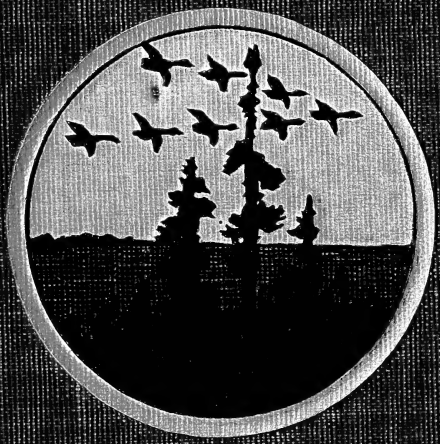
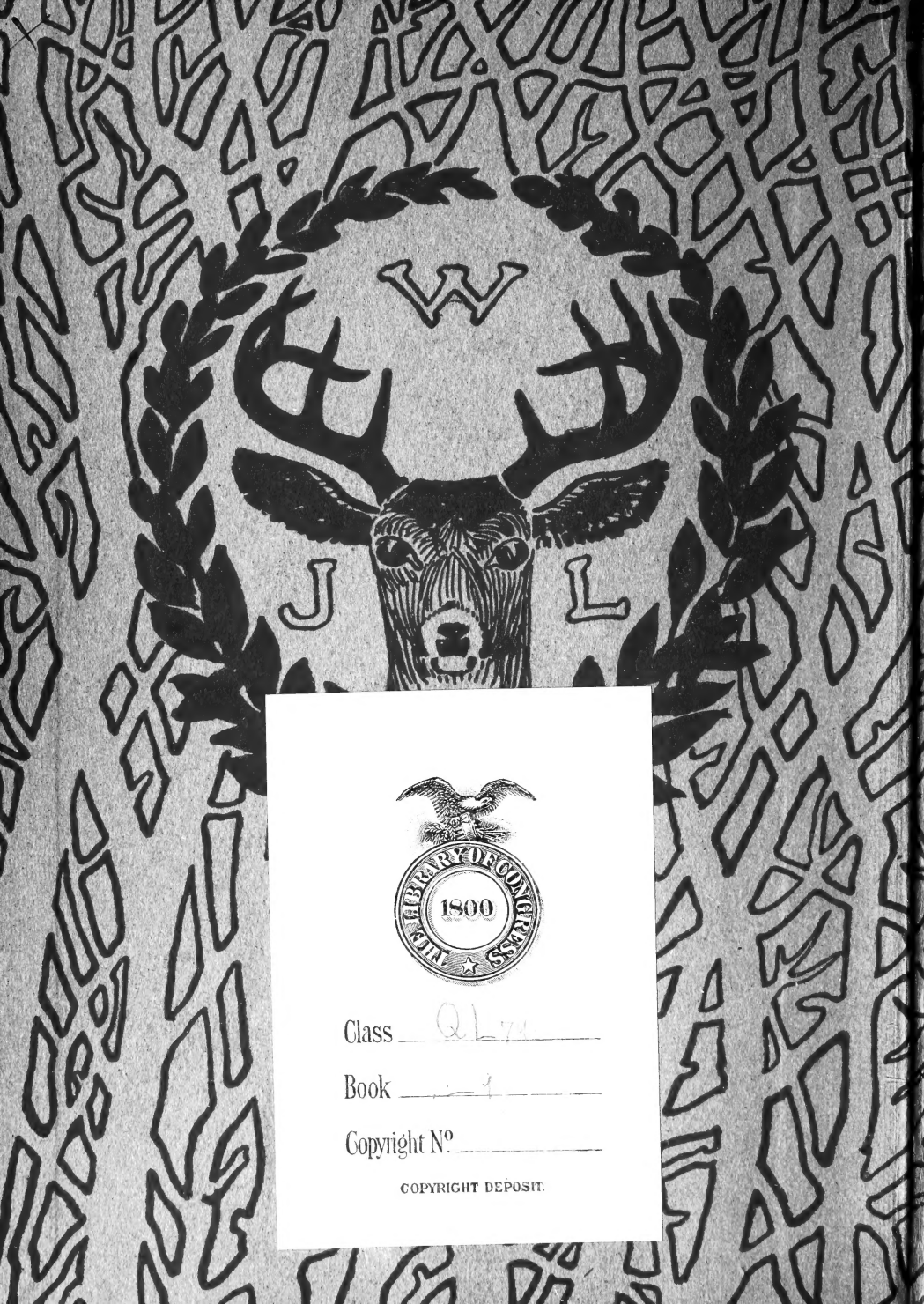
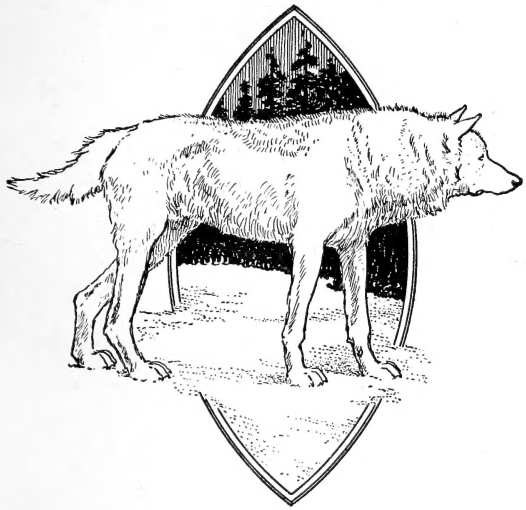
"WHOSE HOME IS THE WILDERNESS"



WILLIAM J. LONG



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SECRETS OF THE WOODS
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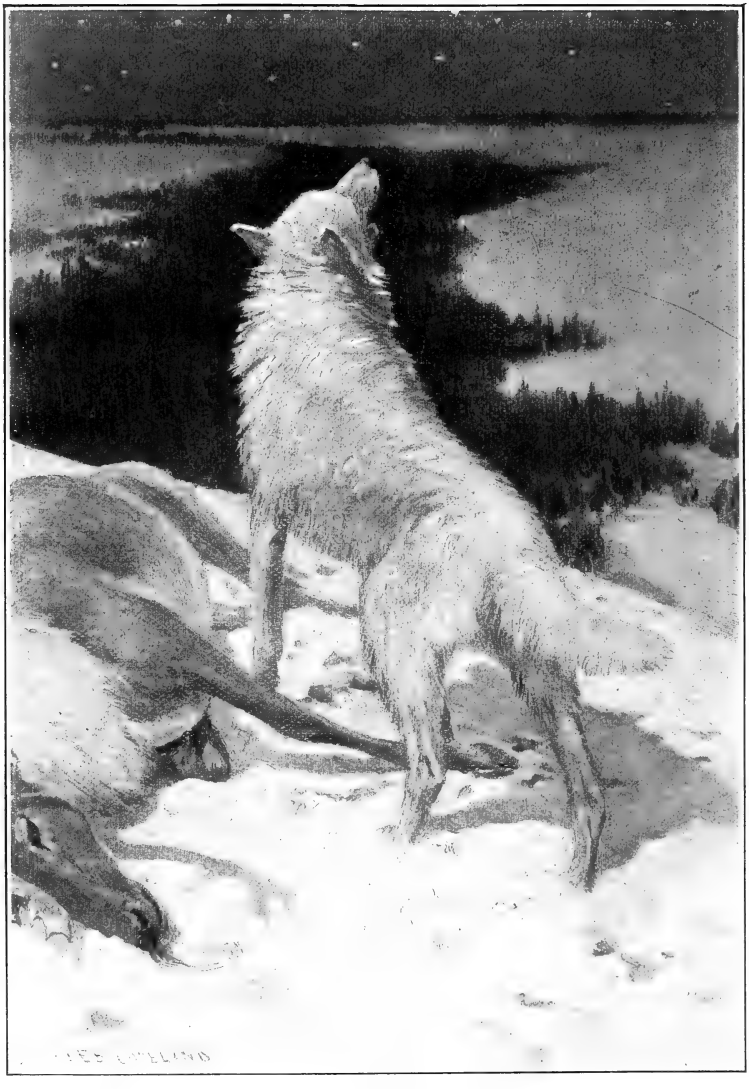
WHOSE HOME IS
THE WILDERNESS



"His eager food cry . . . went singing through the winter night" (see page 73)

Whose Home is the Wilderness

Some Studies of
Wild Animal Life
By

William J. Long
Author of

Northern Trails
School of the Woods
Beasts of the Field
Fowls of the Air
A Little Brother to the Bear
Following the Deer
Brier Patch Philosophy
etc. etc.

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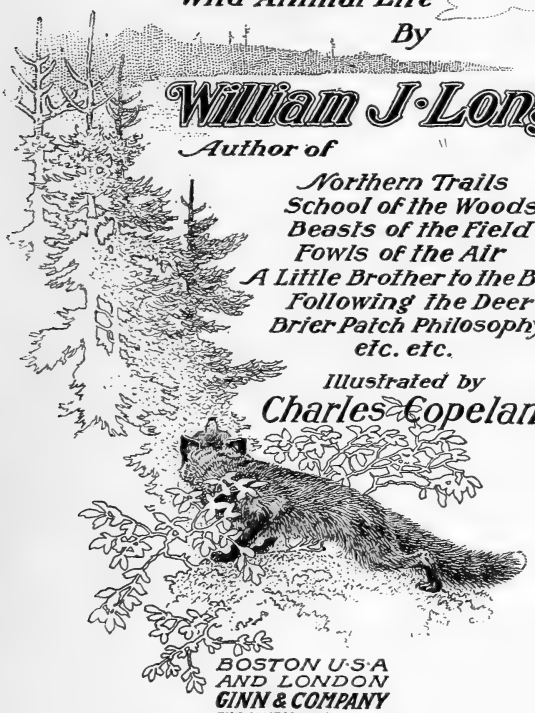

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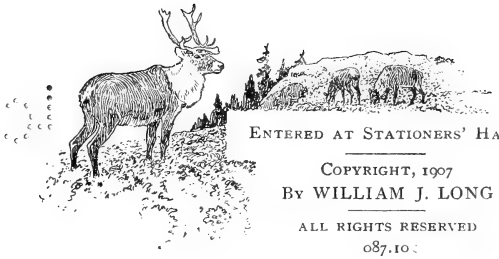

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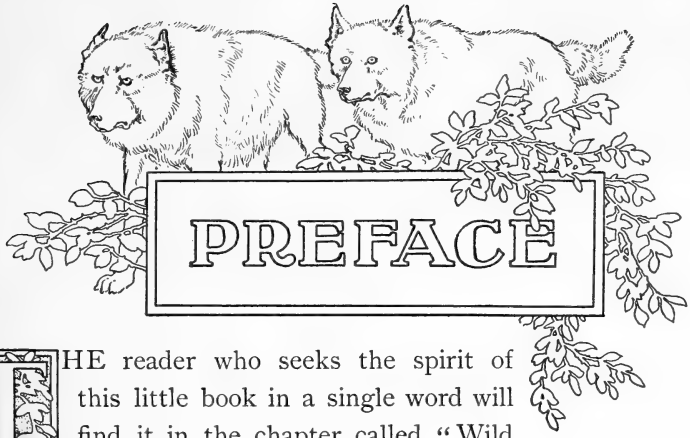
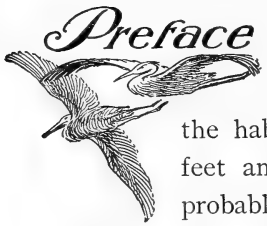
To
Brian
My Bouchaleen



PREFACE

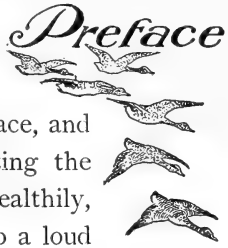
THE reader who seeks the spirit of this little book in a single word will find it in the chapter called "Wild Folk One by One," which is only a name to suggest the individuality of all the wood folk. Not only do they differ as orders and species, eagles from hawks and wolves from foxes, but the different individuals of the same species differ widely one from another. It is now an established fact in biology that no given stock or species ever breeds true in all its individuals. This refers, of course, to outward, biological differences of form and size and color; and when you study the inner characteristics, which the biologist invariably neglects, — the temper, disposition, and the primitive mind of the different animals as manifested in their actions, —



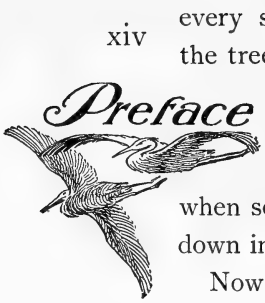
you realize instantly that no two of them are alike, and that to watch them one by one is the only possible way to understand them.

This spring, while I have been digging in my alleged garden, a robin has formed the habit of lighting on the ground close by my feet and picking up the worms that I uncover, probably finding this a much easier way of getting his breakfast than to pull it up out of the lawn. Instead of flying away in alarm, like all other robins that I have noticed, he runs quickly to investigate every worm that I toss down to him; but he will never eat it. He just gives it a whack or two, probably from force of habit, and then throws it away impatiently with a little side jerk of his head. Only the worms that he discovers for himself seem to satisfy his somewhat particular appetite.

Over across the way from where the robin follows my digging, a woodpecker and some sparrows have quarreled for a whole week over the possession of a dead stub in a tree, where the sparrows once built a clumsy nest and where the woodpecker once drilled a neat round hole. The woodpecker first began hammering there, idly enough, I think, for he had already drilled a deep hole in an apple-tree some distance away; but a female sparrow saw him,



and, remembering perhaps her own forgotten nest, which the winds have long since scattered, she immediately raised a great row and called in a dozen other sparrows to help her maintain her fancied rights. Now neither bird will let the other stay near the place in peace, and at times it looks as if one were tantalizing the other. The woodpecker will approach stealthily, look all around for trouble, and then set up a loud tattoo. Instantly an angry chirp sounds around the corner, where the sparrow shows some intention of nesting, and she rushes out at him like a fury, calling in a few pugnacious tribesmen to help her, and together they chivy the woodpecker out of the neighborhood. He may hammer as much as he pleases on any other tree, or on the telegraph pole, or the resounding tin cover of a house turret, and the sparrows pay no attention to him. It is only when he lights on that particular stub that they get angry. Once, after being hunted away, he came back with another woodpecker of a different species, a golden-wing, and together they held their own for a while, one hammering and the other fighting, till the uproar brought in every idle sparrow on the street, and in the end the two hammerers were chased away ingloriously. Then the little woodpecker began to get even by chivying



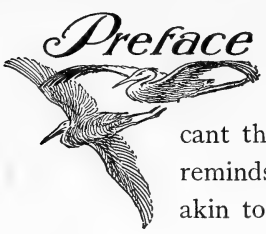
every sparrow he found in the neighborhood of the tree with a feather in her beak; and the little comedy has ended by both birds abandoning the stub as a kind of neutral borderline, where they can always raise a row when so disposed, but where neither can ever settle down in peace.

Now I have watched robins and sparrows and woodpeckers more or less ever since I was a child; but these particular birds attract me enough to watch and to write about them, simply because they show me something about our most familiar little neighbors which none of their kind has ever shown me before. Why these birds should quarrel over an old nesting-place, which neither, probably, really wanted, or why this robin more than all others of his kind should trust me, but still refuse to eat what my hands have touched, while a hundred other birds have gladly taken the food that I have spread for them, only the birds themselves could explain. It is the new fact and the individuality which it expresses that interest me, and I cheerfully grant to even the least of my neighbors the right to their own little whims and notions.

Among the higher orders of intelligent animals that I have watched in the wilderness the individual differences are even more strongly marked.

Thus, the lynx is usually a cowardly animal, and hunters who scare the wits out of Upweekis with a pack of savage dogs, and trappers who find him in their traps, frightened and bewildered, in midwinter, when he is also weakened by starvation, generally tell you dogmatically that the lynx never fights or shows courage. But I have found him on my own trail in the winter woods when he was uncomfortably bold in his disposition; and my friend the keeper of the Canadian National Park, who is a big man and a brave one, and who has spent the greater part of his life close to wild animals, had the most uncomfortable experience which he has ever known in the woods when he was followed all one afternoon by one of these big, silent prowlers, who plainly meant mischief and who was not to be frightened away.

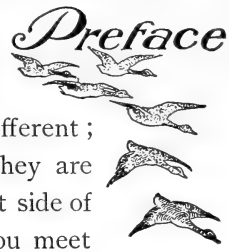
This same Canada lynx is also generally set down as a snarling, selfish, stupid beast; but one summer I found a den and hid beside it every morning at daylight for over a week, and at the end, when I had watched this savage old mother and her own little ones without prejudice, I gladly modified my own previous opinion of Upweekis the Shadow as an essentially selfish and uninteresting animal. Indeed, I find that any animal or bird



becomes interesting the moment you lay aside your gun and your prejudices and watch with your heart as well as your eyes wide open; especially so when, after an hour's silent watching, the animal suddenly does some little significant thing that you never noticed before, and that reminds you that this shy little life is, after all, akin to your own.

Those who have kept a variety of dogs and cats and horses need no argument to convince them of the individuality of their pets; but all your interesting stories of your dogs and cats, showing their individual characteristics, are merely suggestive of the wider individual differences among the more intelligent wolves and caribou, and indeed among all wild animals whose wits are sharpened by getting their own living in a world of many troubles. They are much harder to watch and to understand, and that is the chief reason why we have not long ago discovered more about them.

Even among those who have had the opportunity of watching the rare wild creatures, two things still stand in the way of our larger knowledge, namely, our hunting and our prejudice. It is simply impossible for the man who chases through the woods with dogs and rifles, intent on killing his game, ever to understand an animal. As well expect the



barbarian who puts a village to fire and slaughter to understand the peaceful spirit of the people whom he destroys in their terror and confusion. It is not simply that the hunter is limited in knowledge by his own pursuits and interests, but the animals themselves are different; when you meet them in a place where they are often hunted they show an entirely different side of their nature, — much wilder than when you meet them peacefully in the solitudes. And the man who goes to the woods with a preconceived idea that animals of the same species are all alike, that they are governed solely by instinct and show no individual wit or variation, merely binds a thick veil of prejudice over his eyes and blunders blindly along, missing every significant little thing which makes the animal interesting.

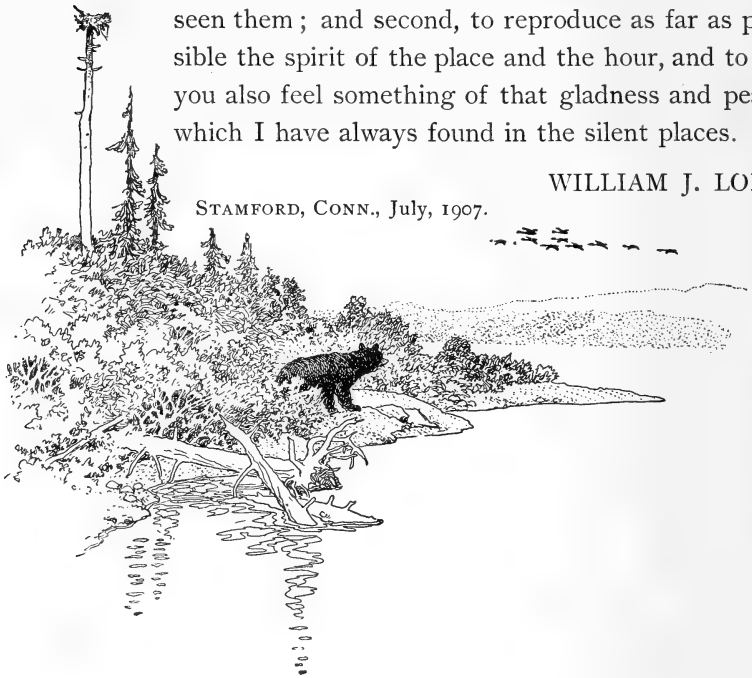
For many years now I have delighted to watch wild animals in the wilderness, trying to see without prejudice just what they do, and trying to understand, so far as a man can, just how in their own way they live and think and feel. Sometimes I creep near and hide and watch them, close at hand, until they discover me; and almost invariably at such times they show no fear at first, but only an intense curiosity. Sometimes I vary the programme, as in the following chapter on the bear,

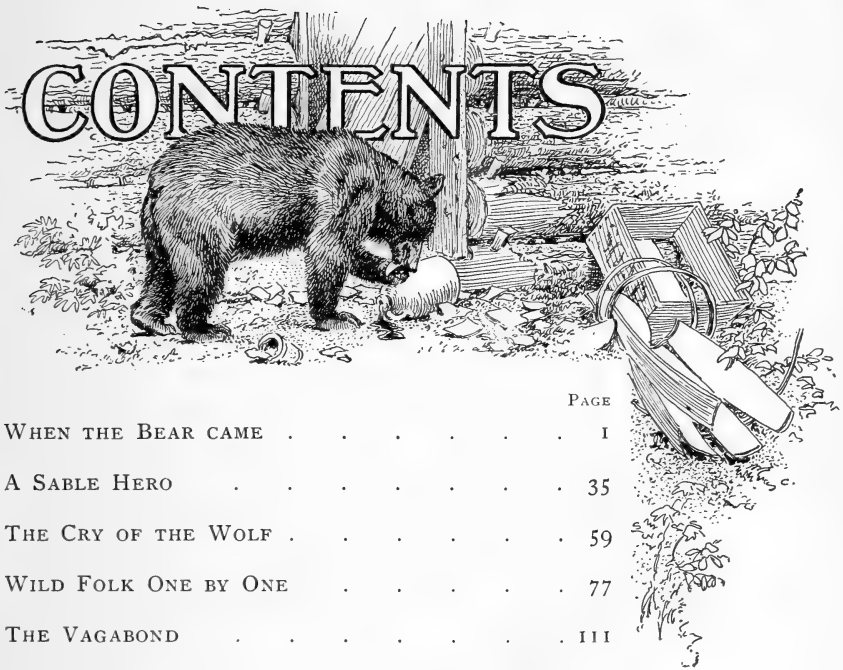
when I find a good spot in the wilderness where game signs are abundant, and watch there all day long, from dawn to sunset, noting quietly and carefully every animal from moose to wood-mouse that passes along the silent trail. And this, when you once find the joy of it, is the very best hunting of all.

This little book is one of the results of these happy vacations spent in watching the wild things. It aims to do two things: first, to show some of the unrecorded facts of animal life exactly as I have seen them; and second, to reproduce as far as possible the spirit of the place and the hour, and to let you also feel something of that gladness and peace which I have always found in the silent places.

WILLIAM J. LONG

STAMFORD, CONN., July, 1907.





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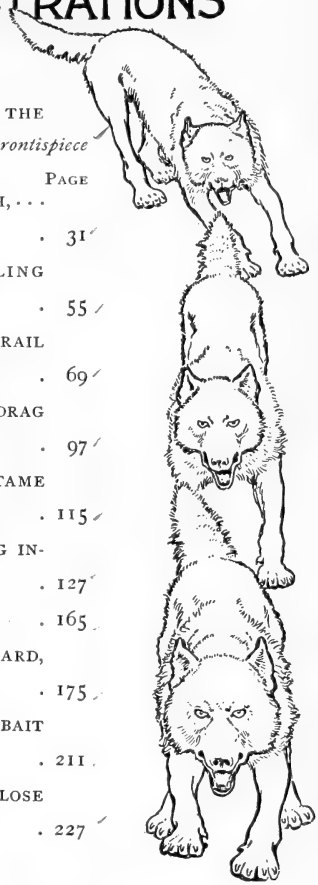


I

When The Bear Came

THE long summer afternoon was fading away; a solitary hermit-thrush was trying to remember his spring song over a belated nest; the air filled suddenly with that marvelously soft, clear gleam that precedes the twilight, and cool purple shadows began to creep down the western mountain into the little wild valley, when the bear came for whom I had been watching all day long.

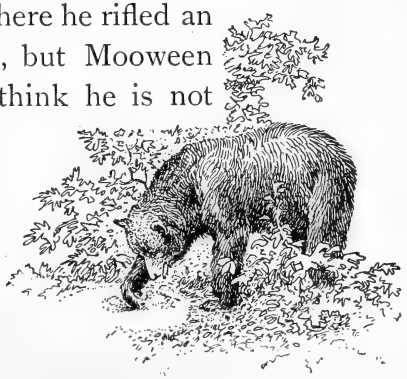
Now you naturally think of a bear as something to kill, if you can; and because he is shy and seldom seen, a summer day is not too long to wait for him, especially when many things are happening, meanwhile, to give you good hunting. I had found Mooween's "works" in a burned valley among

the hills, on my way to a lonely little pond where never a fly had been cast, but where, nevertheless, there were some big trout that I had seen breaking water one morning at daylight. Those same big trout proved hard to catch; the day was too bright for such shy fellows, and as I fished I was thinking more of the bear's works than of the best flies or bait to beguile the wary ones. So presently I followed my heart back to the little wild valley and went nosing along the bear's trail to find out what he had been doing.

