

MOOSE-HUNTING.

BY T. E. LAMBERT.



" We start on our moose-hunt next Thursday ; you had better come."

It was a howling wild November night when I received that telegram. The thought of going after moose in the wilds of Nova Scotia in such weather did not look like the height of fun, yet I could not help recalling the many glowing accounts my friends had given of their jolly trips after moose and caribou, so the novelty of such an experience made me decide to join the party. On reaching Halifax I found it somewhat colder than in Boston, but in every way suited for our intended trip, as there was every prospect of snow. Our party, including the three Indian guides, made seven. We picked the guides up at Bedford, ten miles from Halifax, — Louis Noel, his son Joe, and a youngster Paul, who was to act as camp-keeper.

When we reached Shubenacadie our troubles commenced, for from that point we had to stage it to New Caledonia, and, as our luck would have it, the stage was so well patronized that day our party got on only by much crowding, and consequently was the cause of considerable growling. On reaching Pictou we succeeded in hiring a sled to carry us to the head of Saint Mary's river, where we pitched camp. During our drive through the woods we had plenty of opportunities to admire and appreciate the sagacity of our horses.

Many a time I felt certain we were on the point of coming to grief, for what seemed to me the best side of the road, that they would leave severely alone and take the worst ; it proved however they knew what they were about, and, as our driver remarked, " They were thar before, and no snow-drift nor nothing could fool them old bosses. " I would advise any of my readers who may meditate a trip after moose, for the first time, not to start out with the idea that it is all fun, for it is not; when a man looks back and thinks of the amount of ground he has got over in a day after one, particularly if it is a " traveler, " he can feel a pardonable pride at the quantity of endurance and staying-power he has in him.

After getting into camp we had to wait for a fall of snow, to make tracking easy, which, luckily, came the second day. It was very near sunset when I saw my first moose. I must say it was a hard day's tramp ; there was no macadamized road about it either. We followed a fresh track for some hours; it was the seventh or eighth, I do not know which, the previous one being of no use to follow, as the guides said, " them's travelers ; " that is, they were disturbed and would not halt. We were on the top notch of expectation a dozen times during the day by the movement of the guide and his signals to stop, but only to hear him recite the old, old order, " come on. " I had made up my mind that this moose hunting was all condemned nonsense, that there was no such animal in the country, and in a low, but very decided tone was telling my fellow-victim all I knew about prehistoric animals, when suddenly he said, " Joe beckons ; you go ; now easy. " I could see by Joe's motions that this time, at last, the game was there sure, and the time had come when I was to prove myself a hero or a muff. My anxiety to get there quickly, and at the same time avoid making a noise, lengthened thirty yards to an Irish mile, in my imagination. When I crawled up to Joe's side he pointed out the moose ; but, to save my soul, I could see nothing but a clump of trees. Joe gave me a look, and, to satisfy himself that I

was not stone blind, pointed his rifle in the direction and asked me to look along the barrel. There he was, sure enough, but only his hind-quarters visible. Joe said, "Fire!" so I blazed away. Out jumped the moose, and Joe after him. I sat down, fully satisfied that I had been and gone and done it; I was a muff, and had won the leather medal. The moose and Joe were soon "lost to sight, though to memory dear." But a little later there was another report; I started in the direction, and came up to Joe standing over a dead moose. Joe, in a most *nonchalant* manner, informed me that he did not wish to finish him so soon, but he had no show of heading him to camp. For the moment I did not see his object in trying to head the moose to camp, but when I looked at the huge bulk of the animal, and recollected it had to be carried on his shoulders, I appreciated very readily his wish to avoid as much labor in "backing" him as possible. As it was, we were about ten miles away. Joe went to work, skinned and cut up the spoils in a most scientific and expeditious manner. He backed all that was necessary for immediate use, and left the balance to be called for. My companion, Ned, was particularly elated, — "who, although he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying," — and on our march back to camp, he fully made up for the day's forced restraint on his vocal organs by again and again informing both woods, streams, and us that, —

"May little dogs wag their tails in front,
If ever I cease to love."

For myself, I did not see the relevancy of the song to the matter in hand; but, knowing it was the only one he knew, it had to be put down to exuberancy of spirits.

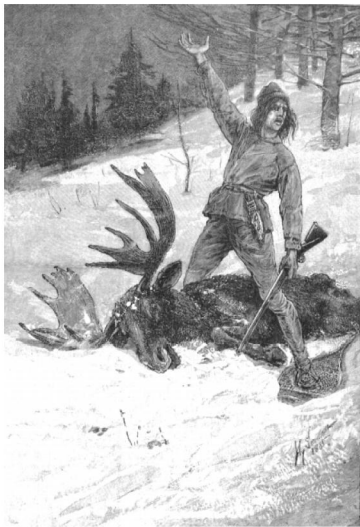
Our tramp back was not as tiresome as I anticipated, though I had an internal feeling that if we could not go out next day I would not cry over the disappointment. Joe was as fresh as a daisy, and noted down every track met, and told us the animal that made it. Indeed, to my thinking, one of the most interesting features of the sport is to watch the wonderful knowledge of wood-craft displayed by Indians. It is absolutely marvelous, and seems to be a gift peculiar to themselves. Probably there are no ten men who can compete with even an ordinary Indian. I might take this as an instance to show how much at home these children of the woods are.

