed the snow, now crimsoned with his blood, it gave evidence of the vigor and power, the emphasis, so to speak, of the life I had taken away. The next season I revisited the old stamping grounds, but only two living elk

remained. In a pocket of the hills the hungry progeny of an Indian hunter were sucking the marrow bones of two others but recently killed, and during the preceding spring Indian butchers had reduced the gallant band to these pitiable proportions. Starting to hunt the two remaining animals I got a shot at the smaller of the two as his quick slashing stride was carrying him through some thick scrub. The bullet caught him on the flank, but he was able to keep out of my way all day, and on the next morning I found him skinned, dissected and entombed under the snow. I had not yet seen the wily redskin, but here was his handiwork. By the laws of the chase the meat belonged to the Indian.

The sole survivor of this unfortunate band detected danger in time and left the locality forever.

TRAINING.

BY MALCOLM W. FORD.

BENEFICIAL athletic training is nothing but a building-up process of the nerves and muscles. Every man starts with a certain quantity of each, and if he wishes to add to his supply he can easily do so by judicious treatment. The main questions with ambitious athletes are what shall I eat, how often shall I practice, how much shall I take, and how am I to know when to stop. These are pretty hard questions to answer, for men vary so in the amount of exercise that they can take.

In treating this subject my intention is to show that a method of healthy body training can easily be followed by the average business or professional man who has athletic propensities. The great drawback to most essays on athletic training is that a mode of life is advised which is too far out of the way of a man's ordinary routine to be followed with comfort or even success. The average amateur can afford neither the time nor the inconvenience to train the way a professional would. College men, as a rule, train very much as professionals do, for they have the time and generally the enthusiasm. When a man's training becomes irksome it does him no good, for the state of his mind prevents his system from being built up.

The ideal training is the kind that is taken with no especial object in view, for there is no fear then of its being overdone, and the amount of physical work a man can take with profit is a question that can be solved with a little experience by himself in a better way than others can do it for him.

The first question generally asked concerns the diet. Novices imagine that, before one can get strong food eaten by average humanity must be given up, and only stale bread, underdone meat and a little water or tea be taken. They are given this idea by many who are known to have had no practical experience, but who are always willing to give advice. When I first commenced taking part in competitions nine years ago I had been given exaggerated notions about diet, but it did not take long to see that the inconvenience did not pay. For two weeks previous to a certain contest I denied myself of water, and even went so far as to take only half a cup of coffee for breakfast. I had a continual thirst and this made my meals unrelished. At the contest my performance was not so good as I had expected, and this rather discouraged me. I then went back to the normal fare, and drank all the water, milk, tea or