Here he stopped to lap the water from the cold brook, which steals along under the wild grasses and vanishes under a great fallen log. See the print of his forefeet where he stood, and yonder one huge hind track to tell you how big he is! He was heading for the blueberry patch, and there — just look how he has stripped the bushes, champing them between his great jaws, pulling off green and ripe ones alike, and getting as many leaves as berries! He is a poor picker, sure enough. A berry must be such

a little thing in a bear's big mouth! I wonder how many quarts it would take to satisfy him. There he went into the wild raspberry bushes for a little variety. Careful old bear! No careless stripping of bushes now, pulling them through his mouth and over his tongue roughly, for these bushes have prickles on them. Here is where he sat down and bent the berry-laden vines with his forepaws, mouthing them carefully, taking only the ripest berries and leaving the others crushed on their stems. With a little imagination this is better than trout-fishing. One can almost see the old fellow sitting here, filling himself with sweet red berries and having a good time all by himself.

There he leaves the raspberry patch and heads again for the open. You can trace his course a dozen yards ahead by the disturbed bushes, showing the silvery under side of their leaves. Here he stopped to rip open a log for grubs; here he dug under a root for a wood-mouse, probably, and here he rifled an ant's nest. Small game this, but Mooween likes it; and you begin to think he is not



such a terrible fellow, after all, since he spends so much of his time and great strength hunting grubs and mice and such "small deer," and is evidently content with what he gets. Do you wonder, now, how he can pick a tiny ant out of that mass of rubbish with his big tongue without getting a mouthful of dust and dry chaff? He does not do it that way; he seems to know better, and that the moment an ant-hill is disturbed the inmates will come swarming out, running about in alarm, crawling over everything and back again, and hurrying away with the young grubs to hide them from the light, which kills them. So he just knocks the top off the hill, stirs up the nest, and lies down quietly, placing his forepaws where the ants are thickest. At first he makes no effort to pick up the hurrying insects, workers and fighters, which swarm out of their tunnels, some to repair the damage, some to attack the intruder, and some, the nurses, to take care of the young grubs. Mooween waits till they crawl over the big black object that rests upon the nest and then he begins to

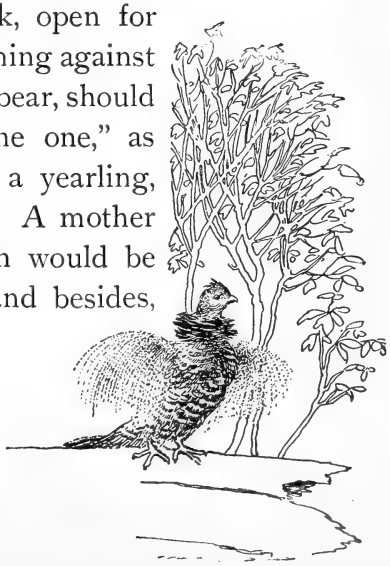
lick his paws, more and more greedily as he tastes the acid things, like a child sucking a big pickle. So he gets all he wants, cleanly from his own paws, instead of filling his mouth with dust and chaff, as he must do if he attempted to catch them in any other way.

An interesting fellow is Mooween. Yonder is his trail after leaving the ant-hill. Here are berries that were in his mouth only two or three hours ago, for they are still moist; here are others that he tasted the day before yesterday, and here is a place where he must have passed many times to leave such a plain trail among the dense bushes. A bear, if not disturbed, almost invariably comes back over the same route, sometimes the next day, sometimes the next week, but always on the same general trail, as he makes his rounds from one good feeding-ground to another. Judging by his works here, Mooween likes the place and comes often, and we have only to hide and watch for a few days, or perhaps only for a few hours, in order to get him.

This was the thought in my head as I left my camp at daylight next morning for a long, lazy, satisfying day all alone. Within the hour I had crossed the lake, followed a mile of dimly blazed trail, all fresh and dripping with dew, and was sitting comfortably in the nest I had chosen. This was a huge rock, some thirty or forty feet high, projecting from the eastern hill, with bushes and little trees on the top, where you could see for several hundred yards up and down the valley. One was sure to see something in such a place, if he waited long enough, and whichever way the wind blew you were well above the ground scent and had a big territory under your eyes wherein no animal would probably smell you. As wild animals seldom look up, you were perfectly safe from their eyes so long as you kept still. At least I thought so till a big buck came along and taught me differently, an hour or two later.

The sun had not yet looked over the eastern hills when I settled down to watch. A wavy line of soft white mist lay over the

brook, which now and then I heard faintly, telling its story to the alder leaves and to the mossy stones. Over on the western mountain a cock partridge began to drum out of season, in simple gladness perhaps, as the light ran down the slopes. Nearer a few birds, in the second belated nesting, were trying to sing cheerily. The whole earth lay fresh and moist and sweet under my eyes, and the air was filled with the delicious fragrance of the early morning. Truly it was good to be here alone, with no one to talk or to interrupt your own thoughts and impressions. I made a soft seat and leaned against the stem of a young aspen to enjoy it all comfortably. Whatever came along, it was sure to be good hunting. My field-glasses hung from my neck, open for instant use, and my rifle stood leaning against a bush; for I intended to kill the bear, should he turn out to be a "big ol' he one," as Simmo would call him, or even a yearling, if his skin were any good at all. A mother bear would be safe, for her skin would be utterly worthless at this time; and besides,



bears do no harm in the woods; they are not game-killers. A mother bear would mean one or two more cubs next year, and the more bears there are the better for one who camps in the big wilderness.

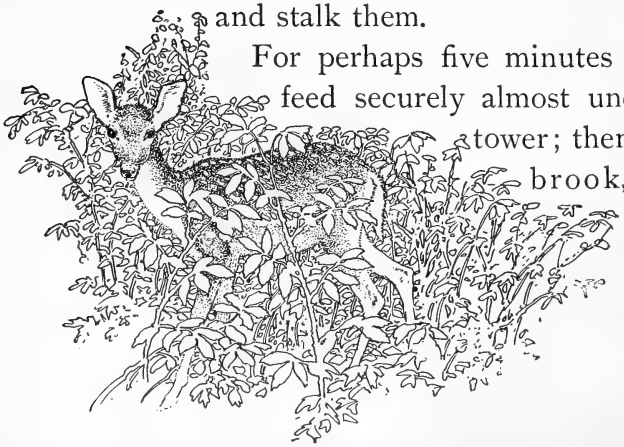
Presently, in the exquisite morning stillness, I heard a familiar sound, — *krop*, *krop*, *krop!* and then a soft rustle of leaves and one sharp, clear snap of a dry twig. Only a deer's dainty foot breaks a twig like that. He is up there feeding — two, no, three of them — and instantly I am all attention. Soon, by a great log that lies near me, in the shadow of the eastern hills, I see a small animal moving indistinctly. A porcupine, I think, for it is too small for a deer, and it moves along the log in a rambling, hesitating way that is characteristic of the bristling fellow, who never seems to know where he is going nor what he will do next. Slowly the glasses come up to my eyes. I stop breathing suddenly, for it is a deer's head, a yearling, and she is cropping the plants that grow richly along either side of the moldering log. All the rest of her body is hidden

in the shadows and underbrush, but the head goes searching along the old log, and through the glass I can see her eyelids blink impatiently as they are brushed by leaves and brambles.

Suddenly a big doe steps out, in full sight, and hides the yearling at her eager feeding. For a few moments the old deer stands perfectly still, looking down into the valley, which is just beginning to brighten in the morning light. She is not watching for enemies now. The early peace still rests over all the woods, and there is nothing in her quiet bearing to suggest fear. She seems to be just looking down over the exquisite little familiar place, as if she knew and owned it all. All the deer love sightly places, and you could search the wilderness over without finding a prettier spot than this.

As she stands there, quiet and confident, within thirty yards of a deadly rifle, the underbrush opens and a dappled fawn capers out gracefully. Here are three generations of deer living together in peace, and they will hold together for mutual companionship

and protection, if the hunters let them alone, until the yearling yonder has a fawn of her own to care for and to take up all her attention. The little fellow seems fat and well-fed; evidently he has no fears, and as I watch sympathetically he glides up to his mother, lifts his pretty head, while she bends down to rub his cheeks and neck in quick, gentle little caresses. For a few moments only I can watch them, because, curiously enough, a deer never feeds long in the midst of abundance, but takes a bite here and a bite there and moves onward, tasting twenty varieties of food within as many minutes and making a continual pleasure of feeding. Aside from this evident pleasure there is probably also a measure of protection in the habit, for by changing constantly deer keep more alert and watchful, and make it more difficult for prowlers like myself to find and stalk them.



For perhaps five minutes the three deer feed securely almost under my watch-tower; then they cross the brook, not stopping

for even a sip of the delicious water. Everything they eat at this hour is drenched with dew, and so they have no need for drinking deeply. Besides, the wild animals are wiser than men in that they first eat their fill and drink afterwards. As they wander up the brook on the opposite side I am all expectancy once more, for I came down there myself, only a little while ago, and presently they must cross my trail in the wet grass. Ah, see them now! The yearling scented it first, threw up her head, and froze in her tracks. Catching her sudden alarm the old doe stood alert, sniffing the air and turning eyes and ears up and down the valley; while the fawn, not knowing what it all meant, shrank into a bush to hide and stood looking out, his eyes big with wonder. A different picture that, and a sad commentary on my own ways in the wilderness. There was no sound, no alarm of any kind that I could understand; but the old doe turned abruptly and glided up the hill. The fawn followed in his mother's tracks, and the yearling made her own trail. A moment

later I caught a glimpse of them, standing among the big trees on the edge of the green brûlée, watching keenly the back trail. Then they melted away like shadows in the still woods.

A half-hour passed over me in the exquisite place before other sounds came drifting down the wild hillside,—*prut, prut, prut! kwit, kwit! kroo, kroo!* Leaves moved here and there; little wavy lines ran along the berry bushes, and I knew that a flock of partridges had come down to feed, though I could see nothing of them, only the shaking of leaves and grass stems as they glided about. Presently a young bird jumped upon a fallen log in plain sight and stretched his neck to look. Another and another followed, until six were in a row; then the old hen bird appeared on the end of the log, glanced over her brood to see that all were there, and without any fuss began to preen herself quietly.

It was a most tempting sight. At times three or four heads were in line, and I found myself thinking greedily how many I could cut off with a single bullet; for at this season

the young birds are fat and tender, more delicious than any chicken. But I was after bears, and must keep still; and besides, the moment you go hunting for meat you get just that in your head, as if the world were only a butcher shop, and you miss twenty better things. This hour and place are altogether too exquisite for shooting. I wonder, now, what in the world are they all gawking on that log for, when they ought to be filling themselves with sweet berries?

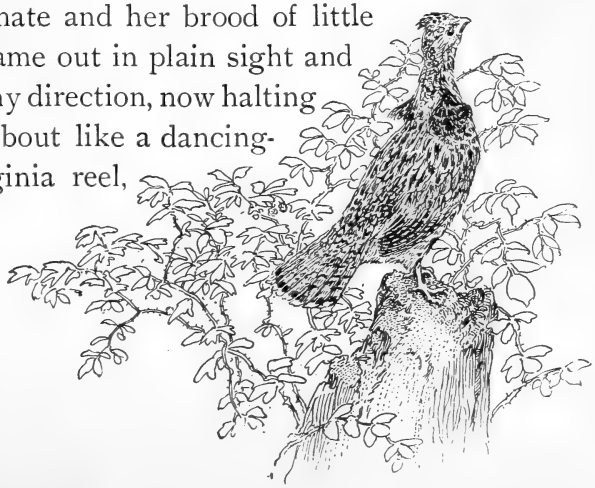
Many times before this I had surprised a flock of grouse resting on a log or in the open woods at this same hour, when they ought to be feeding, and had wondered about it. Now for the first time it seemed to me that I understood. In the late fall, when mornings are cold, grouse always seek the first sunshine, apparently to warm themselves; but here their bedraggled feathers showed plainly that the bushes were still too wet for comfortable feeding. A grouse loves to keep himself perfectly trim and neat, and this desire seems to be stronger than the desire for food, even in the young birds. For

a long time they kept to their dry log, each one busy trimming his own feathers, while I watched them with immense interest, and the sun poured down into the valley and dried up the dew. Then they jumped down, one by one, and I could trace the flock for a long distance at their feeding, and occasionally I had a glimpse of a young bird jumping into sight for an instant to peck at the berries that hung too high for his ordinary reach.

Just below me was a clump of tall raspberry bushes well laden with the delicious fruit. When the flock found this they remained there, quiet and unseen, for several moments, evidently picking up the berries that had fallen to the ground. Then a bush swayed and bent, and I saw a young bird plainly trying to climb up into it. But he could get no grip on the slender stem; it was too fragile to bear his weight, and presently he tumbled off, shaking down a shower of ripe berries, which he ate greedily. Soon the flock passed out of sight, and I forgot all about them in watching another shaking of

the bushes that was going on all the while close at hand.

For some moments I had noticed it; now, as my young partridges had nothing more to show me, I turned my glasses in the direction of the spot and watched intently. Every now and then a bush would shake as something struck it from beneath; but the leaves were too thick, and try as I would I could see nothing definitely. Another flock of young birds, I thought, but hardly had I come to this conclusion when a big drummer partridge appeared for an instant on top of a stump, looked all around a few moments keenly, jumped back into the thicket of raspberries, and immediately the bushes began to shake again. No flock there, certainly, for when you find a drummer you find a selfish bird that looks after himself only and takes no thought for his mate and her brood of little ones. Soon he came out in plain sight and minced along in my direction, now halting to turn himself about like a dancing-master at a Virginia reel,



now spreading his tail and ruff, and now mounting a log to walk it proudly from end to end. I suppose he was only exercising caution, in his own way, in a world of many dangers; but he made the impression on me of a fine dandy, displaying himself for the benefit of any hens that might be watching him.

As he stopped and turned himself about, spreading and closing his beautiful tail, on a log just below me, my hand reached almost unconsciously for the rifle. "You are a fine, fat bird," I thought, "but you do nothing for the support of your family, and nobody would miss you if you were gone. I could take your head off, now, without half trying, and you would be a rare *bonne bouche* wrapped in bacon strips and browned on a spit over the coals. Hello! what in the world are you doing now?"

For Seksagadagee the grouse had jumped down from his log, glided into a raspberry thicket under my eyes, and instantly a tall bush shivered violently and a few ripe berries rattled to the ground. A few moments of

intent watching, then another tall bush quivered as something struck it, and more ripe berries were shaken from their stems.

It was plain enough now what he was doing, though I could hardly see a feather, only the swift motion in the bushes, a shake, and then the falling berries. Instead of trying to climb the slender stems, like a foolish young grouse, he simply ran against them, making a battering-ram of himself, or else struck them with his powerful wing and so shook off a few of the ripe berries for his own enjoyment. So he passed on through the thicket and down to the brook, where I soon lost him among the alders.

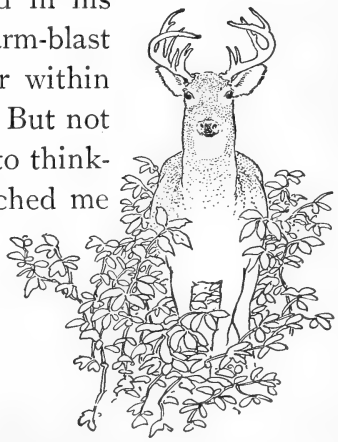
Good hunting this! I am glad enough now that I did not take his head off at first sight, as I might have done. It is better to get an idea from a bird, to understand a little better how he lives, than to make a breakfast of him. Both he and I, evidently, are debtors to the bear for which I am watching, he for his atom of life, and I for a small grain of knowledge. Whoever it is that keeps the world's accounts, or writes things down in

the "book of remembrance," he must have a curious trial balance to strike at the end of every life, however big or little.

He had been gone for perhaps an hour and nothing of any great interest had passed under my leafy watch-tower. It was getting towards the hour when all game that stirs about in the early dawn has fed full and is moving slowly to its morning rest. The birds had ceased calling; an intense silence brooded over the great wilderness. Suddenly I felt, as I often do when alone in the woods, that something was watching me, and turned my head quickly. That was my only mistake; for it frightened the big buck that stood close behind, watching me intently. He had come down the hill quietly, probably to drink at the brook. Some slight motion of mine had caught his eye, and he had stopped instantly to find out what I was. He stood on the hillside in plain sight, not twenty yards away, and almost on my own level. In the whole sweep of landscape there was not another spot where he could have approached without my first seeing or hearing

him. I have no idea how long he had been standing there behind me, trying to make out the queer unknown thing on the rock; and had I remained still, or had I turned my head very slowly, he would undoubtedly have puzzled over it still longer. As it was, I had one splendid glimpse of him standing like a magnificent statue, his antlers raised, his black nose pointing straight at me like an accusing finger, and a look of inexpressible wildness in his bright eyes as they looked straight into mine. Then he whirled on his hind legs, leaped over a great rock, his white flag flying defiantly in my face, and I heard the sound of his feet, *bump, bump, bump!* after he vanished in the shelter and silence of the friendly woods.

How selfish even an animal gets when he has only himself to care for! A doe, used to caring for others, had she stood in his place, would have sounded her alarm-blast at the first jump to warn every deer within hearing that an enemy was in sight. But not so with this selfish old buck, used to thinking for himself alone. He had watched me



silently, cunningly, till I betrayed myself; then he jumped away without a sound, caring nothing for any other deer that might be coming down to drink at the brook. If I were after meat now, I would wait awhile, till you forgot your fears, and pick up your trail; and I think I know where I could find you, later in the day, when you think all things are resting lazily like yourself. As it is, good luck to you, Hetokh the buck. This hunting satisfies me perfectly. Only, when the snows come, I hope it will be your selfish trail and not that of the careful old doe that the hunters will follow.

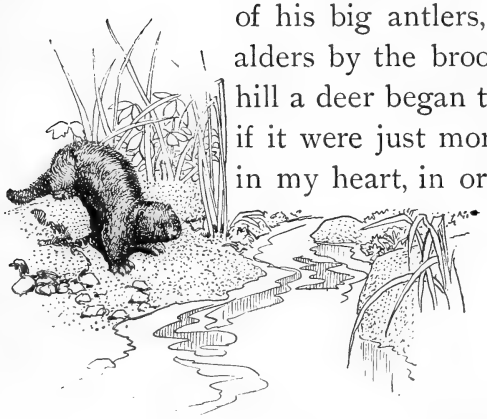
The day passed more slowly after Hetokh had gone, till the noon sun shone down straight and clear in the valley, when I ate a handful of figs and pilot-bread thankfully and crept down from my rock to drink at the little brook. For an hour or more a pair of big hawks had been circling high over me, whistling shrilly, and their calls were answered by some young hawks which I could see occasionally, flying over the big woods across the valley. They knew that I did not

belong here on the rock, but they were uncertain about me till I crawled out and showed myself plainly, when they whirled away towards their young and did not come back again.

Hour after hour passed swiftly over the beautiful place, and the very spirit of the big wilderness, all stillness and peace, took possession of the watcher. The big game was resting lazily, hidden away in the fir-thickets on the hillsides, and the small things had the big world all to themselves. Now it was a chipmunk — Chickchickoo-weesep, as Simmo calls him — who kept up a regular, sleepy *chunk-a-chunk*, *chunk-a-chunk*, in most monotonous measure, as if he were the nurse of the world, to keep everything dozing in the afternoon sunshine. Again it was a waving line of bushes, moving slowly across the valley, and try as I would I could not see whether fur or feathers moved beneath it. Now Cheokhes the mink glided in and out of sight, following the hidden brook on his still hunting. Again a little wild bird, which had never seen a man

before, approached within reach of my hand and looked at me with round, inquisitive eyes, and after a moment's observation flew down to whir his little wings in my face in order to make me move; and again it was only an insect, creeping in and out among the moss and lichens under my hand and acting as if his were the only important life in the universe, as it probably was to him.

So the long, happy hours passed, all too swiftly. A wonderful tide of soft, clear light that filled the air and made everything brilliant rolled suddenly over the valley, and I knew, without once looking at my watch, that I had been sitting here fourteen hours and that the twilight would follow speedily. A moose appeared silently at the lower end of the valley, followed the dim trail for a dozen yards, the light shining on the tips of his big antlers, and vanished among the alders by the brook. Over on the opposite hill a deer began to feed, *krop*, *krop*, *krop!* as if it were just morning, as I wished it to be in my heart, in order that I might have so



many more hours of solitude and immense peace. High overhead a night-hawk began booming; little birds began to chirp as they gathered for the night's rest, and — What was that?

Up on the hill on my left, where the western light shone clearest, a log bumped suddenly; a twig cracked heavily, heedlessly, as if the creature that passed through the solitude yonder had little concern how he walked. Mooween the bear was coming, at last, for that is the way he feeds in the burned lands, when he thinks no human enemy is near to watch him.

A mountain-ash shivered suddenly, just below where I had heard the twig crack; the underbrush opened and out he came, a splendid big brute, black and glossy, and went straight to a raspberry patch. My glasses were upon him instantly, watching every suggestive movement as he sat down and gathered the bushes with his paws and mouthed them carefully, stripping off all the ripe berries. He was near enough to shoot. My hand reached slowly for the rifle; but

it was too entertaining just to watch him sitting there, all unconscious, enjoying himself in his own way, and I still had plenty of time to kill him. He was hungry, evidently; it would take many berries to satisfy that enormous appetite. When he had stripped all the bushes within reach he turned away impatiently and, neglecting other berries all around him, came out of the raspberry patch straight towards me. I could see his brown muzzle now, and the little sharp eyes that looked only in front of his nose. He turned his great head suddenly, as if he had scented something, and went straight through two clumps of blueberry bushes for an ant-hill that lay in plain sight. This he stirred up roughly, knocking the top aside, and sat down beside it, regarding it intently. There was nothing in the nest, evidently. Perhaps he had eaten them all up, long ago, or else he had no mind for sour ants as yet, until he had cloyed himself with honey or sweet fruit. After a moment's intent watching of the ant-hill, and before I had recovered from my own intense absorption or

remembered that this was the bear I had come to kill, he rose suddenly and vanished in a dense fir-thicket.

I could still trace his course dimly, for he was near at hand, and wherever he went he made the tip of a bush sway here and there, as he touched its stem. Presently a hollow *bump!* rolled out of the thicket; then the sound of rotten wood being torn to pieces. Ten minutes passed slowly, more slowly than any other in the long day, without any sound or motion from Mooween. I thought I had lost him, when he appeared again, much farther away, on the opposite hillside, where charred and fallen logs lay thickest. He stopped at one, gave it a heavy thump with his paw and turned his head sidewise to listen; then he went on, gathering a few blueberries casually, till he found another log that suited him. Again the heavy thump of his forepaw, again the quick twisting of his head to listen; then he slid one paw under the log to grip it from the opposite side, drove the big claws of his other paw into the top, and with one wrench laid the log open. In

an instant he was busy, jumping about excitedly, running his tongue up and down over the moldering wood, picking up every grub and worm and beetle that he had exposed, and that now crawled or darted back to cover.

When he had eaten all the tidbits he came quartering down the hill in my direction, and twice in plain sight I saw him repeat the interesting performance. He would bat a log with his forepaw and instantly turn his head to lay his ear closer, just as a robin turns his head to listen and to locate the worm that he hears working underground. The blow was intended, evidently, to stir up the hidden insect life and set it moving, so that Mooween could hear it. If he heard nothing, he would go on till he found another log that suited him and give that a thump, twisting his head alertly to listen for results. When he heard his small game stirring he would tear the log to pieces; and then it was immensely entertaining to see him hopping about, all life and animation now, thrusting his nose into crevices, lapping

eagerly with his tongue, and before he had swallowed one morsel jumping away to catch another. And when a grub escaped him and his tongue swept up only rotten wood, he would get mad as a hatter and put both paws up to his ears, like an angry child, and wiggle and shake himself. Then he would aim a spiteful blow at the spot where the grub had disappeared, ripping out a shower of dead brown wood with his powerful claws; and instantly he would forget his anger and everything else in trying to catch one, two — a whole nest of unexpected grubs which his blow had left exposed and squirming.