The moose I had a hand in killing was, as I said, about ten miles from camp, when it was agreed that Louis should do the backing; a few directions from Joe were enough; and though he had not been with us, he found the place as easy as rolling off a log. I have watched them thoroughly, and will say that they put in the most honest kind of hard work for you, even when you are asleep. You might ask on getting up where Louis or Joe was. "Oh, gone out to look up a fresh track!" They seem to have an innate love for the chase. I was struck most forcibly with Joe's change of countenance when I shot the moose. From the stoical "*nil admirari*" manner he usually displayed to one blood-thirsty enough to do credit to his entire ancestry combined it seemed like the exultation of the keenest sportsman and the red man boiled down to a concentrated essence.

The party that went with Louis had the day's tramping for their pains, not even getting a glimpse at a moose. A porcupine, which they dug out, constituted the amount of their luck. An Indian will go for any one of these he comes across, it being, in his eyes, as much of a delicacy as a coon is to our Southern colored brother. I tasted a little of this one: it seemed something like young pig, and by no means bad. Whether it is natural instinct, or their thorough knowledge of the denizens of the woods, an Indian is never at a loss for something to eat, and, thanks to their never-failing friend, the birch-bark, something to cook it in.

When we turned out next morning, it was just about day-break. We were not very discontented on hearing the announcement that, owing to the falling snow the tracking would be bad. A very decided feeling of stiffness pervaded our party, and a day's rest was most acceptable. The forenoon was spent in *otium cum dignitate*, and in the afternoon we went fishing for trout through the ice. This is a sport that is deservedly called "pot-hunting;" but when one recalls how nice trout tastes in the woods appetite must be held as an excuse for the unsportsmanlike way of catching them. Salt pork was the bait used; and when they are willing to take that they deserve being caught.

Our young camp-keeper, an ardent sportsman, by the way went out and snared a hare and three partridges. This was an agreeable surprise and a very nice addition to the larder. The snow-storm giving



signs of holding up, the morrow's tramp made an early "go to bed" necessary; our expectations of snow were fulfilled. Our ever-watchful guides had us up and doing at the proper time, and after a hearty breakfast our plans for the day were soon arranged, it being decided to pair off with the same guides we had on the first day. We were hunting for a trail for about an hour, when we heard two shots fired in quick succession in the direction of Louis'

the prostrate form of a splendid moose. "Keep a look-out," he said, "on that point, and you will soon see the old man; I'll go to work." Right he was, for, in the very direction he pointed, the old man and one of his party came in view. A mutual waving of hats telegraphed the story, and glad they were to know that their expected long run after the wounded animal had come to so speedy and successful an end.

How Joe could divine the moose's intentions, and select the exact spot for heading him off, the Lord and Joe could only tell. The remarks he made to his father threw no light on the subject, as they always spoke to one another in the Indian dialect, which was entirely beyond my grasp.

Meeting with success so early in the day, and its bringing the whole party together, changed the day's plans. I remained with the old man, who took Joe's place in "fixing" up the moose for transportation, while the rest continued the chase, under Joe's guidance. Fortune seemed to favor them that day, as they were not long in coming across a fresh track. Fred told me that, when they struck it, it looked like a perfect thoroughfare for moose, and for the life of him he could not tell "which was which;" but it did not take Joe long to come to a conclusion. One look at the sky, and wetting his finger to find out which way the wind blew, as there was hardly a breath, then off he went at a tangent. His "good genius" did not fail him, for after a *détour* of a couple of hours they came plump on the quarry. It was Fred's turn to tire, being now the only green-hand of the party. To make it easier for him the moose laid down; but an unfortunate noise Fred made with his rifle brought the moose to his feet, and away he went. Joe rushed off to the right, and directed the Doctor to go in a nearly opposite direction. The Doctor, being an old hand, tried the call of a bull moose, and the young bull, as he proved to be, headed to within sixty yards of him, and then stopped, sticking his nose in the air in a bewildered sort of way. That stop was a fatal one to him, for the next instant he dropped in a heap, shot behind the fore-shoulder in a most artistic manner.



MY GRAND OPPORTUNITY.

party, making us feel that their turn for luck had come. Our guide stood for a moment thinking, and, without a word, bolted for a hill some hundred yards off. We followed slowly, and soon saw him creeping to the top; he had scarcely reached it when "bang!" went his gun, and he disappeared as if he had tumbled down the other side. The whole business was so sudden and strange we were sure he had met with an accident, and ran as hard as we could to his assistance; but the horrible sight we anticipated seeing was transformed into one that made our hats trip heavenward, and the woods reëcho a ringing cheer. Joe was standing over