He was near me now and just in front, where even the poorest of shots could hardly miss him. Slowly, regretfully, I must confess, my hand crept towards the rifle that had stood there all the day idle; but it stopped again as Mooween sat down in another raspberry patch, where the sweet red berries were thickest, and began to eat them greedily, all unmindful of the enemy that lay now with head and shoulders over

the edge of the rock, watching every unconscious movement. That was the whole trouble. I had stopped to watch him instead of shooting at the first good chance; and the moment you stop to watch an animal with any sympathetic or human interest, you forget all about your rifle. And the longer you watch the harder it is to bring yourself to shoot. It seemed only fair, when a bear had given you a happy day and a whole lot of good hunting, to acknowledge the debt and to leave to some other fellow whatever fun there might be in killing him. Besides, he was so much more interesting alive than dead; his skin was little good at this season, and — I began to make excuses now — I wondered if I still had light enough left to follow the dim trail back through the darkening woods to where I had left my canoe in the morning twilight.

Suddenly the leaves over my head began to rustle. It had been calm and still all day; now a night-wind eddied over my rock and set all the aspen leaves to trembling. On the instant Mooween sprang to his feet.

"Mooween sat down in another raspberry patch, . . .
and began to eat greedily"

The careless, confident air of this great prowler of the northern woods vanished in tense alertness. He threw his nose into the breeze, rocking his head up and down so as to try more air and catch every tainted atom. He turned his head up, then down the valley; looked past my rock twice, but never noticed or suspected what he must have plainly seen had he raised his eyes,—a man leaning far over the edge and watching him with silent intentness. He turned swiftly, glided into the nearest thicket, and for several long minutes not a leaf stirred. He was in there somewhere, sitting perfectly still, rocking his brown muzzle up and down in the effort to find out what the thing was that had sent him this subtle, alarming message. Then a waving line of brush-tops was drawn slowly, cautiously up over the hill. On a great bare rock I saw him plainly once more, as he turned to the back trail to listen and sniff and watch, to find out if it could tell him anything. No chance of surprising him again, even had I wished it, for now his keen senses

were all alert for every slightest warning; yet so still was he, so absorbed in sifting the many messages that float unnoticed through the big woods, that a man might pass close under his watch-tower without ever noticing Mooween standing silent among the shadows. Then he glided down from his rock and vanished into the vast silence and mystery that comes at twilight over the wilderness.


A
SABRE HERO

A SABLE HERO

VER the beach came the ducks, — coots, broadbills, golden eyes, dusky mallards, driving in like arrows on the blasts of a landward gale, and set their stiff wings and came down with a long splashing plunge, quacking their delight at the new feeding-grounds. For the ice was out of the big pond at last; though here and there, where the winter storms had broken over the beach, it was still piled up in gray, uncouth masses

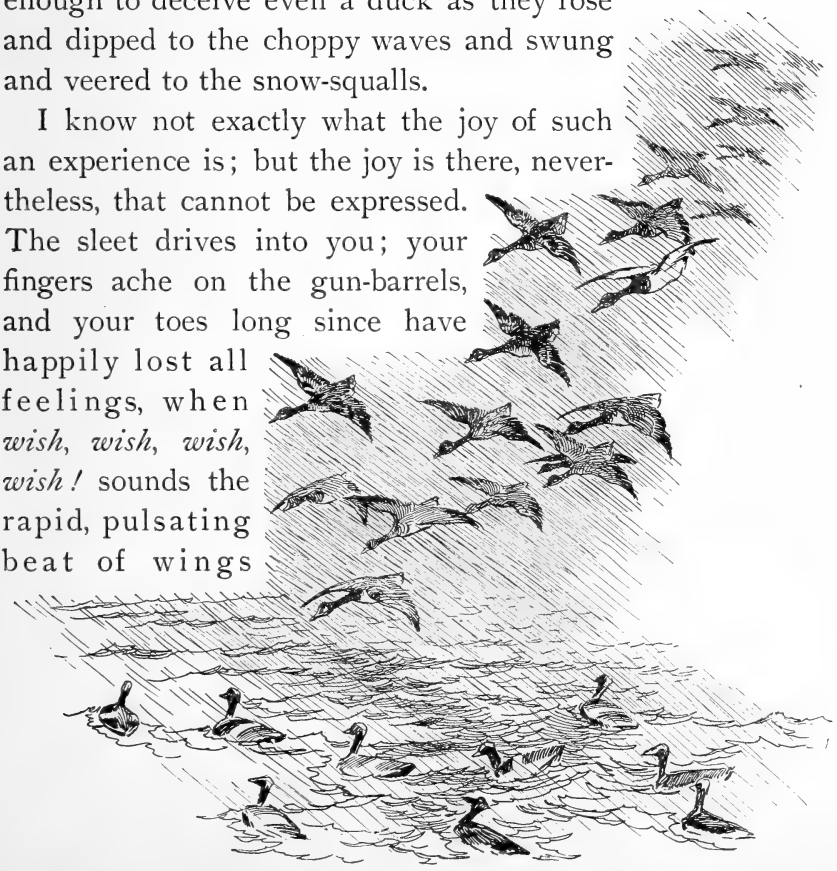
along the shore. For days the birds had been coming in, tired of salt mussels as a steady diet, and weary of being tossed about on the shoals where the long ocean rollers broke into sand and spray over their feeding-grounds. First they came to the outer harbor, only to be routed out of every resting-place by the busy scollop-boats; and the fishermen watched their unwilling flight and whispered to their hunting friends that there was good shooting at Coskata, "rafts and slathers of ducks," they said, all going into the pond whenever the boats stirred them up.

That is why I slept at the life-saving station that night when the northeaster began to blow, and why dawn found me tramping the shore of the pond, carelessly routing out scattered bunches of ducks that had come in ahead of me. No need to crawl and hide and strain my eyes now in the gloom, for the storm-tossed birds would surely be back again before I was half ready for them.

Hunters had been here already, in pleasant weather; but to-day, with a gale blowing and

squalls of sleet driving into one's face like hot needles, they would all be snug in the fish-houses swapping stories, and I might have the big pond all to myself. My stand was a huge pile of broken ice where I hollowed out a nest, lining it with seaweed, and threw an old sheet over my shoulders so as to look like one of the ice cakes. In front of me a dozen wooden decoys were bobbing about merrily, looking natural enough to deceive even a duck as they rose and dipped to the choppy waves and swung and veered to the snow-squalls.

I know not exactly what the joy of such an experience is; but the joy is there, nevertheless, that cannot be expressed. The sleet drives into you; your fingers ache on the gun-barrels, and your toes long since have happily lost all feelings, when *wish*, *wish*, *wish*, *wish!* sounds the rapid, pulsating beat of wings



swooping down to your decoys, and lo! you are all warm again. And when the swift wings are still, and only the squall rumbles and hisses among the ice cakes, you are still cozy at heart, and a certain elemental gladness thrills you as you chatter through your teeth the old Anglo-Saxon song of *The Seafarer:*

The hail flew in showers about me; and there I heard only
The roar of the sea, ice-cold waves and the cry of the swan.
For pastime the gannets' cry served me; the swough of the seals
For laughter of men; and for mead drink the call of the sea-mews.
The shadows of night became darker; it snowed from the north;
The world was enchained by the frost; hail fell upon earth —
'T was the coldest of grain. Yet the thoughts of my heart now are throbbing
To test the sea-streams, the salt waves in tumultuous play.

Indeed, it is all there still, the thrill and power and uplift of the elements that made the old Saxon glad at heart in the midst of

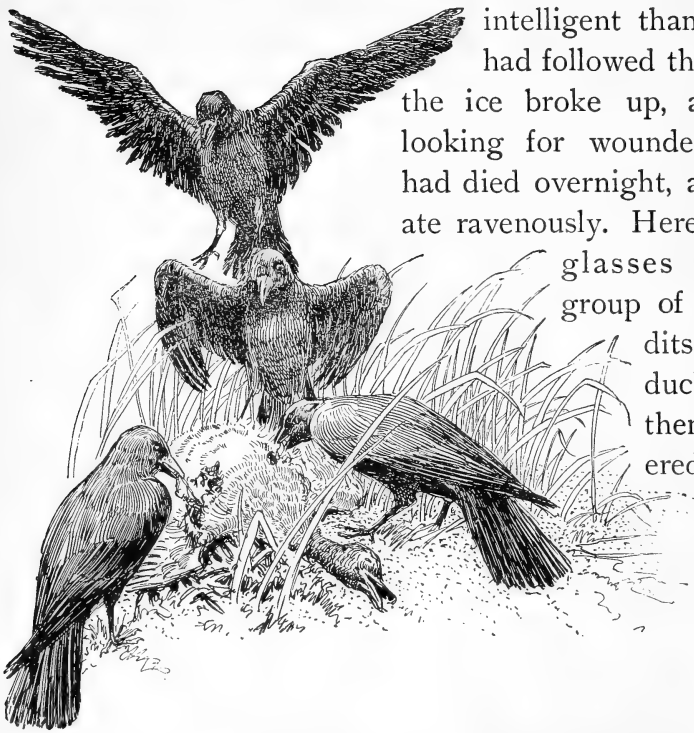
his icy fetters; and we have only to step a little way out of our steam-warmed houses to find that Nature and the heart of man are not changed with our civilization. But it takes more than a flight of birds and a gun and a dog to get at the root of the matter in duck-shooting.

In an hour I had all the birds I wanted, picking out an occasional black duck and a rare redhead from the swift flights, and leaving the rest to veer and bob curiously and lift their wings in salutation to my stupid decoys. Then I laid aside the gun gladly, and began to watch the flocks with a more humane interest.

As the light brightened in the east other and more worthy hunters had appeared stealthily. First a wild and half-starved cat caught my eye, crouching in a tuft of dry *wobski* grass, staring hungrily at my decoys with fierce unblinking eyes. For some of the summer visitors here have an atrocious way of bringing cats with them, and then turning the creatures adrift when they flit away with the birds to their winter homes.

These abandoned cats haunt the gutters and back yards for one season; then, finding the hand of every man and the tooth of every dog against them, they take to the swamps and rear their broods of savage, round-headed offspring, and pick up a wild living from the tides and birds and rabbits.

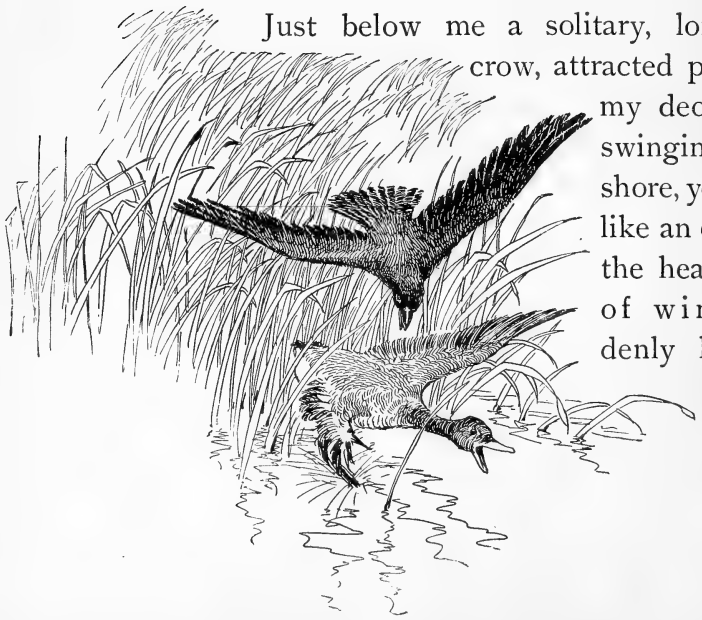
After the big cat came scores of crows, flapping in silently without any trace of the clamor that marks their autumn gatherings, and began to search industriously the grass and matted weeds along the shore. More intelligent than the cats, they had followed the hunters when the ice broke up, and were now looking for wounded birds which had died overnight, and which they ate ravenously. Here and there my glasses showed me a group of the sable bandits tearing at a duck which one of them had discovered, and which he



shared peaceably with certain of his fellows. What puzzled me — and what puzzles me still, though I have watched them many times gleaning after the hunters — was that only a certain number would come down to share a find of this kind, while a hundred more half-starved crows, which saw them plainly, would go on with their ceaseless hunting in the coves and matted grasses. Sometimes only three or four crows would gather about a dead duck; and again a dozen would surround him in a dense black circle, each standing in his place but never mounting the game to claim it for his own, as vultures and beasts of prey invariably do. Near these feeding groups were often scores of other crows that had found nothing, and that went on their hungry way without a thought, apparently, of joining the scant feast.

I am inclined to think that family relations hold longer among the birds than we have supposed. I have known old birds to help younger ones — presumably their own offspring — in building their first nests; and

among gregarious birds, like the crows and geese, the parents look after the welfare of their little ones more or less all winter. Probably these crows on the shore represented family groups, each of which had a right to what the others found. Whether a few strangers joined them, and the great majority of the flock kept away simply because they recognized that one small duck was not enough to fill so many mouths, is purely a matter of guesswork. The one thing that is certain to me, after long watching, is that the crows understand perfectly their own regulations, and that these busy groups on the shore were not the result of chance or accident.



Just below me a solitary, long-winged crow, attracted perhaps by my decoys, came swinging up the shore, yew-yawing like an old boat in the heavy squalls of wind. Suddenly he poised

like a hawk and plunged down into a great bed of matted grass. Out of it on the instant shot a wing-broken duck with the crow after him, hovering and striking savagely with his beak, while the duck flapped his useless wing and splashed and skittered and tried to dive in the shallow water. Over him like a black fate hung the crow, with one sharp call, which was answered instantly by another crow that darted over my head without seeing me. Together they chivied the poor duck back toward his hiding-place. There the savage beaks soon finished him, the waves threw him ashore, and within the minute five crows were gathered about him, tearing at the warm, rich flesh as if famished.

Far up on my left, on the narrow strip of beach that separated the pond from the open ocean, I had occasional glimpses of a crow mounting up and up till he poised high over the hard sand left by the tide. Something flashed white as it fell, with the crow swooping down after it. He had found some hard-shelled clam that the waves had rolled up,

too hard for his beak to break, and was cracking it by letting it fall from the height. It is a queer kind of hunting, which one may note among gulls and crows in midwinter when they follow the tide-line, and I was watching it curiously when all thoughts of peaceful habits and observation were driven pell-mell out of my head. Over the beach from the open sea came a great gang of geese, flying low and unsteadily, as if weary of the long flight and the ceaseless battle with the wind.

I watched them breathlessly as they slanted down into the pond, paying no heed to my little decoys, but lighting far out in the middle, where they were perfectly safe. There they gathered in a close group, spread and gathered again, and sat silently, with raised heads, studying the shores of the unknown pond where they had taken refuge. I was on the wrong side that time. After a half-hour's watching they glided slowly to an open beach, under the lee of a sand-bank, on the opposite side of the pond. Through my glasses I watched

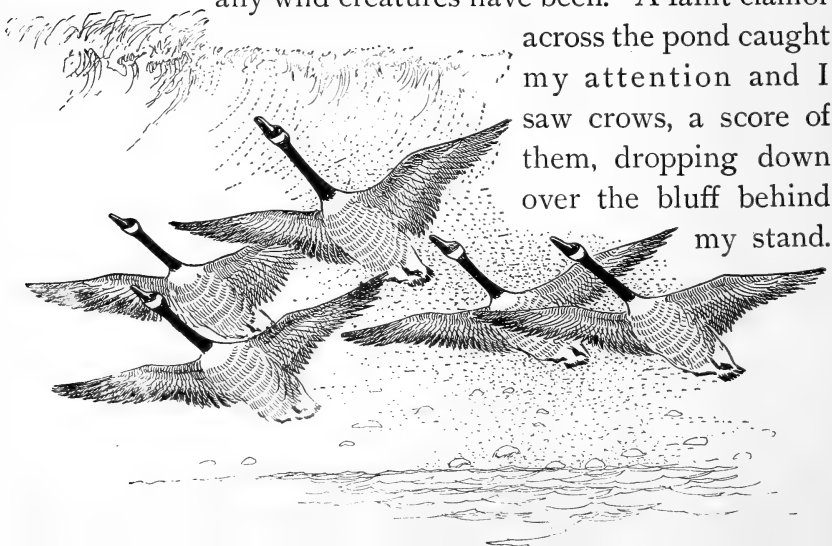
them enviously, resting themselves, soothing their tired wings and preening their feathers.

It was a hard tramp around the pond; but geese are rare game here, and I was chilled with sitting still so long in my icy nest and glad to be moving again. My ducks were left in the stand, with a *waif* upon them to show that they were mine should any hunters chance that way; my lunch also, pushed under the edge of an ice cake so that the sleet should not wet and freeze it into cold comfort before my return. Leaving every weight but the gun and field-glass and a few shells, I crept out, still covered by the sheet, so that the geese would not notice me.

Directly behind my stand was a low bluff. I climbed this very slowly, rolled over the summit, and hurried around the pond, keeping myself well hidden behind banks and bushes. I had gained the sand-ridges behind which the geese were huddled, and was crawling over them like a turtle, sure of a perfect shot and at least three geese, when the stalk was brought to an exasperating end. Some

crows flying along the beach saw me creeping, and flew high over me to see what it was all about. They saw the big gang of geese resting unsuspiciously under the bank, and swooped down with a sharp note of warning. I knew it was all up then; for many times before this the crows had come between me and game in the same way. The geese jumped on the instant, still fifty yards out of range, set their broad wings to the wind, and slanted up like kites; then turned at the leader's deep *honk* and bore away steadily out of sight and hearing.

I went down to the shore, with what small philosophy the squalls had left anchored in me, and began to examine the tracks and signs of the geese, led by the subtle fascination that always holds me to the spot where any wild creatures have been. A faint clamor across the pond caught my attention and I saw crows, a score of them, dropping down over the bluff behind my stand.



Through the glass I saw others standing on the ice cakes, peering about inquisitively. Then one came out of the stand, perched an instant on the rim, and jumped back again. Others followed him; one, two, a dozen were inside, and feathers began to fly up in the wind. They had found my ducks and lunch, and judging by the way they tumbled down in an endless stream over the bank, no law or family relationship seemed to set any limit to the numbers. *Haw! haw!* down they came. They had driven off my geese, and were now making sad havoc of my own ducks.

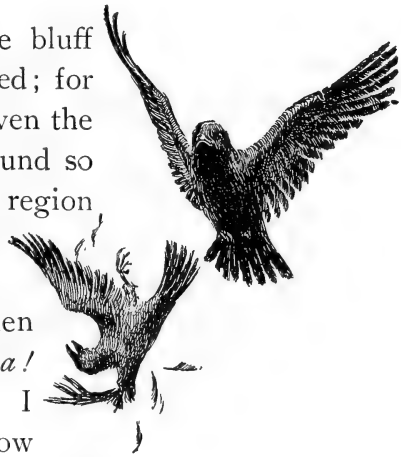
It took me nearly an hour to double the pond and get safely behind the bluff. It was all still now; apparently every crow within sight or hearing had come to the unexpected feast and was stuffing himself with duck down in my stand. Slipping in a couple of lighter shells, I ran forward. One might overlook the geese — for that was not a bad thing when you looked at it from the birds' viewpoint — but there were plundered nests and the death of young

song-birds at the crows' door, and plenty of other old scores to settle. The high banks hid me perfectly, and the gale blew away every sound of my swift approach.

I was still some hundreds of yards from the edge of the bluff when a sharp *ka-ka!* made me turn quickly. From some pine woods behind me two crows darted out and rushed for the bluff, crying a loud warning at every flap of their wings. Whether they were sentinels or not, I do not know; but they certainly knew where the flock was hidden, all unconscious of danger, and the moment I appeared running for the bluff they darted in ahead of me to give the alarm. I watched them curiously as they sped straight for the spot, struggling desperately against the gale and sounding the danger-note in a continuous cry. I looked to see the flock rise clamoring over the bluff; but they were hidden too deep to hear, and the wind carried away the sentinels' alarm.

The two watchmen had not forgotten their caution and were evidently aiming to pass well out of range; but they forgot the gale,

and in every squall they were pushed steadily to leeward. As they crossed in front of me a gust of wind flung them up almost over my head. The gun spoke once, and the leader tumbled headlong at my feet. The second barrel missed fire, and the other crow whirled in a panic over my head and darted back for the woods whence he had come.



Still the flock under the bluff did not appear, as I expected; for the squall had carried off even the heavy report, or made it sound so faint and far away that in a region of hunters it was unheeded. Slipping in fresh shells, I was running forward, when again the sharp *ka-ka! ka-ka!* sounded behind me; and I turned to see the second crow heading like an arrow for the bluff, sounding his alarm-note as he came on.

I stopped again to watch with intense interest as he neared the flock. He was closer to the ground this time and flying

more swiftly; but again he made the same sad blunder. The gale drove him steadily to leeward, and as he crossed before me a furious blast hurled him up over my head. The gun-sight covered him swiftly; and then, so near was he, I saw his wild, frightened eyes looking straight into mine along the shining gun-barrels. What he thought or felt, who can tell? There, just beyond, he saw his fellow-sentinel lying still, a drop of bright red clinging to the point of his dark beak, the rough wind ruffling his glossy blue-black feathers; here beneath him was the man who had done it, who could do it again; and there —

He whirled wildly at thought of the unconscious flock and sounded the alarm-cry at the top of his lungs. Had I pressed the trigger curling snugly under my finger, that cry to others to save themselves would have been his last. However poor and blind the understanding behind those frightened eyes, he could still see a duty to his fellows and be faithful, crying out to them to escape

even at the terrible moment when death reached up from below to cut him down. It all occurred in an instant; but in that instant I had some thoughts and a whole lot of feelings, and the first and last of them was that a man must not shoot a bird like that.

Slowly the gun came down; my eyes followed him with wonder and admiration as panic seized him again at sight of the man and his dead mate, and he whirled away on the squall. Then I ran swiftly to the edge of the bluff and peeked over.

Oh, you black rascals! with all your cunning, here you are fairly caught at last; and a moment ago I was ready enough to send some of you over the long flight to join the ducks. I wish you knew, I wish I could tell you, how much you owe to a little forgotten sentinel out yonder. For one must needs spare life, even the poor life of a crow, or a thief, after seeing another ready to die to save it.

Such a flurry of feathers whirled up out of the stand and danced a saraband in mad

glee over the ice cakes! They had ripped open my lunch, too; among the hopping blue backs I could see bits of the paper that had wrapped it up. Some new-comers tore ravenously at what was left of the ducks; others stood about working and stretching their necks to worry down a big morsel; still others, too full for another mouthful, perched solemnly on the edges of the stand, looking down curiously at the feast which had no more personal interest for them. The humor of the situation fell upon me, the tramp over the marshes in the cold, comfortless hour before daylight, the long watch in the ice and sleet, the escaped geese, and then the crows' fat feast at the end of my labors. I had barely seen all this at a glance, and had begun to poke some of that fun at myself which my friends kept in liberal store for me when I used to go duck-hunting, when the warning *ka-ka!* rattled on the wind and the sentinel shot over my head again.

The crows heard him this time and gave heed on the instant. A cloud of duck feathers,

"Up they came hawing, flapping,
scrambling desperately"

driven by the whirring wings, rolled up out of the stand, like smoke from a tug's funnel. Here and there a single crow burst out of the cloud like a bomb, with a squawk and a yell as he saw me so near, which served only to increase the clamor and confusion below. Up they came *hawing*, flapping, scrambling desperately to get steerage way, till the gale caught them and whirled them in a crazy rout over my head. But after the first startled instant I scarcely saw them, my eyes being fastened on a single small crow, the sentinel. He turned sharply as the flock took alarm, was swept aside by a blast of wind, but returned again, and then led the wild rush over the moors to the pines where he had kept watch.

How much did he understand of what he had done? That is a question which only a crow could answer; but a man does not have to watch the black flocks very long to see that they generally know very well what they are doing, and depend very little on blind impulse. He had seen guns and hunters and falling birds more than once, and knew the danger;

he heard the terrifying roar, the whistle of shot, the thud of his stricken mate; yet he came back twice in the face of it all to warn his fellows. Only a poor hungry crow, of course, and we don't know what goes on in his head. But when a soldier on the outpost jumps to answer a call like that, we understand exactly where to place him.

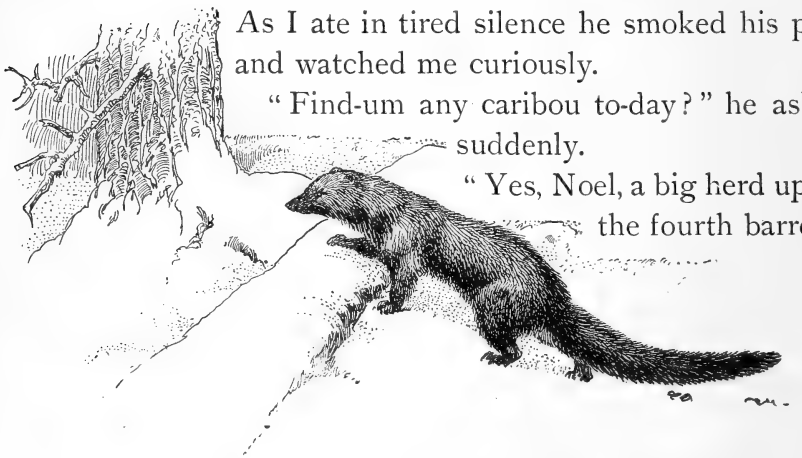

The Cry of
the Wolf

The Cry Of The Wolf

OLD NOEL and I were camped on the caribou trails, one winter, away up on the edge of the barren lands. It was a curious kind of Christmas vacation I had chosen, — to leave friends and creature comforts in order to shiver and lie awake beside a fire in the snow; but fun is what you like to do, and whenever the North calls you go, if you can, without caring much whether it is work or play that lies just ahead of you. I was there for no better reason than simply because I wanted to be there, and incidentally because I hoped to find out a little about the ways of wolves and caribou. Old Noel was there because he generally went where I wanted him to go, and because he was wiser than any other man, I think, about the life of animals. He knew, when I called him, that

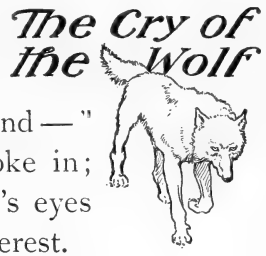
there would be plenty of pork, plenty of tea, plenty of tobacco, plenty of warm blankets, and that within a day or two a fat young caribou would be hanging up in front of the *commoosie* to keep the wolf from the door, or better, perhaps, to bring him sniffing around where we slept through the long winter night. So Noel had no present worries or troubles, being only an Indian. As for the rest, he can hardly yet understand why I should follow a herd of caribou all day long, and sleep cold on the trail, just to find out something which he has always known.

For instance, one day I came in at dusk, worn out from a long tramp in the snow that was too light and soft for snowshoes, to find him stroking the beautiful skin of a fisher which he had taken from one of his traps. As I ate in tired silence he smoked his pipe and watched me curiously.



"Find-um any caribou to-day?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, Noel, a big herd up on the fourth barren."



"Kill-um any dem caribou?" he demanded, as if killing were the only end of hunting.

"No, I got too interested watching a few yearlings playing by themselves. Then a big lynx appeared, hiding and playing like a kitten, on top of a rock and —"

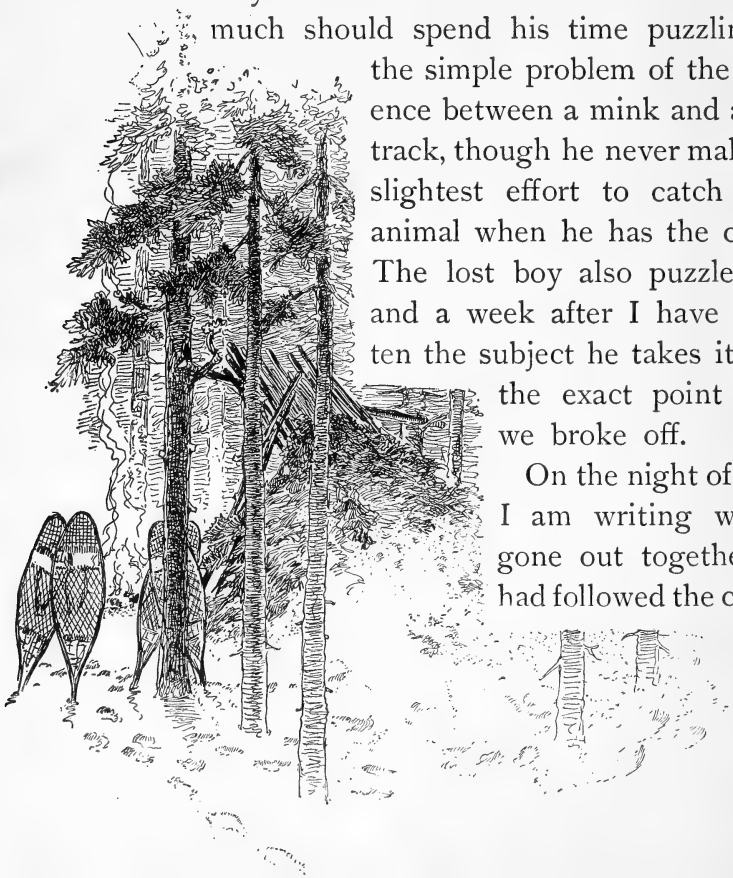
"You shoot-um dat link?" he broke in; and the fire that sleeps in an Indian's eyes began to sparkle with the hunter's interest.

"No," I said, shamefaced; "he seemed to be trying to decoy the young caribou where he could jump on one. I got too close, and he saw me before I thought of shooting him."

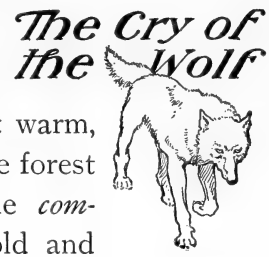
"By cosh," said Noel indignantly, "I go wid you nex' time! Dat link skin fetch-um six dollars. Why you go huntin' anyway?"

"Just for the love of it, Noel, — a boy's love of the big woods and the rivers and the silent places. I am hunting for the boy chiefly, the boy who was myself, whom I lost long ago, but whom I am always hoping to find again, either here or in the Happy Hunting Grounds. Do you ever follow his trail, Noel, and forget that you are an old man?"

But an Indian, used to silence and mystery as his daily portion, never answers a question like that; and you are never quite sure what he is thinking about. Often when he has questioned me about books and men, about cities and churches and the great sea and the life of other lands, I find him regarding me intently across the camp-fire, asking silently why a man who has seen and learned so much should spend his time puzzling out the simple problem of the difference between a mink and a sable track, though he never makes the slightest effort to catch either animal when he has the chance. The lost boy also puzzles him, and a week after I have forgotten the subject he takes it up at the exact point where we broke off.



On the night of which I am writing we had gone out together and had followed the caribou



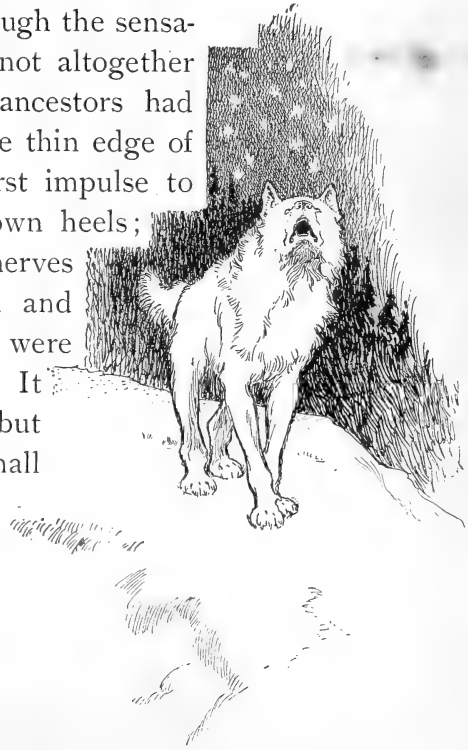
herd too far from our snug little nest under a ledge, and were camped on the trail. At dusk we had scraped a hole in the snow with our snowshoes, made a little hut of slanting poles and boughs, covered deeply with snow to keep it warm, and a huge fire of hard wood sang the forest songs sleepily in front of our little *commoosie*. The night was intensely cold and still; the smoke stood straight up from the camp-fire; the stars glittered and grew big, and the snow lay like a garment of jewels over all the earth. The moon shone white and cold, and under it the spruce forest stood, as always in the still night, waiting, waiting apparently for something that never comes. Far off, like a ghost of a sound, a low moan trembled suddenly on the horizon. I answered it with a shiver, which was partly the cold, partly the sense of elemental mystery that never leaves me in the wilderness, and glided away into the shadows of the big woods.

A few hundred yards behind our *commoosie* there was a cliff on the edge of a

great barren. I climbed to the top and stood there alone in the vast silence of the winter night, so cold, so still that one's nerves were all a-tingle, and the chiming of a million fairy bells seemed to constitute the silence. At my feet stretched the open barren, desolate, fearfully desolate and lifeless under the moonlight; and all around the black forest stood waiting. Though silent, all the world seemed struggling in some strange way for speech, seemed freezing to death in the grip of the winter night and, waiting in tense expectancy for some great voice to express its suffering.

Suddenly the voice came. From the woods close at hand a sound broke out, — a terrible sound, beginning in a low moan, swelling out into a roar that filled the forest like the sound of a cataract, and vanishing again in a wail of unimaginable woe. Even the echoes, so ready to respond to every call, seemed frightened at this appalling outcry. Not one answered, for the sound itself seemed to fill the lonely world and to hush and startle all things.

A hundred times before this, alone on the mountain top, on the wide sea, on the ice-bound northern wastes, or at midnight in the unbroken forest, I had tried to feel the spirit of primal nature; to know what the first man felt in the presence of boundless mystery. Here was my answer with a vengeance. I could get no nearer to primal man and beast and nature than to stand here in the snow and moonlight, with the desolate barren before me, the black woods all around, and that appalling voice of a great beast filling all the night. And I confess that, though the sensation was magnificent, it was not altogether pleasant. My old primitive ancestors had lived so many centuries on the thin edge of flight and panic that their first impulse to run was still strong in my own heels; my back was cold, and my nerves were all up on edge, jarred and jangled as if some rough hand were rubbing them with sandpaper. It was all over in an instant; but one can feel a lot in a small



moment when he is alone in the woods at night, and for the first time the howl of a great timber-wolf rolls over his head.

Again the tense silence settled over the wilderness. The curious impression of chiming silver bells was ringing in my ears when once more the terrible sound came rushing, tumbling, ululating through the startled woods. This time it was answered. From the woods far across the barren a cry broke out; no echo, certainly, but the unmistakable voice of a big starving wolf. Another howl on my left; and from the low hills behind me and beyond the *commoosie* a fourth uttered his cry of desolation. For a half-hour I stood there, shivering in spite of myself; now watching keenly over the barren, hoping to see the gathering of the savage pack; now calculating in the blessed silence whether that first hungry wolf could be following the trail I had made at dusk; and all the while wondering at the meaning of this fearful cry of *woe*, *woe*, *woe*, which seemed to fill all the world. Then it was all still again; the open barren lay white

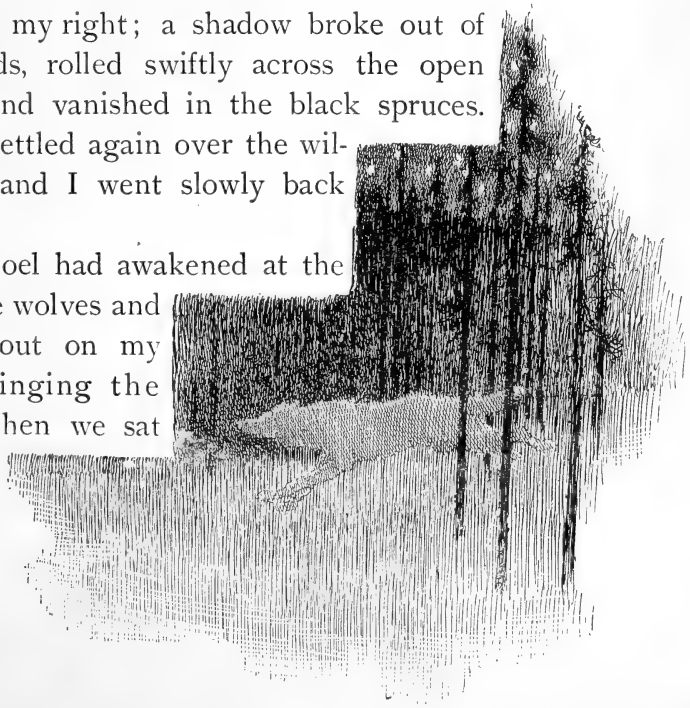
"That first hungry wolf . . . following the trail
I had made at dusk"

and cold under the moon; the black spruces stood huddled together in groups, waiting.

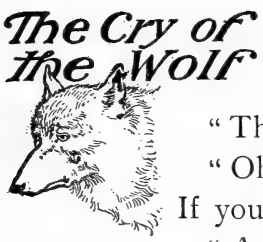
Suddenly there was another sound. Far away on my left, and behind me, a cry rang out from a distant barren —*Hoooo-ow ! ow ! ow ! ow !* No voice of woe this time, but a keen, eager summoning call that sang through the woods like a rifle bullet. *Come, come, come, come !* it seemed to say; but the impression was not one of articulate sound but only of indefinite feeling. A single eager yelp, the irrepressible outburst of a hungry young wolf, answered the new call. There was a sudden movement on my right; a shadow broke out of the woods, rolled swiftly across the open barren, and vanished in the black spruces. Silence settled again over the wilderness, and I went slowly back to camp.

The Cry of the Wolf

Old Noel had awakened at the cry of the wolves and hurried out on my trail, bringing the rifle. When we sat



down before the fire again I went straight to the point.



"Noel," I said, "can a wolf talk?"

"Talk? course he talk. Eve't'ing talk in hees own way."

"Then what did that first wolf say, Noel?"

"Oh, he say he hongry; lonely too, p'raps. If you call dat way, hwolf he always come."

"And that other wolf, Noel, 'way over to the southwest on the other barren, what did he say?"

"Oh, he say, 'Come over here, hurry up,'" said Noel; and, as is always the case when I am most interested and want to talk, not another word could I get out of him.

At daylight I had stirred the fire and boiled the kettle and was away on the trail. One seldom really sleeps in the open during these intensely cold nights, but just dozes and wakes and feeds the fire and pulls his blankets closer, and springs up rested, fresh and strong, in the morning. I hurried to the place where I had seen that shadow vanish in the woods, picked up the trail of a running wolf and followed it for miles, straight as a

string, to a dense fir thicket on the sheltered side of a little barren. Here several caribou had rested awhile in the snow, and here — the record was plain as a printed page — a wolf had found them and, instead of hunting in wolf fashion, had circled to leeward and stalked and killed one with the stealth of a lynx creeping on a hidden rabbit. It was undoubtedly his eager food cry that went singing through the winter night and brought every hungry wolf within hearing to share the good luck that had fallen to him alone.

I followed the trails all morning, and at noon was back again at the home camp, whither Noel had preceded me. Four hungry Indians were there, and Noel was feeding them full from my scant store. The last of my pork had vanished, and my tea and Noel's tobacco seemed in a pitifully low state to one who knows how essential these things are in the northern winter; but though they were on their way out to plenty, these stranger Indians had appropriated my necessities as freely as they would have taken

bark from a birch tree to light their fire. When they had gone Noel and I sat down to talk. I was comparatively new to the woods and to the ways of wolves, and I expressed my eager wonder at what I had read in the snow.

"Oh," said Noel, "dat's not'ing. Dat's just hwolf way; Injun way, too; share w'at he got."

"So I see," said I, thinking of my tea and pork. "But, Noel, did you ever hear of the primitive, primordial beast?"

"What kind animal dat?" said Noel, all interest, as he invariably is upon the rare occasions when I venture to become his teacher.

"Why, don't you see, Noel, the primordial beast is the original animal that Clote Scarpe created, the wolf and the caribou, with their savage instincts and greed and selfishness and all that. Our social philosophers down yonder, who pretend to explain our curious civilization, tell us that all our trouble comes from the primordial wolf; that our fierce and savage competition —"

"W'at dat t'ing — some tother beast dat live down your way?" demanded Noel.

"Oh, no; competition is said to be the life of our trade," I said dubiously. "It means that when you have a little business I come along with a bigger one and crowd you out, without thinking much of your wife and babies; and that when you are hungry I buy all the meat in sight and charge you big prices, so as to get rich by making you poorer."

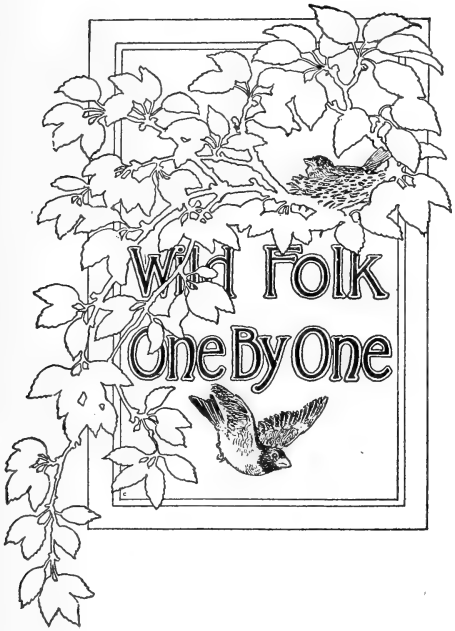
"And you t'ink dat come from hwolf?" said Noel indignantly. "Tell me, what dat hwolf do when he find-um lot meat last night?"

"He called in the others before he had taken a mouthful himself," I said honestly.

"And what dem same caribou do when it cold?"

"They make a ring against the wind or storm and put the weakest inside. Their bodies keep the little ones warm, and when danger comes the big ones meet it first," I answered, giving him back some of his own teaching.

"Den why you call-um selfish? Why you call-um bad beasts? By cosh, now," said Noel, taking his ax and peering intently through the woods for a birch log for our night fire, "when poor Injun come live down yonder, I hope dat competition man gets a little more hwolf in hees heart. *Hoooo-ow! ow! ow! ow!*" And again, in perfect imitation, the thrilling food cry of the big timber-wolf went singing through the still woods.


Wild Folk
One By One

Wild Folk One By One

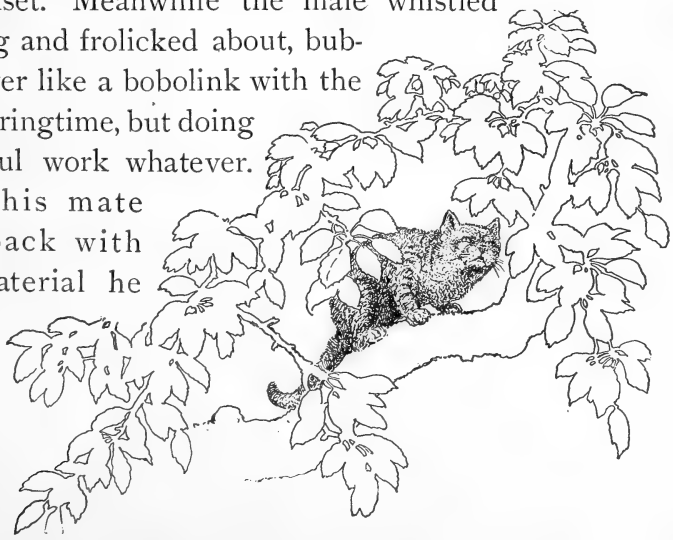
UNDER my window, in the old student days at Andover, a pair of rose-breasted grosbeaks built their nest in an apple-tree at the corner of Bartlett Hall, and just beneath my favorite reading-seat. I watched them there with more than ordinary interest from the moment the site was chosen until the young birds were led away by their parents to learn the ways of the world. No better opportunity was ever given to study the life of a bird family; for I had only to turn my head away from the pile of books, and there was the nest with the mother bird standing by, so near that I could see her eyes wink.

I sat very quiet at the window, never climbed to the nest, spread food occasionally, and drove away sundry cats and boys and one despicable egg-collector; and so it may be that the birds regarded me as a friend, and were less constrained than usual. Certainly they showed little fear of me, though shy enough with other men. Once, while I was reading a book on the old bench under the nest, the male, a gorgeous fellow, came down and perched on the chain between two posts behind me. After watching a moment with round, inquisitive eyes he came hitching and twittering along till within reach of my hand, where he turned his head from side to side and looked me all over, and twittered back as I talked to him softly.

Another day, when I worked at my table, the female flew to the open window and called to me excitedly. I went to the window at once, but saw nothing unusual. Still she zigzagged back and forth between my window and a thick lilac bush at the foot of the tree where her nest was, calling a

continuous alarm-note. When I ran out she met me at the steps and led me straight to the lilac, where, parting the leaves and branches, I found a cat hiding on a knot at the farther side of the apple-tree, waiting with cold green eyes till the alarm should blow over. But I am getting ahead of my story.

Like many other birds, when engaged in any good work, the grosbeaks furnished a curious commentary on our human endeavors. The female did most of the work, and the male did all the celebrating. In collecting materials and in shaping the nest the female was busy as a bee in clover-blossom time, hurrying back and forth and doing an astonishing amount of work between sunrise and sunset. Meanwhile the male whistled and sang and frolicked about, bubbling over like a bobolink with the joy of springtime, but doing no useful work whatever. When his mate came back with new material he



would fly to meet her, fluttering about her, cheeping and singing, as if he were praising her for her diligence. Then he would look on with immense importance as she worked at the nest, rounding it with her own breast to give it the shape she wanted. As he bubbled over extravagantly in his praise her busy, silent air seemed to say, "Go 'way now with your blarney." But she liked it, nevertheless, and when, in excess of zeal, he would bustle away and come back with one small straw, she would take it from his beak and work it in with her own abundant collection.

When the material was at last arranged to suit her the two birds would stand together on a twig, and she seemed, from her voice and attitude and from his sudden dejection, to be scolding him for his idleness. The lecture ended, she would fly straight away to the foot of a bank where material was plentiful, and he would start just as diligently in another direction. Unfortunately he had to cross some chains swinging between the stone posts about the dormitories, and he

could never cross a chain without lighting upon it. The impact of his flight would sometimes set the chain swaying slightly, and he enjoyed the new sensation of swinging, fluttering his wings and stretching his neck and tip-tilting his tail to keep his balance. When the motion ceased he would flit up into an elm-tree, catch an insect or two, whistle exuberantly, and forget all about the work till he heard his mate returning, calling gladly as she came on. Then — three times I saw him do it — the lazy rascal slipped up to the nest, hurriedly pulled out of it a mouthful of straws and, hopping to the end of the branch, held them out to his mate to show her what good work he had been doing while she was gone. At last she caught him, and flew at him in a rage, and drove him out of the tree, scattering her own material over the lawn in her indignation.

Later, when she was brooding her eggs, the male showed a very different side of his character. Though I had known grosbeaks all my life, I discovered then that he has one

song very different from his ordinary melodious warble. It is low and sweet, and seems intended for his mate alone; for I never heard him use it except when she was brooding her eggs and he was standing close beside her. From my window I could hardly hear it, close at hand, though I could distinguish his whistling song half-way across the big campus; but when sitting on the old bench under the nest I often heard it clearly, and could see him standing very still beside his brooding mate, or bending down as if to breathe the exquisite little melody into her ears, as one would whisper a secret. Birds of all kinds are naturally quieter near their own nests; but in this low song of the grosbeak there seemed to be more than the usual precaution against listening enemies.

Always, late at night, I would open my window near the nest before I blew my light out; and then as the light vanished I would hear a stir and a surprised twitter from my little neighbors, as if they missed the friendly shining of my lamp in the darkness. And

often at midnight, as I sat at the open window, breathing deep of the fragrance of the summer night and listening in the tender, immeasurable silence, I would hear a faint sweet song by the nest, so fine that it was more like the voice of an insect than of a hardy bird, — as if the grosbeak were dreaming and still singing in his dreams.

Just behind the dormitory another pair of grosbeaks built their nest in a linden tree. Unlike the other, it was hidden away where no eyes but my own ever discovered it. The birds themselves were shy, secretive, silent, as different from their kind on the other side of the house as it was possible for birds to be. Though I watched them more or less all the early summer, I saw nothing different from what I had often seen in other grosbeaks; while hardly a day went by without revealing some new or interesting trait in the birds under my window. This was partly, perhaps, because I watched the latter with more sympathetic interest, as one regards the little suggestive nothings of his own children; but

partly also because the birds themselves were different in character and disposition.

It was the same room where I befriended a hornet that got drunk at every opportunity, as recorded elsewhere, and from which, on winter holidays, I often went out fox-hunting with Ol' Roby, a sad-faced hound that lost his life, at last, in following over thin ice a cunning tramp fox that had already led more than one foolish dog to the railroad tracks; and the chief lesson of the grosbeak families was this, that every life, however small, has its own problems, its own particular joys and sorrows, and out of these things it develops its own individuality.

Here at last we are on debatable ground, and one must go softly. Let the simplest illustration suffice to get our bearings. You hit a dog with a stick, and the dog yelps, tucks his tail between his legs and melts away like a scared rabbit; only the dog looks back over his shoulder, and the rabbit can see behind without looking. Here is a beautifully simple case of reflex action and

instinct, the kind that is numerously recorded in works of experimentation upon animals by the comparative psychologists. Now hit another dog in the same place with the same stick, and this dog, without saying a word and so quick that you forget to take an observation on his tail, turns and gets his teeth into your leg. Obviously here is a case where apparently similar causes do not produce similar results. The second dog may be own brother to the first, born and reared under precisely the same conditions, and our much-cherished law of reflexes ought to apply perfectly, but it does not. A new element has come in to modify the result, — the element of disposition. "Any stick will do to beat a dog with," says Sancho Panza, and the rule may be safely adopted by the psychologists; but what the dog will do is always an open question, depending entirely on the character, disposition, and experiences of the particular animal under the stick.

With the element of disposition another and more baffling element enters into our

study, the element of individual freedom, which may be real, or only apparent, according to one's view of the universe and of Augustine's philosophy; but which is, in either case, an element to be dealt with seriously, since at any moment it may upset the most carefully laid scheme of experimentation.

Once, in my more enthusiastic salad days, when after reading sundry English and German psychologists it seemed somewhat easier to write a book on animal psychology than it does now, I shut up an old cat with her litter of kittens in a cage made especially for the purpose. There was a trap-door in the cage, so arranged that by stepping on a spring the door would open to let kitty out; while entrance was easily gained through the roof by means of an inclined board. My immediate object was to find out whether the old cat, after discovering the secret of exit, would show it to her kittens. And that was only one of numerous experiments I made to determine how far an animal consciously teaches its young the things that

they would never know of themselves, led solely by their own instincts and experience.

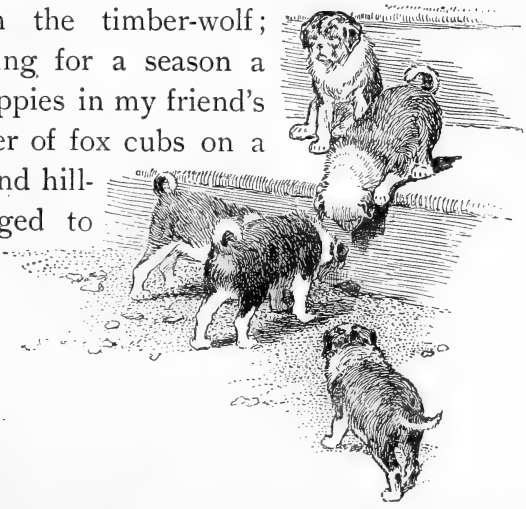
The old cat found the spring in a day or two without any help from me, and after that went out and in as she pleased. But she never taught the trick to her little ones. Instead, I saw her one day cuff one of her kittens away from the corner where the spring was, and where he might easily have found the way out himself. When the time came she pressed the spring and let all her kittens out, and never entered the cage again. To this day I am unable to say whether she was unwilling to teach, or feared a trap, or whether, being a wise old cat in her way, she preferred to leave them in the cage, where they were safe from prowling dogs, while she roamed about at her pleasure. Meanwhile a friend told me enthusiastically of his own cat, which had learned to open a door by climbing on a box and pressing down the latch. Then she taught the trick successfully to three out of her four kittens.

This unknown element of individuality carries us over the border-land of science into

a fascinating realm, where as yet only a few pioneers have made any exploration. Here the hard and fast rules laid down by the scientists and comparative psychologists apply only in the most general way, as we apply the adjective *shrewd* indiscriminately to all Yankees, and *volatile* to all Frenchmen, and the word *instinct* to all bird migration. Sooner or later science will explore the new field, as educators have begun the great task of exploring the child mind and determining its general laws; but for the present one cannot live with a child, or watch a single animal closely and sympathetically for a single season, without finding much that refuses scientific analysis, at least in our present ignorance, and which one must interpret, lacking other standards, by the measure of his own life, which is, after all, the only thing that a man understands even a little.

It is a big world, globe-trotters to the contrary notwithstanding, and Nature seems to abhor repetition as she abhors a vacuum. Owners of dogs and cats and horses need no

argument to convince them of the individuality of their pets. The only question is, Do wild animals of the same species differ as widely in habits and characteristics as the domestic animals? Personally, after many years of watching animals in their native woods, I am convinced that the wild creature is more individual than the animal dwelling in our houses and stables. Contact with man generally serves to dull the native wit of an animal and reduce him to a creature of habit and dependence. The ducks and turkeys of our barn-yards hold no comparison with the wild creatures in their native ponds and woods; the cows and sheep are far below the standards of the deer and bighorn of the forests and mountains. Even the dog suffers in comparison with the timber-wolf; and after watching for a season a litter of collie puppies in my friend's stable and a litter of fox cubs on a wild New England hillside, I was obliged to confess, though



I am fond of dogs, that the foxes were more interesting and individual in their actions.

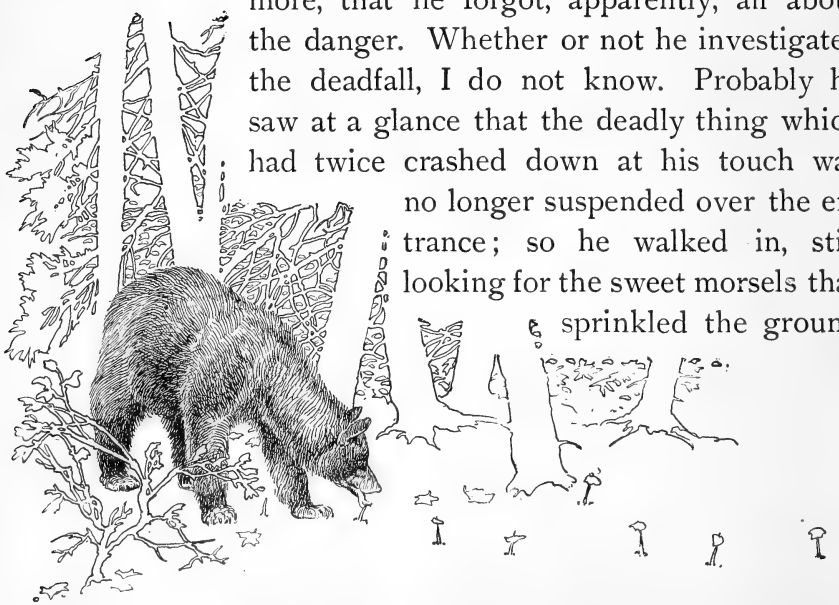
Once, with an old hunter who had learned much of his wonderful animal lore from the Indians, I set a deadfall for a big black bear that had taken to raiding the sheepfolds. At first the cunning old fellow would not go near the trap; then, when the sheep were guarded by day and locked up by night, and a trail of honey was led through the woods to the deadfall, he began to investigate the new source of supply. The deadfall was set beside the huge stump of a pine-tree. From either side of the stump a row of stout stakes was driven in a half-circle almost meeting in front, making a snug little pen with one narrow door, opposite the pine, by which alone Mooween might enter. Across the entrance was laid a single large log, and over it the heavy deadfall was suspended by a trigger and weighted with a dozen other logs.

Now in comparison with wolves or foxes most bears are easily caught in a deadfall, the general idea seeming to be that a bear in

approaching the trap will put one forepaw over the bed-log and reach in the other paw to drag out the bait; which, of course, releases the trigger and brings the whole crushing weight down on the small of his back, catching him and generally killing him between the fall and the bed-log. Nine out of ten bears, if they were inexperienced enough to meddle with the trap at all, would do just this thing; but our particular bear did not. First he licked up all the honey as far as the trap, and went away discreetly. The next night, with the taste of honey in his mouth, he broke into the pen from the side, sprung the trap harmlessly, and ate up all the bait. The crash of the falling logs would have scared another bear into a panic and made him suspicious of all such traps for life; but Mooween thought he understood such things. Two nights later he came back and repeated his performance; only, as we had driven an extra row of stakes, he did not bother to break in, but climbed up the rear side of the stump, where he was perfectly safe from the falling log, and again

sprung the trap and ate up everything in sight. Whereupon the old hunter vowed he would catch that particular bear if it took all summer.

We took away the fall-log and set a steel trap just inside the pen, covering it carefully with twigs and moss and leaves, just like the forest floor. Then the old hunter broke forty or fifty short twigs and stuck them in the ground here and there, some inside the pen, and many more scattered along the path in front. On the top of each twig he stuck a piece of rank meat and smeared everything with honey. When Mooween came again he was so busy, licking up the scattered scraps and looking for more, that he forgot, apparently, all about the danger. Whether or not he investigated the deadfall, I do not know. Probably he saw at a glance that the deadly thing which had twice crashed down at his touch was no longer suspended over the entrance; so he walked in, still looking for the sweet morsels that sprinkled the ground



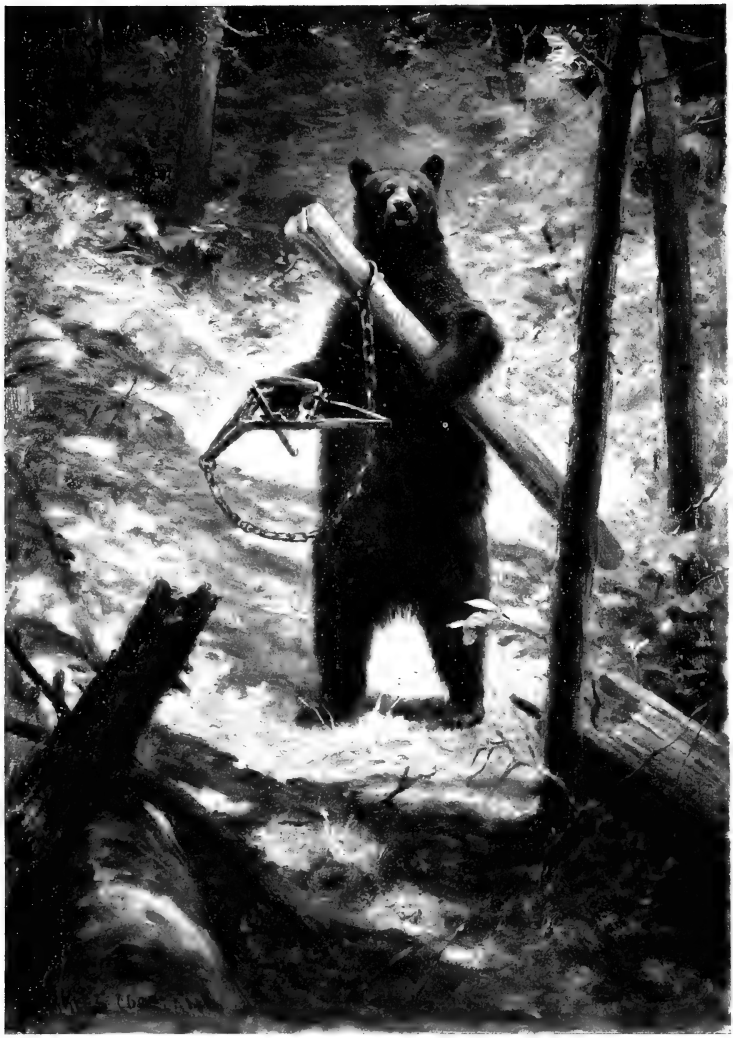
so unaccountably. As he stepped over the bed-log he put his forepaw squarely into the iron jaws of the trap, which snapped like lightning, and he was caught.

We took up the trail the next morning. Attached to the trap by an iron chain was an eight-foot log, not heavy enough to hold the bear, but more than enough to bother him as it jerked along, catching in roots and bushes, and leaving a trail that even a dull-nosed lynx might follow. Suddenly, however, the trail of the clog vanished, and the puzzled old hunter stood peering in every direction to see where it had gone. It was precisely like the trail of a cunning old buck, or a fisher, that sometimes ends abruptly with a single footprint, as if the creature had taken wings; only Mooween with the heavy clog could hardly leap far to one side, or return on his trail stepping daintily in his own footprints, as deer and fox and fisher do when they are followed.

As I circled widely, trying to hit the trail again, I came upon a bear's fresh tracks in the mud by a little brook. There was no

trace of the clog, and my first thought was that another bear was near; but in another moment I saw that the new trail showed only the prints of the bear's hind feet. I whistled for the old hunter, who came quickly and looked once at the telltale tracks. "That's him; he's walkin' on his hind legs," he said briefly. And that was true, as we soon discovered. The bear would drag the clog as long as it followed easily; but when it caught in a root, or when the pain in his pinched paw became too great, he would go back, pick up the clog, and go forward again, walking on his hind legs and carrying the drag in his arms. So we found him at last, limping bravely forward. He was walking upright, like a huge monkey, the trap on one paw, the heavy clog under his free arm, and the chain clanking against his breast as he walked, as if he were handcuffed.

There is small glory for man in the incident. My own sympathies were entirely with the bear, and our trapper's cunning seemed to us both a mean and detestable thing as I



"Walking on his hind legs and carrying
the drag in his arms"

tried unsuccessfully to free the splendid brute, and offered the old hunter twice the bounty if he could devise any way of removing the trap without at the same time being brained or scalped by a blow from Mooween's free paw. I mention the fact simply to illustrate the subject I am talking about more vividly than is possible by making general laws or theories for the wood folk, as is usually done. Nine bears out of ten simply drag their clog till it becomes hopelessly tangled in the underbrush; when, like a fox, they lie down and wait to be killed, as the hunter approaches, with nose down between their paws, as if fate were too much for them and they bowed their heads to what they cannot understand. But the tenth bear uses his wits, and so upsets any theories we may have as to instinct and reflex impulses.

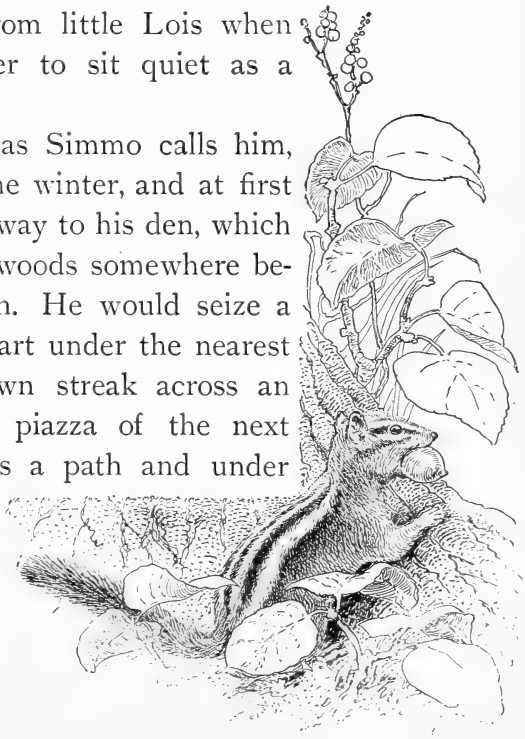
From the bear to the chipmunk is a far cry; but the same puzzling factor of individuality applies to both animals, and indeed to all those between them that make their home in the wilderness. Last summer one

of the men whom I employed in the woods tried for weeks to make friends with a chipmunk that made himself very much at home about our camp. One day, when he told me of his efforts and failure, I assured him solemnly that he did not have the right medicine. I took an English walnut from his hand — a broken nut, because when we gave this wilderness squirrel a whole nut for the first time he did not know what to do with it — and sat down on the ground, mumbling a bit of Latin doggerel for medicine. As long as the guide stood near me the chipmunk kept at a distance; but when the man withdrew and sat down quietly the little fellow came at once to my call, halting and jumping aside nervously, but eyeing me steadily all the while, till his nose touched the bait in my hand. I gave him one small taste and then drew the nut away, which was altogether too much for his timidity. Evidently in his eyes also the blessing brightened as it took flight, for he scampered nimbly after it till he sat fair on my knee, where he nipped and tugged and

twisted his little head, trying in every way to pull the morsel from between my fingers.

To this day the guide thinks that I have some special power over wild animals; but it was simply a case of keeping physically and mentally quiet. He had been too eager, too excited, too impatient; and the chipmunk, like most wild animals, and like certain children who seem at times to understand your thought rather than your action, had felt the subtle excitement and was afraid. In a day or two he understood us better and would take food from anybody, even from little Lois when we could persuade her to sit quiet as a mouse for a moment.

Chikchickooweesep, as Simmo calls him, was storing food for the winter, and at first he carried everything away to his den, which was hidden in the big woods somewhere beyond the farthest cabin. He would seize a nut from our fingers, dart under the nearest piazza, out like a brown streak across an open spot, under the piazza of the next cabin, out again across a path and under



a root, as if the owl were after him; then along the shadow of a mossy log, and so on to his den, following always the same trail and hiding himself cunningly from the eyes of any enemies that might be watching. Several minutes would pass before we would see him again, peeking out with bright inquisitive eyes from beneath the nearest cabin to see if we were still in an idle mood and had anything good to offer him.

Soon, however, these long trips began to bother the little husbandman. He was wasting too much time going and coming; and often when he returned his new friends had tired of waiting for him and had gone off on the trail of other wood folk in the great wilderness. Nor had they generously left where he could find them any of the nuts which he saw in their hands when he went away. So when food was shown him in abundance he began to hide it in numerous *caches* near at hand, so as to dispose quickly of all that was offered him. Sometimes I would put a dozen tidbits in the palm of my

hand and watch with intense interest as he sat upright on my fingers, his feet wonderfully soft and light and his eyes round as a rooster's as he saw the rich abundance. He would stuff his cheek pouches full as they would hold; then scamper off to the nearest *cache* and hide his morsels under a stone or root or mossy log. In a moment he would be back again for more, which he hid promptly in a different place. For with the exception of his den, which he had chosen carefully, he seemed to have a great aversion to putting too many eggs in one basket, where Meeko the red squirrel might find and steal them. When the store in my hand was gone to the last crumb he would then dig up his scattered tidbits at his leisure and carry them off to his winter storehouse.

This lasted three or four days; then Chikchickooweesep began to be troubled again. There seemed to be no limit to the generosity of his new friends, and he was still wasting too much time in transportation. Possibly also the security of the camp from hawks

and owls and foxes appealed to him. So, like a certain rich man who had no room where to bestow his fruits and his goods, he resolved to build another storehouse. He still came regularly to the camp door and hid all that we gave him; but he employed all his spare time in transferring all his goods from the distant storehouse to the hollow roots of a tree that stood beside the open door of my little tent. There, close beside his chief source of supply, he made a new den, and from there he often came into my tent to wake me up in the early morning; for he soon learned that I kept a little tin box of crackers and nuts and rice and raisins, which I would open to him for the asking.

One day, partly to test his intelligence, and partly in pure idleness for the mischief of the thing, I tied half a nut to a string and gave it to Chikch'eesep, holding the other end of the string myself. Away he went with the prize in his teeth, whisking over the ground like a sunbeam, as chipmunks go, till the cord straightened out with a snap, giving him a

terrible jolt and sending him flying over on his back in a complete somersault at the unexpected stop. In a wink he was up and off again, only to have the nut jerked out of his mouth a second time as he started in a headlong rush for his den. This time he scolded like a fish-wife; but whether he were berating me or the unoffending nut, I could not tell. In the midst of his scolding he seized the morsel and backed away till the string drew taut, when he began to tug and pull and worry, running back and forth in half-circles at the end of his tether. Then he would stop and brace himself with hind feet well apart and shoulders flat to the ground and surge backward on his purchase, bringing all the muscles of his body into play at once, like a fox I once saw that caught a woodchuck by the tail just as the little creature dove into his burrow and tugged in vain to drag him out.

After a minute or two of this vain effort Chikch'eesep dropped the nut and seemed to be studying his proposition; for he sat very still on his hind legs, looking at the

obstinate thing, and his eyes were shining steadily. Suddenly he dropped on all fours, came between me and the nut, cut the string with his teeth, and hurried away with his booty. When he came back I had the other half of the nut tied to the same string. No fooling this time. Without a moment's hesitation he cut the string, grabbed his prize, and away he went, *whizz!* like a bumblebee that has got his bearings.

One who has watched the wood folk without prejudice might multiply instances of this kind indefinitely. Indeed, as I think over the birds and animals of my acquaintance and see them again in the wilderness, hardly one passes, from the moose to the wood-mouse, and from the eagle of the unnamed cliffs to Killooleet who sang on my ridge-pole, without bringing with him some vivid bit of personal experience which sets that particular animal or bird apart from all the rest. Deer are plentiful about my wilderness camp, and I see scores of them in the course of a summer and autumn; but one remembers not deer in general, but this particular buck

that drove some smaller deer out of a sunny covert and lay down in it himself; and that particular young doe, which found her first fawn lying dead, and then went out through the woods seeking and calling him, with the puzzling thought in her poor head that her fawn was a living, answering, lovable reality, and not the cold, mute, silent thing she had just seen. And so with all other animals; the more you know them the more individual do they become.

The reason why we have so long held the opposite opinion, and put the animals down as, all alike, creatures of blind instinct and impulse, is a very simple one: we have noted the resemblances which unite animals of the same species, rather than the differences which separate them. Now resemblances lie on the surface and are easily seen; while differences lie deep and are comparatively hard to discover. I know two men who, with a shave and hair-cut and dress suit apiece, would be indistinguishable across a drawing-room. On Sunday you would bow to one, thinking he was the other; and relying solely upon

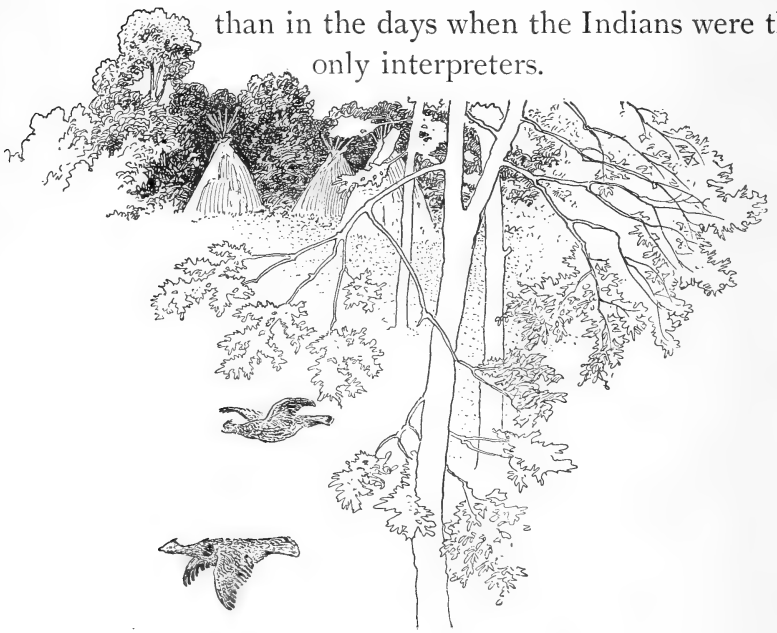
chance meetings and personal observation (as we do with wild animals), it would take you a year to discover that one is a waiter, a kindly, honest man who is good to his family, and the other an accomplished musician who lives chiefly on his emotions and is a moral scoundrel, with a deserted wife and child somewhere in his hinterland.

Sit in the box of a theater and look out over the audience only a few yards away; the men all look alike and act alike. For the moment they are alike. Sit at your window and watch the unconscious Sunday strollers at a little distance; again the impression of general sameness in dress, walk, looks, actions, as if they were, all alike, clothed by nature and blown along by the south wind; yet these men and women represent all the varieties of human character and individuality. Only as we come close to them, live with them, know them intimately, do they show the individual characteristics which separate them from all other men and women. That men are all alike is a true but superficial observation.

Now apply that to the wood folk. We see the wild creatures almost invariably at a greater distance, and at less leisure, than we see the theater audience or the Sunday crowd, and we know far less of their motives and springs of action. They look in a general way alike, and act alike; and so we have jumped to the superficial conclusion that they are alike. That means simply that we have seen the surface of things, the passing crowd at a distance. Now go close to the animals, watch them, follow them, win their confidence if possible, and instantly they begin to separate themselves by little individual tricks and traits. This is the secret of the stories of dogs and pets that are multiplying so rapidly, and of the records of the few pioneers who have had the patience and sympathy to go among the wild birds and animals, to live with them and watch them and find out how, in their dumb way, they live and think and feel. We are simply discovering the individual differences which separate an animal from his kind, which have always existed, but which

we did not see simply because we were too far away, and were perhaps blinded also by our barbaric desire to kill, and especially by our prejudices and our preconceived notion that wild animals of the same kind are all alike.

The biologist has been busy with his microscope, the psychologist with his experimentation, the ornithologist with his gun and egg-case and cabinet of dried skins, the writer of natural history with his easy-chair generalizations, the hunter with his dogs and sport. Meanwhile the lives of the wild birds and animals seem to me to be less understood than in the days when the Indians were their only interpreters.



THE VAGABOND

HE ducks were quacking contentedly enough, in the pond at the foot of the lane, when the vagabond first came among them.

They were a motley collection, all sorts and conditions of ducks; for the farmer who owned them had a fondness for variety. Moreover, he was a hunter, especially fond of shooting the wild ducks in the little ponds and the river-mouth and on the open sea, close at hand. This latter taste gave opportunity to the former, for whenever he wing-tipped a wild duck and his dog brought in the bird uninjured, he would take him home and tame him and then turn him loose with his motley flock. And, curiously enough, the

influence of the domestic birds, with their settled habits and their content with good food and comfortable quarters, generally finished the taming process. Also in the springtime our farmer used to hunt the creeks and lonely ponds where the wild fowl nested, and whenever he found their eggs he would bring them home and hatch them under a tame duck. So that you often saw a group of pure wild birds, which would have been perfectly at home among the wild-rice beds of the Chesapeake or in the unnamed flashets of the lonely Labrador, follow contentedly at the heels of a bird that had never known any other home than a duck-coop, or any other liberty than to waddle down the lane to the horse-pond and to think, perhaps, how big the world was. Then the vagabond came and upset all their steady habits.

He was a fine big drake, a dusky mallard, that darted over the pond one day at sunset, when the ducks were preening themselves and gabbling contentedly. Where he came from nobody knew; but the rush of his

"Set his wings and slanted down among his tame kindred"

powerful wings and the look of utter wildness in his bright eyes spoke of vast distances and the peace of the far Northland, where he had been born and bred in the silent places. As is always the case with tame ducks, the *wish, wish, wish* of the wild wings seemed to rouse some strong, unknown desire that slumbers lightly under the tame habits of the water-fowl. A score of birds threw themselves into the water, calling lustily and lifting their wings. *Hark, ark, ark, ark!* clamored the hen ducks in a mighty chorus, and *Hoke, oke, oke, oke!* came back the drake's husky answer. He circled many times over the excited flock; whirled once completely around the shores to see that no enemy was there; then set his wings and slanted down among his tame kindred. And the farmer, watching from his dooryard, knew that an unexpected and very welcome addition had come to his motley flock.

For three or four days the vagabond stayed with the tame ducks, paying no attention to the cattle that came to drink, but rising with a swift rush, as if flung up by powerful

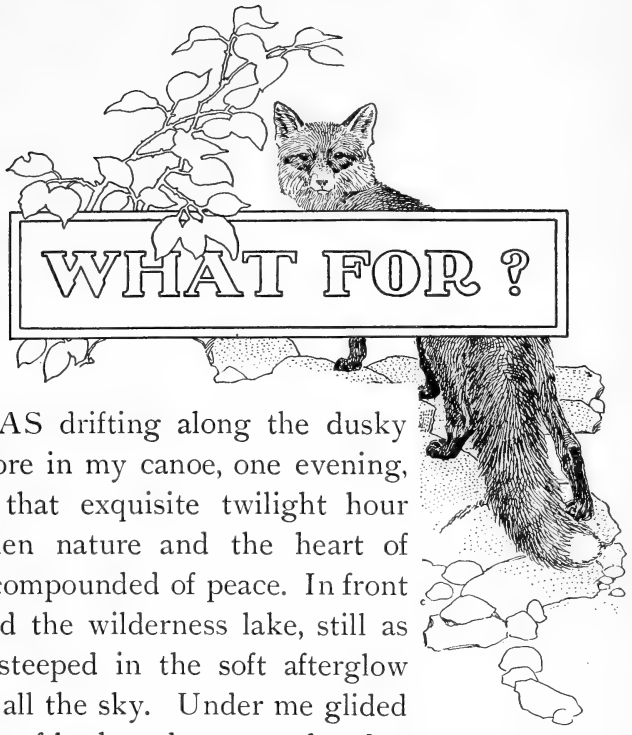
springs, whenever a man appeared on the scene. Sometimes he headed for the river; sometimes for the open sea; but generally he circled widely, high in air, watching keenly until the man went away, when with immense caution he would rejoin his new companions. At the very outset he assumed a kind of leadership over part of the big flock, and it was noticeable that the wildest birds, those in whom the native strain was purest, followed him most willingly. The older birds, and those most influenced by domestic breeding, would follow their own ways, and at night would waddle up the lane to sleep in their accustomed place. But the younger birds, and especially those hatched from the wild eggs, preferred to follow the vagabond. They would cluster about him, always at the farthest and loneliest nooks in the pond; would stretch their wings and cry after him when he flew away; would rush to meet and greet him when he came back; and at night would stay with him in the pond instead of going home to the duck-coop.

One night the farmer noticed him in the pond with a large flock of the tame birds around him, and they were all playing intently together, darting about in circles, threshing their wings powerfully, skittering across the whole width of the pond, gabbling and quacking in nameless excitement. It was precisely like the wild flocks that one sometimes sees gather in the early autumn in the far North,—a dozen different families getting acquainted and apparently working themselves into some sort of shape for the long journey together. Next morning at sunrise the vagabond was gone, and the whole flock with him. Of the forty or more birds that were playing together at twilight, not a solitary duck remained to tell of the influence and advantage of man's protection.

A few of the birds were afterwards found in the river, making a sad attempt at getting their own living. A few more appeared, foot-sore and weary, in the yard of a farmer a mile away, and were shut up with the chickens. Still others were captured or shot ten miles down the coast. The rest never came

back, nor does any man know what became of them. Occasionally, on the Maine coast, I have seen a wild duck showing, by his superior size or shape or coloration, a strain of domestic breeding. So some of the wanderers, let us trust, are still following the vagabond's trail to the silent places.

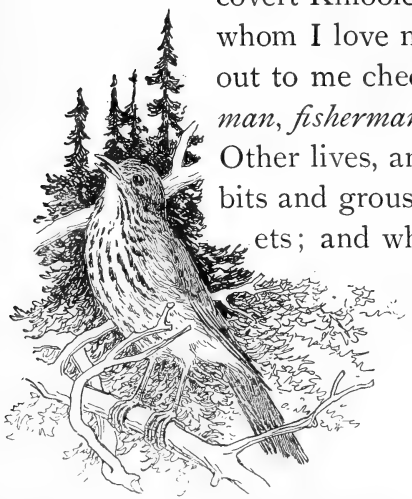

WHAT FOR ?



I WAS drifting along the dusky shore in my canoe, one evening, at that exquisite twilight hour when nature and the heart of man seem all compounded of peace. In front of me stretched the wilderness lake, still as a mirror and steeped in the soft afterglow that illumined all the sky. Under me glided the little canoe of bark and roots and cedar, the work of my Indian's hands, part and parcel of the silent wilderness. The paddle was never raised but kept turning noiselessly under water, sending the light, beautiful craft smoothly along without a sound, without a

ripple. Far behind me in camp I could faintly hear Simmo at work mending our tin baker, — *tink, tink, tink !* He was two miles away, but the sound carried over the perfect silence, and in imagination I saw him bending over his work, silent, absorbed, intent, like the muskrat yonder, opening his supper of fresh-water clams without breaking the fragile shells. *Tink, tink, tink !* The sound was like the last chirp of a sleepy bird, and none of the shy, timid wood folk seemed to pay any attention to it.

On my right rose the wild tangle of the burned lands, green and shadowy, hiding their abundant life. On every rampike and on every dead branch the thrushes were singing wondrously sweet, and in every dusky covert Killooleet, the white-throated sparrow, whom I love more than all other birds, called out to me cheerily, *Good-night, friend fisherman, fisherman, fisherman !* as I drifted past. Other lives, and larger, were here too. Rabbits and grouse swarmed in the dense thickets; and where they are you may be sure



of finding the birds and beasts of prey, which follow them like shadows. Up on the top of the ridge a lynx had her den and her kittens, and I had been watching them that morning before sunrise. Somewhere in the shadows lurked a big bull caribou that came out on the open shore in the morning and the evening twilights, and, though it was not a wolf country, there was at least one big gray timber-wolf which Simmo and I had seen plainly on the shore one night when a buck broke out of the cover and came leaping along the water's edge, so frightened and heedless that he passed between my tent and my canoe without swerving for either in his wild rush. It was largely in the hope of meeting some of these shy prowlers that I had come out alone in the still twilight hour, when the animals are least afraid and when a man's heart loses all desire to harm any living creature.

As I drifted silently along a faint rustle of leaves caught my ear, and I stopped instantly to become part of the light canoe. There was no breeze stirring and such a sound,

however faint, could come only from the passing of life through the coverts. There it was again! Not a sound this time but a movement of the leaves, and just in front of me a big red fox glided out of the underbrush upon the open shore.

I had pursed my lips to squeak like a mouse, and so to bring him nearer, when he stopped and turned his head back to the woods, standing with one forefoot raised, listening intently. Something was evidently following him, and I forbore to squeak in order to find out what it was, hoping in my heart for another glimpse of my big wolf, who has more cunning than any fox and who hunts and kills and eats Eleemos whenever he crosses the wolf's trail.

A full moment Eleemos stood listening, wrinkling his nose back at the woods in order to catch any message from the trail. Then he turned and trotted swiftly up the shore, keeping close to the water's edge.

I had started to follow him when he turned to listen, and thinking that he might possibly have heard the ripple under the bow of

"Standing with one forefoot raised,
listening intently"

my canoe, I ceased all motion and sat watching him. But he had not heard me. His whole attention seemed concentrated upon the woods and upon his own back trail, and after a moment he trotted on again. For a space of forty or fifty yards he kept straight on. Then he turned and came back with immense caution, apparently stepping in his own tracks, and stopping often to sniff and listen.

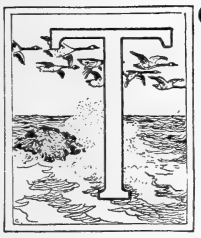
Half-way back to where he had emerged from the woods Eleemos stopped for the last time, nose, ears, and eyes questioning the silent hillside. Like a flash he crouched and leaped sidewise, landing in the shallow water. There he trotted swiftly along towards me, in the opposite direction to that which he had first taken, lifting his pads smoothly, making no splash or commotion, but showing plainly enough by his action how a fox hates to wet his dainty feet, — probably because he knows that when wet they leave more scent behind them. So he passed swiftly between me and the shore, keeping to the shallow water till he disappeared

around the nearest point, leaving the lake all hushed and motionless as before.

I whirled the canoe and followed silently; but when I reached the point he had vanished, going back, probably, to the same woods whence he had come. I returned to the spot where I had first seen him and watched there expectantly, hour after hour, till long after darkness had fallen and shadow and substance were merged along the shore. Once the leaves rustled stealthily, and once Killooleet, disturbed in his sleep, trilled out his good-night song. That was all I saw or heard as I drifted homeward through the vast silence of the wilderness night to where Simmo's camp-fire flashed out of the dark woods its cheery invitation.


Wild Goose
Ways

WILD GOOSE WAYS



O understand a wild goose two things are necessary, luck and a good disposition; luck to find him at home, and a disposition to lay aside your gun and your prejudices and to see with an open mind. If happily these two pleasant things have ever fallen to your lot, you no longer call a person a goose unless you mean to pay him a compliment, and you no longer speak of a wild-goose chase as the symbol of a useless and hopeless quest; for among all the birds there

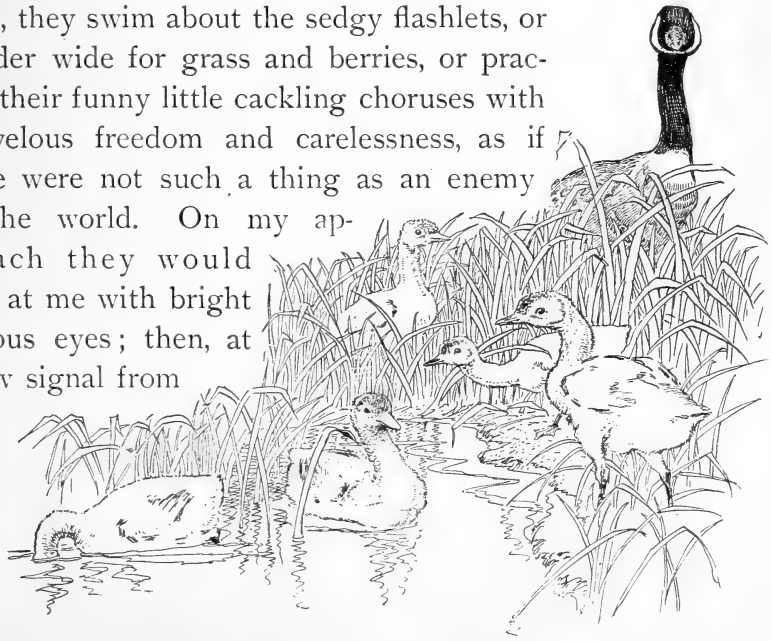
is none that so readily responds to your advances, and none that so abundantly repays you for your time and trouble. Indeed, for the man who has followed Waptonk only with a gun to kill him, or only with his longing eyes as the high-flying wedge harrows the blue heavens and the wild trumpet clangor comes crackling down in the spring twilight, there are chiefly surprises in store when he gets really acquainted with this wild wanderer.

It was largely this element of surprise that led me, when luck came to me on the desolate barrens of the far North, to forsake the salmon rivers which I had come to fish, and the caribou which I had come to understand, and to hide and watch by the lonely little ponds, or flashets, where Waptonk and his mate were training their fuzzy little ones.

I have written elsewhere of my first meeting with Waptonk, the big gander, in the interior of Newfoundland; of his apparent lack of fear, so different from what I expected; of his brave defense of his mate, and of his marvelous care and sagacity in watching

over the young goslings. To understand him better I began at the beginning, that is, with the young birds as soon as possible after they had chipped the shell.

Here again my first impression was one of singular tameness and fearlessness on the part of the young geese, which, a few months later when they first cross the domains of men, our hunters find wild and wary beyond measure. That this latter wariness is due directly to the old birds, which have learned the danger and which lead the young on their first southern migration, is beyond a question. Here on the lonely barrens, where the foot of man almost never rests, they swim about the sedgy flashlets, or wander wide for grass and berries, or practice their funny little cackling choruses with marvelous freedom and carelessness, as if there were not such a thing as an enemy in the world. On my approach they would look at me with bright curious eyes; then, at a low signal from

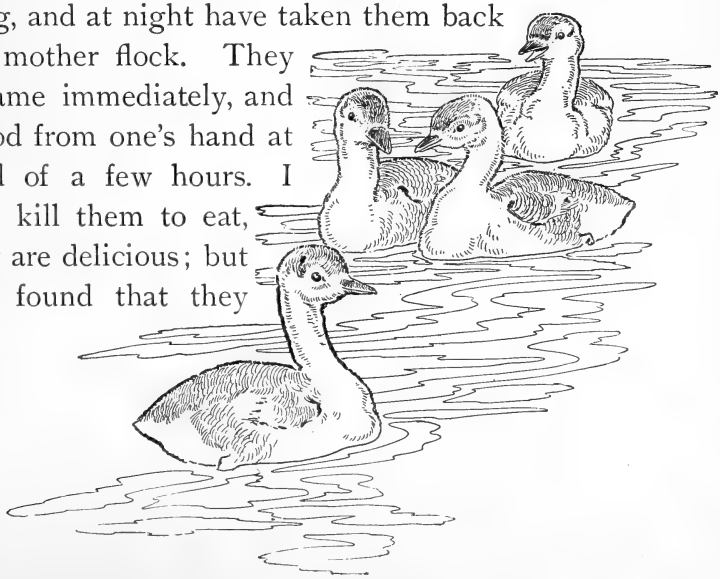


the mother bird, they would go quickly ashore and hide, while Waptonk would circle about on patrol, or station himself squarely across my path if I approached too near. And when, upon rare occasions, for I admired them too much to trouble them, I disregarded the old birds and brushed them aside and went to the little ones, they suffered me to pick them up without resistance, seeming to like their petting, and would share readily the lunch of black bread which I offered them.

Many years ago I came to the conclusion, from watching young cubs and nestlings, that there is very little real fear born in a wild animal. Instead of being instinctive, fear seems to be largely the result of immediate prenatal influences, and of the mother's example and influence as she hovers about her little ones. She knows the danger, and they do not; and it is largely from her alarms that they learn what fear is. Watching these young geese, so friendly and unsuspicious on their own lonely heath, so wild and marvelously intelligent in avoiding all

human devices on their southern migrations, one could hardly escape the opinion that fear is not among the things that are hatched out of an egg. And this is an opinion which, I understand, Professor Hodge is also slowly forming as the result of his experience in raising ruffed grouse for the first time in captivity.

My friend, Dr. Morris, who has camped and fished much in Labrador, writes me that his own experience corresponds to my own in regard to Waptonk's natural fearlessness and even friendliness to man. "Often," he writes, "I have canoed all day where I would have wild geese almost constantly under observation. I have often taken the goslings into my canoe for company in the morning, and at night have taken them back to the mother flock. They grow tame immediately, and take food from one's hand at the end of a few hours. I used to kill them to eat, for they are delicious; but after I found that they

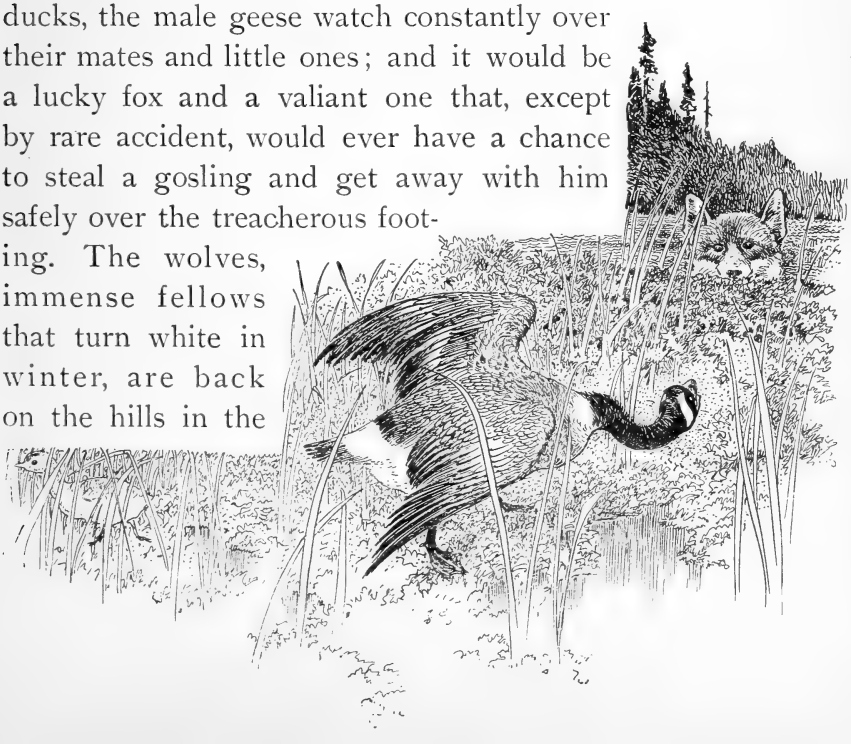


trusted me and would eat from my hand, I could not kill another one, nor allow my Indians to do it."

In the little fishing village of Howe Harbor, on the east coast, I used to watch a flock of six wild goslings that had just been caught in a neighboring pond. The day after they arrived they were running free about the yard, disregarding men and the wolfish huskie dogs alike, and would feed eagerly from the children's hands. Whatever fear of man they possess, therefore, seems to develop late, and seems to be the direct result of the parents' teaching or influence during the migration, rather than of any inherited instinct.

As for their fear of other animals, I was unable from my own observation to form a positive opinion. In the lonely country where I first discovered Waptonk there were some wolves and bears; lynxes were numerous, and foxes of three or four varieties were more plentiful than I have ever found them elsewhere. But Mooween the bear would never trust himself on the soft, dangerous

footing about the ponds where Waptonk is at home; the lynx hates the water that lies just beneath the moss everywhere, and finds plenty of hares and rabbits in his own haunts under the hills. Even the fox would be at a disadvantage in the moist, clinging *sphagnum* into which your foot sinks almost to the knee as you walk; and aside from this disadvantage, I doubt if any fox could make any headway against an enraged wild gander, who can deal hard blows with his powerful wings, and who fights with a magnificent courage that fills you with admiration. Unlike the ducks, the male geese watch constantly over their mates and little ones; and it would be a lucky fox and a valiant one that, except by rare accident, would ever have a chance to steal a gosling and get away with him safely over the treacherous footing. The wolves, immense fellows that turn white in winter, are back on the hills in the

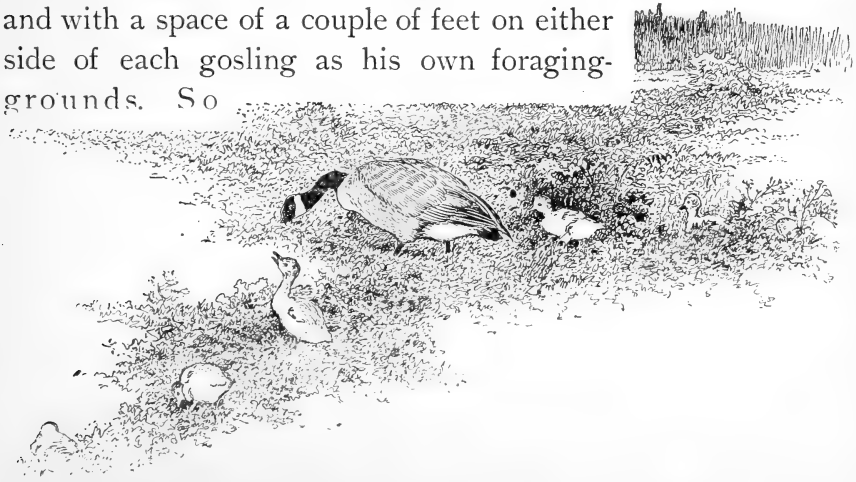


timber, where they feed chiefly on small game and occasionally on the numerous caribou. So it would seem that, even among wild animals, the life of the young goose is singularly free from the fear which we have attributed to the birds while watching their winter life, when the hand of every man and boy is against them.

The conduct of the goslings when disturbed tells the same wholesome story. On the first warning from the old birds they go quietly ashore and hide, trusting to the wet moss and the bottomless mud about their hiding-place to shield them from any large enemy, and confident in their parents' courage and strength to save them from lesser prowlers. Even after they can fly well the young birds seldom take to water, except it be the open ocean or a great lake, but will light in the nearest grass or underbrush and hide instantly. Watching the young birds' flight, you may go straight to the spot where they alight and there find them, if your eyes are keen enough; for they are hard to find even when under your very feet. They hide

with all the cunning of a black duck, and generally the only way to detect them is by their eyes, shining steadily like jewels among the roots and grasses. And when you uncover them at last they lose all fear, like certain very young fawns, in a bright curiosity to know all about the strange animal that has come gently to pet and feed them.

The rarest experience of all was to crawl near and watch the flock when they were entirely unconscious of your presence. In the morning you would see them start out across the barrens to feed, and would notice the beginning of that wedge formation with which they make all their long migrations. The mother would walk at the head, and strung out on either side of her, like a broad arrow-head, would come the young birds, walking straight ahead in parallel courses, and with a space of a couple of feet on either side of each gosling as his own foraging-grounds. So



they would cover a broad strip of the barrens, moving forward in a straight line and finding every tender bit of grass and every cluster of berries in their course. But whenever the mother or one of the goslings came upon tender grass, or berries in abundance, or a bed of the delicious bake-apples, the whole wedge would waver and break, and all you would see would be a hopping, hurrying mass of fuzzy bodies, cheeping, whistling, scurrying about lest they should miss the best morsels, and *konk-konking* their satisfaction as they gobbled down the rich abundance. Then the wedge would slowly form again, and they would start off in eager search of another find.

It was very noticeable that, in leaving the little pond and crossing ground that had already been gleaned, or wherever there was any alarm or any treacherous ground to be crossed, the goslings made no attempt at wedge formation, but clustered together and followed carefully the steps of the mother bird, or else stood perfectly still until she called them on. The wedge seemed to be

used to cover thoroughly a new piece of ground, where each might have his own territory, and where every young bird could have plain sight of the leader as they moved onward. Possibly, also, there was a definite training here for the wedge flight, to which all geese must sooner or later be accustomed.

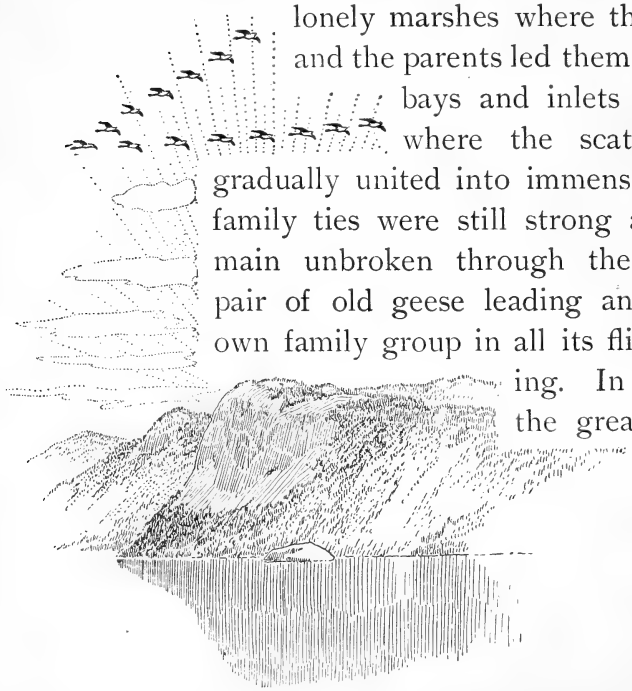
Wherever the geese went, whether questing for berries, or preening their feathers, or gathering with a multitude of their fellows on the open ocean, they were forever gabbling. Only the immediate presence of danger kept them for a moment silent; and I found myself often wondering whether the astonishing gamut of goose sounds has any fixed and definite meaning. It is not that certain calls express certain ideas, — beyond a few elemental emotions of food, danger, rage, affection, and the inarticulate cries which express them, I have not found that kind of speech among the wood folk, — but rather that the tone itself expresses everything by its changing quality. That geese talk to each other in this way is beyond question.

Aside from this question of communication, the voice of the wild goose, ranging from the sleepy twilight cheepings of affection for his little ones to the brazen roar, like the clang of a war gong, with which he voices his defiance on land and shouts aloud to the spring from the high heavens, is perhaps the most marvelous in all nature. Though the voice have no musical quality, yet for barbaric martial clangor it has no equal; and if Rome were, indeed, saved by its geese, sleeping on the wall and naturally detecting the approach of danger, I can fancy that every Roman soldier, when he heard the wild midnight alarm, jumped for his weapons as if a bugle had called him. Here on the lonely barren I could at times hardly locate the gentle sounds, though half a dozen geese were gabbling within twenty yards of my hiding; while in the spring the same flock, passing overhead at an enormous altitude, would rouse every lagging goose and stir the heart of every man within five miles of its thrilling *jubilate*.

How Nature can put so much power into so small a compass is one of the mysteries. Nothing of man's invention, and perhaps nothing else in the throat of an animal, can begin to equal the carrying and penetrating power of the wild-goose *honk*. I have often tried to estimate the distance at which it can be plainly heard; but all such estimates are largely guesswork. Once, when I heard a flock of geese on the open ocean, their distance, as estimated by a shoal and buoy, was a full three miles. Another time I had a chance to compare them with a bull moose, whose voice is a grunting roar that startles the woods like a gunshot. I was calling from a lake one night, when a bull moose answered very faintly from the mountain behind me. It was a perfectly still night, with moist air in which sounds carry perfectly, and as I called I could trace the huge brute's course as he came down the mountain, the roars growing heavier and heavier till with a terrific crash he broke out on the open shore. From three to five miles was the estimated

distance at which I first heard him, though he had probably come from farther away, his keen ears having heard the rolling bellow of my birch-bark trumpet. A few days later a flock of wild geese passed over the same lake, flying very high on their southern migration; and I heard plainly the leader's deep *honk* and the flock's cackling answer after they had passed over and beyond the same mountain, at a distance much greater than that from which I had first heard the big bull's answer.

When the young birds were well grown they deserted the little flashets and the lonely marshes where they were born, and the parents led them to the shallow bays and inlets of the ocean, where the scattered families gradually united into immense flocks. The family ties were still strong and would remain unbroken through the winter, each pair of old geese leading and guiding its own family group in all its flights and feeding. In the morning the great flock would



scatter widely, the families going away separately, some to explore the shallows of Pistolet Bay, others flying overland to the ponds and barrens where they were bred; but in the afternoon the scattered flocks would return and reunite, playing and honking together in obedience to their social instinct, which is very strong among the geese, as among the caribou of the same great barrens. Watching them thus together, day after day, it occurred to me suddenly that this social impulse or instinct would account for their migration and for many other things which we have attributed to other causes.

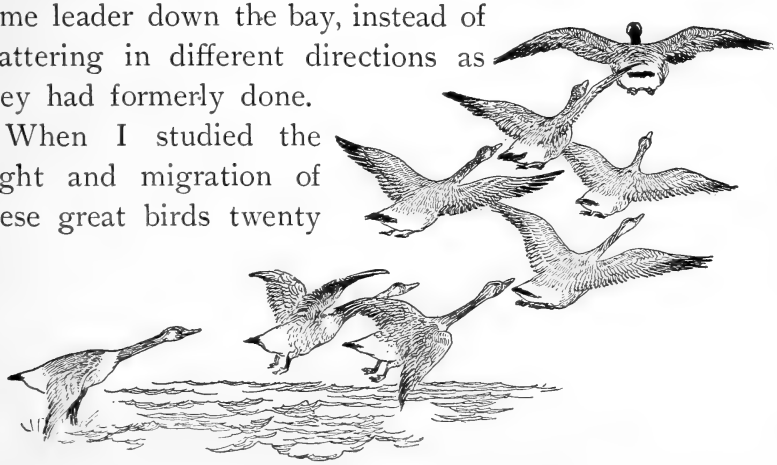
It must be remembered that, of these great flocks, at least four fifths of the birds were younglings which had never been away from the little ponds where they were born, and which knew nothing whatever of the world or of the great southern flight that awaited them; while the other fifth were wise old birds that had made the journey, some once, some ten or twenty times. These old birds, therefore, might reasonably be expected to

have some thought for the change that must speedily take place in the life of the goslings over which they had watched so carefully; and it was but another small step to see in their methods of play and flight a direct preparation for what was to follow. The casual observer, stumbling upon one of these great flocks and seeing them straggle off in alarm, and then never seeing them again nor thinking about them, might thoughtlessly attribute everything in their movement to blind chance and instinct; but one who had watched over them for weeks, and who remembered the marvelous intelligence and teachableness for which the wild goose is noted, was forced to see in all their movements the glimmerings, at least, of an intelligent purpose, the extent of which was probably even greater than he supposed.

First, in the matter of their play, I would lie for hours behind a screen of evergreen, watching a great flock through my glasses and noting every movement. At first the families would hold apart, like young caribou which are brought for the first time out

of the woodsy solitude where they are born to the open barrens where hundreds of their kind are congregating. Gradually they would mingle, raising their wings in the sea-fowls' salutation, honking and playing together, till a score of families had united in a single loose flock. If at the outer edges a sharp *ha-unk!* of alarm was raised, only the nearest geese, and sometimes apparently only the family of the watchman, would pay attention to it. If the alarm were genuine, the flock scattered raggedly, the families rising at different times and each pair of parent birds leading away their own goslings. Gradually all that was changed; the first alarm-note was heeded by every goose, no matter who uttered it; the flight became regular, till at the end of the season the flock would rise almost as one bird and follow the same leader down the bay, instead of scattering in different directions as they had formerly done.

When I studied the flight and migration of these great birds twenty



problems arose, some of which allowed a fairly reasonable guess, but most of which are still unanswered. First, how do the individual geese hold their course in that wedge formation for which the Canada goose is famous, though some of his cousins, like the brant, seem to know nothing about it? Does each goose fly straight ahead, in a course more or less to one side and behind but always parallel to the leader; or do the wings of the wedge converge continually towards the moving head so that every goose, except the one at the point of the wedge, flies in a continuous curve towards his leader and so towards his objective point? The question seems a simple one, yet it is astonishingly difficult of certain solution, and a good many things in Waptonk's life depend on the answer.

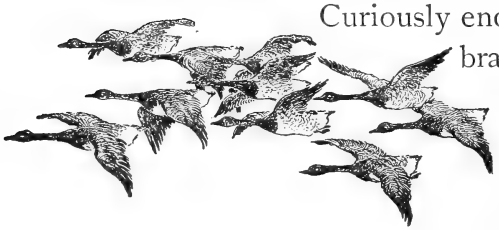
It is often held by hunters that the leader goes ahead not only to show the way but also to "break the air" in the flock's passage. Their evidence seems to show that the leader often gets weary of the swift rush of the wind against him and another bird takes his place

at the head of the wedge, while the youngest or weakest birds fall to the rear of the wings, where the resistance of the air is least and where flying is therefore easiest. And some instances are recorded in the books of flocks of wild geese halting in air to change leaders and then moving on again; though it must be said fairly that such incidents are not recorded as the results of personal observation, but seem to be all copied from some common and unknown source. If these be true, however, they indicate the answer to our question. The birds must all fly at their leader, not straight ahead in parallel courses; otherwise it would be no easier at the end of the wings than at the head of the wedge. Indeed it would probably be harder, for aside from the resistance of the wind, it is less tiring to go at the head than at the tail of a procession.

Personally, after much watching with this question in mind while the old birds were training their young to the wedge flight, and again in the fields when they passed over

my head, I can give no sure answer to the question; but I have this strong impression, that the individual geese in the wedge all fly straight ahead in parallel courses, instead of flying at the goose immediately in front; and so the question of breaking the way has nothing whatever to do with their flight or relative position.

Aside from this personal impression in watching them, certain other things point to the same conclusion. First, the leader of the wedge is always an old bird that has made the migration before and has learned the way from his elders. A young goose would never be found at the head of the wedge, simply because he would be hopelessly lost and know not which way to go. Geese shape their course by mountains and headlands, not by instinct, flying always in a straight course over land and water, and flying very high so as always to keep a vast stretch of country under their eyes and so hold their course with absolute precision.



Curiously enough their cousins, the brant, here in the east at

least, have never learned this trick. They never venture far overland, but always fly low over the water and follow all the windings of the coast in journeying south or north. So they often fly twice as far as Waptonk in going to the same place.

So long as the weather is clear, Waptonk knows precisely where to go, for there before him are the same headlands that he noticed on his last journey. His memory for places, like that of most wild creatures, and like the astonishing memory of mules, is marvelous beyond our power to comprehend. If the weather be foggy so that he cannot see far, or if in journeying at night the bright lights of a town dazzle his eyes, Waptonk is instantly thrown off his balance. The wedge breaks its perfect lines and crowds into a confused mass, honking its wild uncertainty. And there they stay, circling aimlessly, till the old leader catches sight of some familiar landmark and straightens out his course, or else leads the flock to the nearest water and halts them there till he can see just where he is going.

If direction were a matter of instinct with the goose, he could, of course, journey just as well in foggy as in clear weather. As a matter of fact, instinct has very little to do with his finding his way south or north. That is almost entirely a matter of training and remembrance.

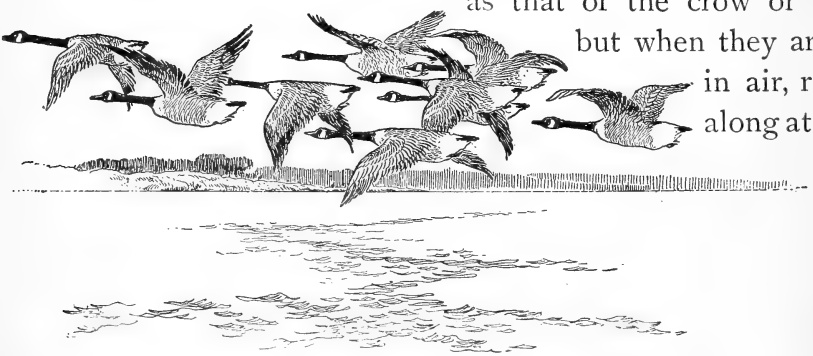
All this apparent digression bears directly upon the problem we were trying to solve. It must be granted, I think, that the young birds are being led southward by an unknown way, and that one of the objects is to show the course, so that the young will remember it and be themselves able to follow it another season. Certainly the results seem to justify this supposition. Now if the geese flew one behind the other in the wedge, only two of them could see the leader, and the landscape of each of the others would be confined to the tail of the goose immediately in front of him and to whatever he might see by bending his head downward. But it is the landscape in front, with its strongly marked headlands, which is important; and judging by his flight to decoys, a

goose sees very little of what is under his wings. By flying in wedge formation and in parallel courses, every goose in the flock can see his leader perfectly and at the same time see all the landscape in front, by which the leader is shaping his course. And the continuous gabble of the migrating flock, the leader's *honk*, and the young birds' quick answer, give the impression that he is calling attention to certain things and that they are following his directions consciously and perfectly.

As for weariness and changing of places, the weakest birds will naturally lag behind; but as the flock is either a single family or two or three united (and probably related) families under a single leader, it is more than probable that the young birds, which have never before made a long flight, will grow weary long before the magnificent old gander that tips the arrow-point, and it is for the young birds invariably that stops are made by the way. The rush of air must be tremendous in their high, swift flight; but the body of each goose is itself a fine wedge

to split the air perfectly, and there is probably very little difference in air resistance whether one goes at the head or at the tail of the procession.

As all the geese fly at the same level, it would seem inevitable that a strong back current of air should be created on either side of the onrushing wedge, and this swift current seems to have the effect of tiring one wing more than the other; since every goose on one leg of the wedge would feel the current chiefly on his right wing, while those on the other side would feel it as strongly on the left. If you watch a flock high in air for a moment, you notice first that the flight is altogether different from that of the same birds when moving from one feeding-ground to another. In the latter case, especially when geese fly low over the water, the flight consists of a heavy flapping of the whole wing, almost as slow and heavy as that of the crow or heron; but when they are high in air, rushing along at ninety



miles an hour, every wing is straight out from the body, and only the tip seems to quiver rapidly. Moreover, rapid as is this motion, all the tips seem to quiver in unison, as if keeping time to some mighty harmony. Now, if you watch sharply, you will see a goose slip from his place on the right side of the wedge, whisk under the flock, and take his place on the left. Presently another and another follow him, till one leg of the wedge is much longer than the other. Then from the left other geese slip over to the right, till the wedge is perfect again. And I know of no explanation for these swift changes in the orderly flock, unless it be that the young geese seek to take the swift back current of air first on one wing, then on the other.

As for changing of leaders on the way, that is puzzling, if true. Personally, I have never seen it, though I have watched wild geese at rest and in flight for long hours at a stretch; and though I have followed hundreds of flocks with my eyes till they vanished in the blue, I have never seen any

change of front, though young birds often waver in the line and tired or wounded ones fall slowly to the rear. If the leader of a flock is killed at the head of his wedge, the geese will often circle in confusion till a new leader is chosen, or takes the place by his own strong impulse; but otherwise I have not seen any variation, nor do I know of an authentic instance when wild geese changed their leaders while in undisturbed flight. It may be true, however, for all that, and it remains for one who has seen it to suggest an explanation of the habit.

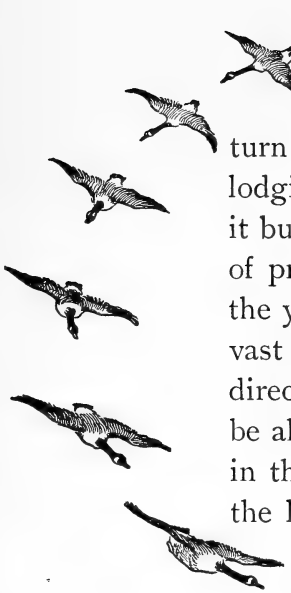
One thing seems certain about the wedge flight: it does not come easily to the eager young birds, and the parents train them diligently till it is perfected. Probably there is some hereditary impulse in this direction, which showed itself in the same formation when they were feeding on the lonely barren; but the impulse, apart from the old birds' training, would amount to very little, as you can see by watching your domestic geese. When the goslings began to use their wings over the barrens and flashets they flew at

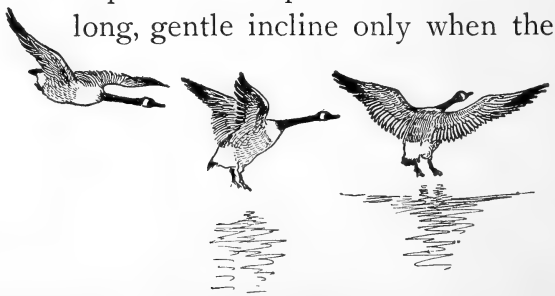
first singly, then in confused groups, and last of all in wedge formation. While one of the old birds led the way the other would circle over the flock or fly close beside it, apparently honking encouragement. Weeks later, on the sea, the flight was not perfected, though practiced constantly; and one often sees a late-hatched flock making its belated way southward, in which the lines of the wedge waver constantly, as if the young birds were not yet drilled to the perfect flight.

In the flight of the old birds there were many other things to fill one with surprise and wonder; for flying seems to be an art and a delight to the wild goose, as it is to the eagle, and the young birds learn it slowly. First, there was the wonderful spiral descent from the heights, one of the rarest and most impressive sights in animate nature, which I have described elsewhere. A great wedge of birds would come winging high over the lake, talking volubly to each other, as geese do in their journeyings over strange territory. Suddenly above the clamor

would sound a peremptory *honk*. All the talking would cease instantly; the wedge would break into two parts, the sides swing together in a single long line, and down they would come, one after another, as if gliding down an invisible winding staircase, in perfect order and in perfect silence.

I have learned since, in watching geese in many places, that this flight is never used when the birds go out to feed or when they swing to the decoys, but only when they return well fed and contented to their night's lodging-place. In the far North, where I saw it but a few rare times, it seems to be a kind of practice drill, with the object of enabling the young birds to come down safely from a vast height to a little wooded pond, where a direct descent in a long slanting line would be almost impossible on account of the trees in the way. Like the wild geese, Hukweem the loon almost invariably comes down to a little pond in a spiral, and uses the long, gentle incline only when the





waters are wide enough to enable him to come down in this way without hitting the trees on the shore. Since the Canada geese are mostly raised in the open barren lands, where there are only a few stunted trees near the nesting-places, and where such a flight is entirely unnecessary, it is at least possible that the old birds train the young to this flight to prepare them for the halting-places on their southern migration.

Scarcely less impressive than the wonderful spiral of the Canada goose, when he winds slowly down the invisible staircase of the winds, is another descent, — a slow, majestic settling downward in perfect column, like the fall of a feather in its airy lightness. At sight of the pond in which they are to rest, the leader honks sharply and the whole flock swings into line behind him. Then with every wing set at the same angle the column slants downward slowly, gently, silently, bending to their rest with indescribable grace. When the drooping feet touch the water the stiffened muscles relax; the broad wings sweep them gently over the surface for an

instant, till all momentum is stilled; and then, with a touch like a kiss, the broad gray breasts settle into the blue waters. An instant later they have swung into a close group, watching intently to see that the flight is ended and the waters safe; then they turn away, honking gladly, to their bathing and preening.

Much more stirring is the descent of another and smaller goose, the black brant, in which wild hilarity seems to break loose all at once in the solemn flock. On approaching a pond the leader, instead of lowering his flight, will often call them up to an enormous height, where they circle silently for a moment over the water, as if measuring the plunge. Again the sharp signal of the leader, and pandemonium breaks suddenly loose, just as a lot of orderly boys break and tumble over the school-house steps at recess time. Down they come, no orderly, majestic descent this time, but a madcap rout that makes you catch breath in astonishment. Whirling, diving, plunging, down they come, somersaulting like a flock of tumbler pigeons

and whooping to break their throats. The glorious rush and tumble makes you want to join it, to jump up and fling away your hat and just yell. Near the water, and just before you think the geese will certainly break their necks, the scene suddenly changes. The great wings spread and set themselves stiffly; the clamor ceases; the wild birds circle into orderly line; and then, throwing wings and breasts against the air, they stop flight in an instant and drop gracefully, silently, into the water.

Farther north, in the same cold waters where Waptonk gathers with his kind, but far away from his tumbling cousins, one may watch the gannet's flight, which is almost as remarkable in its wild picturesqueness. Winging in from their long ocean voyaging, a flock of the great birds will rush together over the spot where one of their scouts has located a school of herring near the surface. At first they plunge swiftly, every bird for himself, but as the numbers increase to hundreds the whole flock rises and circles swiftly over the school.

No falling now in a wild mass to smother the fish or frighten them away. Instead, they whirl in a great white cloud over the sea, the outer birds moving more swiftly and seeming gradually to be drawn in towards the center, like a whirlwind of great snowflakes. From the center the birds plunge downward in a single slender column, every bird striking the water and getting away with his fish just in time to escape the falling bird that comes rushing after him. Then he rejoins the whirling circle and seems to wait his turn to be drawn into the center and plunge again.

But I must not be drawn away into the orderly flight of other birds, else I must speak of the crane and plover and eagle, and of Sir Humphry Davy's wonder, on the crags of Ben Nevis, at seeing a pair of the royal birds plainly teaching their eaglets the wonderful spiral of Waptonk, only they glided up the winding staircase to the blue heavens instead of downward to the blue water.

One thing forced itself gradually upon my attention as I watched these interesting birds

"Then to the ocean and
back again"

in their own domain, and that is, that the flight of the young geese is directed continually, and perhaps consciously, by the old birds to future needs of which the young know absolutely nothing. From the moment they begin to use their wings, first in short scrambling flights, then to new ponds and feeding-grounds which the old gander has discovered, then to the ocean and back again, and then the rising against the wind and the spiral descent and the disciplined wedge flight with his fellows, — in all these things the gosling was being prepared for the great journey that was speedily to follow.

The next question, a great and open one, is the question of instinct and migration. That Waptonk should migrate southward in the fall is simple enough, being a case of necessity; but why he should leave a land of plenty and quiet in the South, in the days when there were no men to bother him, and seek the cold bare hospitality of the North to rear his young, is still the unanswered question. At present it is simply a case of

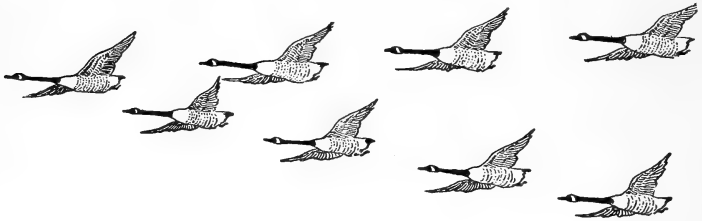
habit, repeated and strengthened year after year; but how the habit first began, and gained such increasing hold upon them, is one of the mysteries. Whether the goslings, left entirely to themselves, would ever migrate, is extremely doubtful. Here and there, in the scattered fishing-villages on the wild coasts, I would find a flock of the birds that had been hatched under a domestic fowl from the wild eggs, or that had been caught young and brought alive to the village. So far as I could discover from my own observation and from questioning their owners, these pure wild birds showed no instinct whatever to migrate at any season.

Occasionally, indeed, they would roam away and try to make their way back over the hills and barrens to the flashets where they were born. If a passing flock called to them overhead, whether the flock were going south or north, or simply out to the shoals to feed, the young birds, like domestic geese, would call back and stretch their wings to follow. But aside from this purely social

excitement I saw no evidence, and found none, though I hunted diligently for it, to show that the young goose has any inborn tendency to drive him either south or north.

The social impulse, therefore, — the tendency under excitement which draws a creature to his own kind, — may altogether account for Waptonk's migration, and perhaps for that of all other young birds. A thrush in a cage grows uneasy and excited at the call of a number of his free fellows at any season. An old horse shut up in a stable-yard kicks up his dull heels and gallops stiffly along the wall when a troop of cavalry goes jingling along the road before him. A man standing at the window feels stirring within him the impulse, which his child obeys hilariously, to go down and join a moving procession. Beast calls to beast, and bird to bird, and man to man, the free to the slave, to come out and be free with his fellows. So the question arises whether the simple social instinct be not enough to account for the whole phenomenon of migration. That, of

course, does not consider the origin of the habit, which may be sought for in geological changes on the earth's surface; but it simplifies enormously our thought of the flocks that call to us from the high heavens every fall and springtime. The old birds are obeying a lifelong habit, copied, as most habits are, from their elders. The young birds are simply going where the others go, and following their leaders as they were trained to do.




QUEER
HUNTING

QUEER HUNTING

I WAS out for a good swim in the big lake one day when, as I ranged past a point, I glanced shoreward and saw three deer — a doe and two fawns — feeding peacefully in a sheltered cove. Here was something much better than swimming. I had approached deer before in many ways, by day and night, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a canoe, sometimes under shadow of the jack-light, sometimes from a tree over a salt-lick, but never as a frog in my own primitive element. So in a sudden spirit of curiosity I determined to find out

how they would regard me or any other animal when they knew not what it was.

I had approached within perhaps a hundred yards, swimming low in the water and silently, when some slight motion caught the doe's eye and she looked up and saw me. As she threw up her head I stopped and remained still as possible, just fanning the water with my hands to keep my head afloat, while the doe stood as if carved from marble, watching the strange thing intently.

When the deer went to feeding again, apparently satisfied that I was nothing of any account, I rolled over on my back and pushed steadily shoreward till more than half the distance was covered, when I rolled back again, and there stood the doe and her fawns, all three with raised heads and ears set forward, plainly asking a hundred questions about the queer frog that they had never seen before. I sounded at once; found that the water was still ten or twelve feet deep; remained out of sight as long as possible; then glided up to the surface again. The

"All three with raised heads and ears set forward,
plainly asking a hundred questions"

deer were now quietly feeding; only, as if not entirely sure of themselves, they were moving along the shore, all three with their backs toward me. I followed rapidly, turning closer to the shore till my feet swept bottom. Then, sitting in the water with only my head out and my hair dripping down over my face, I splashed to attract their attention. All three whirled at the sound, and again pointed their ears and noses at me, asking plainly who I was.

One fawn, a bright, beautiful little creature, came a few steps in my direction, till he stood within twenty yards and I could see his sides swell as he breathed. A fragment of a lily leaf dropped by his mother caught his attention and he picked it up, chewed it a moment with quick, nervous little bites, then, as some slight motion on my part caught his eye, he stood with the leaf hanging from his mouth and again forgot everything but his intense curiosity. The other fawn moved nearer to his mother till he stood close by her side, and lifted his head quickly to nudge her twice, as if to ask, "What is it,

mother? what is it?" and then made trumpets of his ears and an exclamation-point of his eyes and nose to find out for himself the answer to his question.

The doe came a step forward, stamped the earth with her forefoot — which is a trick that all deer have, to make you move and show what you are — and instantly the little fawn nearest me did the same thing. Nearer and nearer the doe came, till she stood beside the first fawn, when she glided between him and me, as if to shield him from any danger. Not once, as she came on, did she take her eyes an instant from my face, and all the while her ears were set to catch the slightest sound. Then, standing with feet braced ready to jump, she stretched herself upward, seeming to grow a

full foot in height before my eyes. Slowly she shrank back again to her normal size, hesitated, advanced a step, turned for an instant to look at the second fawn, to be sure where he was, and set her nose and ears again in my direction.

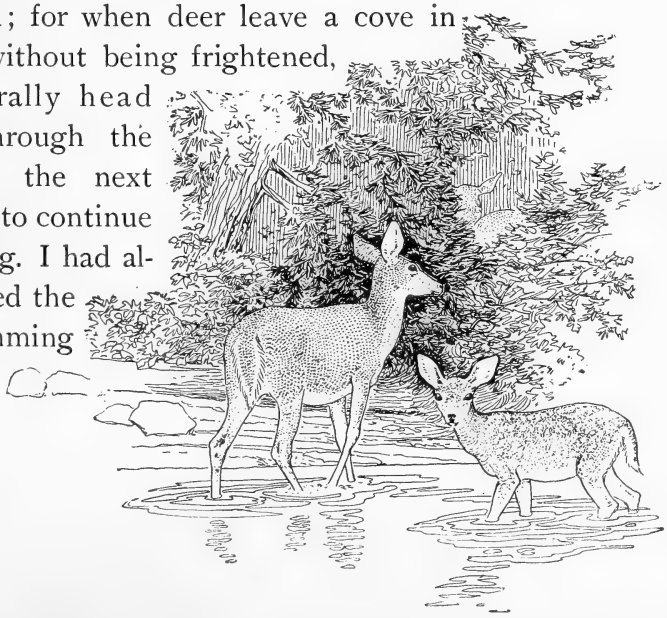
She was now standing in the water up to her knees, within a few yards of the queer thing that she could neither hear nor smell, and that she had certainly never seen before. I think she would have come nearer, for there was hardly any fear manifest, only intense curiosity; but the first fawn, unwilling to be hidden while there was anything to see, came out from behind her and pushed to the front, stopping occasionally to strike the water sharply with his forefoot, while the mother twice swung her head against him, as if to push him back. His boldness evidently alarmed her, for she turned slowly, her body tense as a coiled spring, and waded out stiffly, pausing between her slow steps to listen to what might happen behind her. The fawn stood as she had left him, unmindful of her example, and to reassure him

I sank out of sight and lay on the bottom, where I heard plainly the rapid tread of his feet in the water as he followed his mother, now that there was nothing more to see.

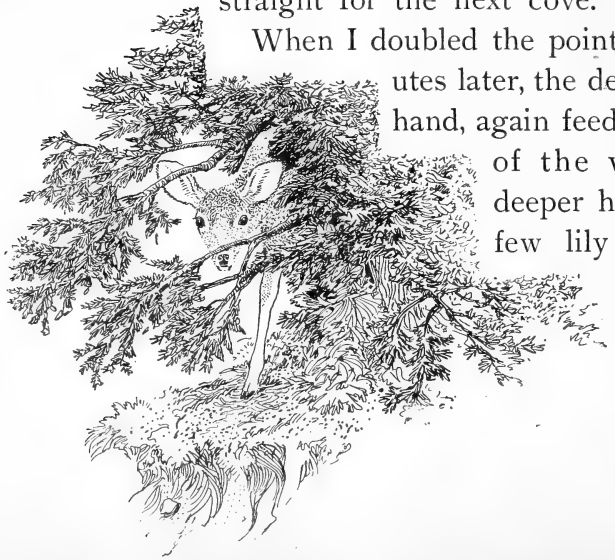
When I came up again all the deer were standing close together, looking back at the spot where the queer frog had disappeared, and I began to play on their curiosity to make them forget their fears. Sinking back till my face was awash, I filled my mouth with water and spurted it up into the air two or three times, and lay down on the bottom again. That was altogether too much for their curiosity, for as my eyes came above the surface once more all three were coming in my direction with short, nervous steps, each one fidgeting and turning his head occasionally to see where the others were and what they were doing. My sudden appearance stopped their advance, and when — for I was half choked — I blew some water out of my nose, the sudden sound startled the tense mother and she whirled aside. This time there was less hesitation. She did not

yet know what the thing was; but she evidently did know that one of her little fawns was altogether too naturally inquisitive, and that he was not yet big enough to take care of himself in a world of danger. So she walked straight for the woods, stopping only once to look back at me doubtfully. One fawn went ahead of her; the other stayed where he was, watching me with bright, inquisitive eyes till his mother vanished in the woods, when, finding himself suddenly all alone, he grew afraid and cantered after her.

When the underbrush closed behind the last fawn I struck out for deep water, intending to round the next point and surprise them again; for when deer leave a cove in this way, without being frightened, they generally head straight through the woods for the next good place to continue their feeding. I had almost reached the point, swimming



swiftly, when the sharp thump of a deer's foot on the earth drew my attention, and there stood the doe, her body hidden in the underbrush, her head thrust out of an opening among the leaves, watching me intently. She had concealed her fawns in the woods and had come back to find out for herself a little more about the big frog that acted so queerly. And seeing me swimming past without regarding her, she had to stamp just once to call attention to herself, like a shy child who refuses your advances but who takes some little indirect way of reminding you that she is there when you seem indifferent. This time, however, I turned away from shore and, swimming on my back, watched her closely till she hurried away to find her fawns. Then I headed straight for the next cove.



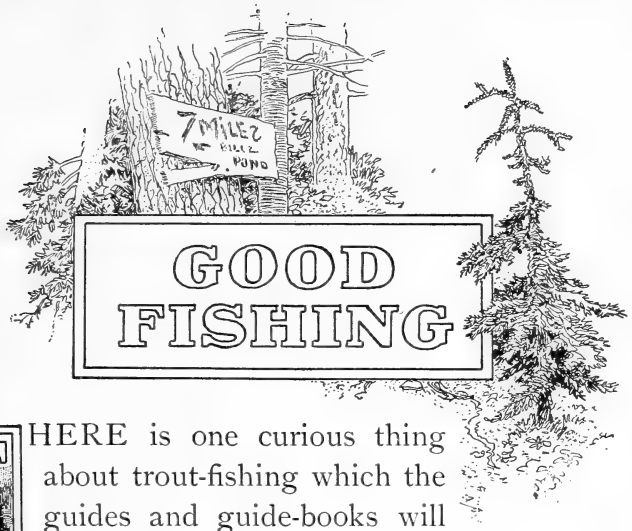
When I doubled the point, some ten minutes later, the deer were close at hand, again feeding at the edge of the water. It was deeper here, with only a few lily pads on long

slender stems. Taking a few deep breaths, I dove and swam under water straight towards them. In a minute I was up again, and there, not ten feet away, stood the inquisitive fawn, his back towards me in utter unconsciousness. He whirled at the ripple, which I could not help making, and stood for an instant as if hypnotized, surprise, wonder, and — yes, it certainly was fear now that made the beautiful, innocent eyes so big and luminous. The mother suddenly threw up her head as if struck. Just one glance at the huge frog so near her little one, then — *Heeyeu! heu! heu! heu!* the sharp alarm-cry of the deer rang out and she bounded for the shore, mud and water flying, and her white flag shining through the shower to show the way that the fawns must follow.

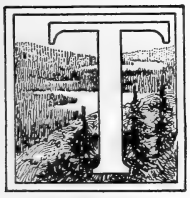
I still think that she did not know who or what I was; but I was altogether too big to be near her fawn, and she was taking no chances. The little fellow broke away on the instant. *Heeeeyeu! heu!* he whistled, joining his little voice to the big alarm that went

rushing along the shore to warn every feeding deer of the presence of danger. He gained the second fawn in a few jumps; side by side they sailed over a fallen log; and the last glimpse I had of them was too little white flags, rising, falling, winking, blinking among the leaves, like the wings of a bird, as they jumped away into the shelter of the green woods.


GOOD
FISHING



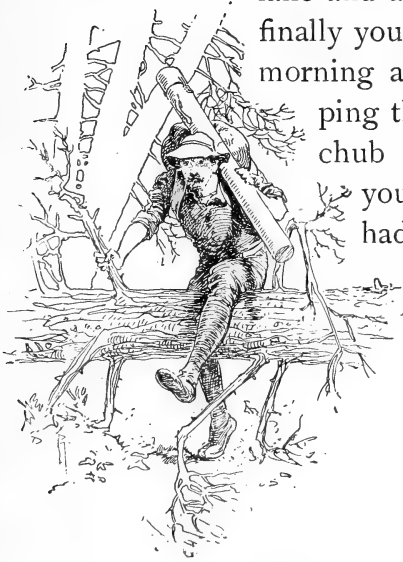
GOOD FISHING



THERE is one curious thing about trout-fishing which the guides and guide-books will never tell you until it is too late, namely, that wherever you go in the North Woods for your summer vacation, the good fishing is always about seven miles farther on.

During the winter, when your daily work is sweetened by dreams of play, you read roseate accounts of big trout and abundant fishing in a certain place by a certain camp, and the summer fever stirs strongly within you. More than ever you dream dreams at

your work; you begin to save your money, to varnish your rod and examine your flies, and to get your tackle together. A thousand times, by day or night, in the quiet of your little room or the roar of the city streets, you see the glint of light on woodland waters, smell the fragrance of the woods in the early morning, and start up with eyes suddenly brightened at the flashing rush of a big trout as he rises to your fly. At last the happy day comes when these sweet dreams promise to become more sweet realities. You travel long on a dusty train, get your head almost jolted off on a buckboard ride over rocks and roots, tramp till your back aches under your pack, cross a lake and a portage and two more lakes, and finally you get to the Promised Land. Next morning at daylight you are eagerly whipping the best pools, catching only stupid chub and a few trout fingerlings; and your sweet dream vanishes as if you had fallen out of bed, instead of waking pleasantly to hear the birds singing.



It makes little difference where you go within the region of advertised camps, down the Penobscot, up the St. John, the story is the same. You are saddened, disappointed, distrustful of men and of human promises, till your guide tells you enthusiastically of a famous place "about seven mile from here" where there is always good fishing. To reach it you get up even earlier in the morning, climb a mountain, crawl through an alder swamp, get wet, hungry, fly-bitten. And once again you catch chub and fingerlings. There is another pond seven miles farther on; but don't go. The fact is that there are trout in all these places; that they come to the surface in the spring and are easily caught with pork or worms or red flannel, and so inspire the camps and railroads to offer golden promises. In summer the trout vanish, and not one guide in a hundred can give you any help in finding or catching them. There is a place seven miles farther on — but enough, enough! This is to suggest that you may stay where you are and have peace and good fishing.

Let me begin the story with a confession and a heresy. I like still-fishing, and that is the confession. It will make every member of the Fly Brotherhood look at me sadly, thinking of the classic definition of fishing as "a pole and line, with a fish at one end and a fool at the other"; which, of course, does not apply to the delicate art of fly-fishing. But still-fishing is also an art, a fine art, in its perfection a greater art than fly-fishing. This is the heresy, and even to whisper it is like dangling a Red-Ibis fly in front of a bull-frog. "Bait-fishing? bah!" To catch such a fellow, to spill his bait, and burn his gear at the stake, and eschew his company, and blackball him at the Catchumalot Fishing Club is what the Brotherhood would plainly like to do. Instead, they glance under your canoe seat and suddenly stop talking. There is a trout hidden away in the shadow, — a three-pounder at least, judging from the broad tail that sticks out of the moss and wet grasses, — and the fly-fisherman, who likes big trout as well as another fellow, begins

to wonder secretly and enviously how in the world you caught that big one in this warm weather. So let me tell you.

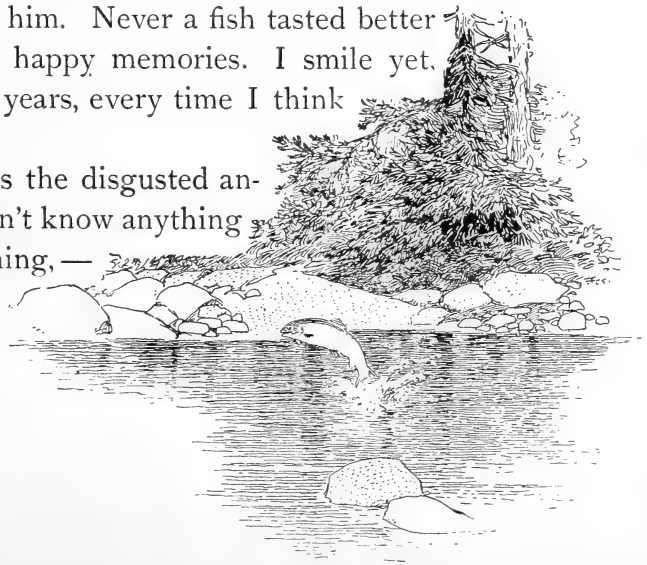
By way of getting together in a friendly talk, and entirely without prejudice, there are certain canons of fishing upon which all good disciples of the gentle Izaak are generally agreed. First, what a man brings home in his heart from fishing is of more consequence than what he brings in his fish-basket. Second, it is neither sport nor fun nor sweet reasonableness to go on catching fish after you have already landed enough for the table. To catch fish and waste them is unpardonable butchery; and to catch them "just for sport" and let them go again savors a little of taking a ball and going out to play barn-tick with yourself, to say nothing of a suggestion of unnecessary cruelty in your amusement. I have a reasonable conviction, based upon some experience and observation, that trout do not suffer when hooked. Neither do they enjoy the sensation; and a man ought to be happy enough himself in the wilderness to give

every other creature a chance to be happy in his own way. Third, it is much more fun to fish when trout are shy and hard to entice than it is to whip a pool where they rise by twos and threes and keep you busy. It may be exciting for a time, but it certainly is no sport to keep at a pool, such as I have sometimes seen, where you can fill your canoe with trout, if you are so disposed, without any particular skill or thoughtfulness. Fourth, it is more fun to locate one big trout, to study him, tempt him, get him, than to fill your basket with little fellows that tumble up at your first invitation. And fifth, when you are downright hungry and really need fish, then any honest method that puts a big trout in your fry-pan, and keeps you sniffing impatiently about the fire where Muctum the Indian is slow about supper, is good fishing.

I remember once when Phil and I were alone on a salmon river, deep in the wilderness. He was busy collecting rare specimens for his University, and I was well content to study the wild creatures, finding them

infinitely more interesting in their own coverts than when stuffed and labeled and put in the museum. There had been no rain for weeks; the water was unusually low and clear, and though there were plenty of salmon they simply would not rise. We had whipped every pool in vain, at all hours; we had even built a fire on the shore and cast our white-winged flies over the shadowy circle where the light vanished into outer darkness; and we were pulling our belts tighter and tighter after two weeks' feeding on pork and huckleberries. Then I took Phil's collecting-gun, one afternoon, and went out and sat on a rock in the pool where I had often seen a big salmon jumping. After three hours' waiting he suddenly flashed up in the air, and that night we ate him. Never a fish tasted better or left more happy memories. I smile yet, after twenty years, every time I think of him.

"But," says the disgusted angler, "you don't know anything about fly-fishing, —

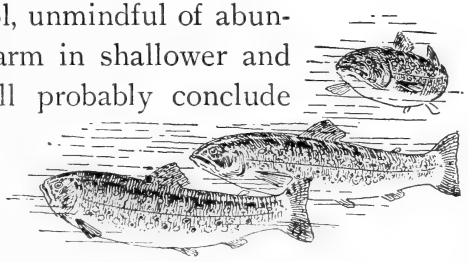


the delicate tackle, the cast light as a snowflake, the rise, the strike, the whir of the reel, the play, the struggle, the — the everlasting *sport* of the thing!"

Surely I do, after trying it on a hundred streams from Labrador southward. When trout are rising to the fly, they offer you the keenest of sport — no fisherman would ask or want anything better; but when they will not rise, when they are deep in the lake, no one knows where, and refuse fly and trolling-spoon and worms and minnows and cut bait, then you get down to the real art of fishing. You must first find your fish where he hides, and then you must find something that will entice him to rise when he is indisposed, and make him eat when he is not hungry. And you will not learn either of these things by instruction. I have taken a man who never had a fly-rod in his hand; in two hours I have taught him to make a decent cast; and I have seen that same raw amateur catch bigger fish than an old fly-fisherman, and in the same pools. For in fly-fishing luck is always one element to be

reckoned with, and a trout's peculiar disposition is another; and often when Skookum the trout has refused to consider your most delicate flies and casting, he will rush savagely at a clumsy bunch of feathers that tumbles in with a splash like a young robin, evidently in sheer anger and with the desire to get the thing out of his way as quickly as possible. But it takes at least ten years and Job's patience to learn still-fishing; and then you are only at the beginning of the delicate art.

First, as to finding your hidden fish, it is well to remember that a trout or a salmon likes water that is just a trifle warmer than his cold blood. That is why he rises to the surface in spring, and why he disappears in summer. It is generally claimed that he follows the food-supply; but a trout in the right place can get along comfortably month after month without visible food and without losing weight; and when you find large trout resting lazily in a deep pool, unmindful of abundant minnows that swarm in shallower and warmer water, you will probably conclude



that the temperature rather than the food-supply is generally a governing factor in his actions. Sometimes your trout goes to the depths; more often, since he likes "living" water, he finds where a spring bubbles up from the bottom and loafs there all day long, only moving out of the comfortable spot to feed occasionally at twilight; so that your canoe often glides over a score of good fish that give absolutely no hint of their presence. For, curiously enough, I have never seen them break water in such places, though in feeding elsewhere at twilight you can hear the water *plop-plopping* and see the little wavelets go circling shoreward wherever a trout is hunting.

I remember especially a little lake — Dacy Pond, in the Nesowadnehunk Valley — where there is a famous place. There are plenty of trout in the lake, clean, silvery, beautiful fish, but unusually notional. For days at a time they will hide and sulk, refusing every variety of fly and bait that you can think to offer. Then there comes an hour — it may be at twilight, or during a shower, or when

the sun pours down and you think that no self-respecting trout would show himself at the surface — when they will tumble up eagerly at anything, and stop again as suddenly as they began. When I camped at the lake I asked a guide, who had spent twenty years in the region, if there were any springs or deep holes where the trout lurked and where we could be reasonably sure of getting a fish for our fry-pan; and he said no. "When they bite they bite; and when they don't you eat pork solitary. It's no possible use to go on fishing," he assured me.

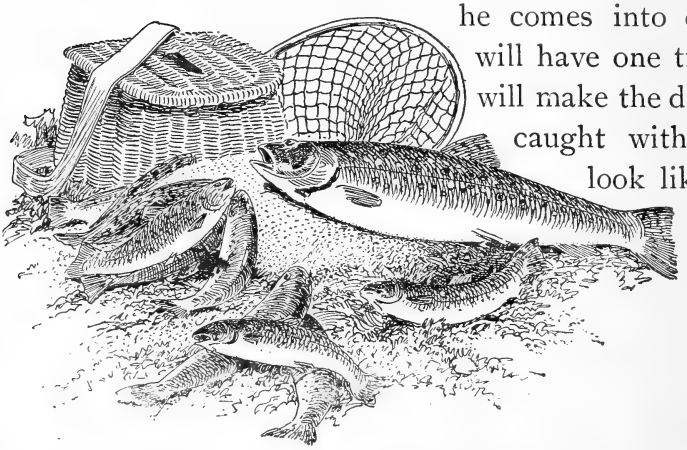
One still day, when I had been drifting for hours over the lake, studying the bottom, some shadows caught my eye for an instant and vanished. Now, when you see shadows like that it means trout, and you must not splash or thump the canoe or even raise your paddle, for trout are easily frightened. So I let my canoe drift slowly over the spot, paddled around in a great circle, and then drifted slowly over it again. There was no mistake; the bottom was covered with big

trout. After half an hour's waiting, in order to rest the fish and let them forget whatever they might have seen, I began to drop my flies very lightly from a distance; but there was no response. Then I went ashore, found some grubs, attached one to a small hook on a fine leader, set him afloat on a chip for a raft, and let him drift slowly, naturally over the place, with ten times the delicate art that it had taken to cast my flies. When he was just over the spot where I had seen the shadows thickest there was the faintest possible movement of the tip of my rod; the raft stopped as the leader straightened; the grub tumbled in, and in an instant I was fast to a big one. In half an hour I had all the fish I wanted, — fine, vigorous, hard-fleshed trout, from one to three pounds weight. They had been lying on the bottom, just over a huge spring that came boiling up through a split rock, in the most unlikely looking spot at the edge of some lily-pads. You could go there at any time, except at twilight when they occasionally scattered, and, if it was too bright for

fly-fishing, let a grub or worm or grasshopper drift delicately into the place, and be sure of good fishing and an excellent supper.

There are just such spots as this in nearly every lake frequented by trout and landlocked salmon, and it is the first manifestation of the still-fisher's art to find them. Sometimes, instead of a spring, trout select a spot on the bottom in deep water, not always the deepest in the lake, but where the temperature and the surroundings suit them. And in this, you must remember, they are as notional as a fox looking for just the right spot on the southern hillside to sleep away the daylight. In one spot only a few rods square there may be a score of large trout and salmon, while only a few yards away you may fish all day long and catch nothing but cusk and eels. As they are fifty feet under water, where you cannot possibly see them, and as you are out on the open lake in your canoe, it requires no small patience to find them and no small skill to locate the spot by exact ranges on the shore, so that you can come quickly again to the

same spot and drop your frog or minnow or grub or worm exactly where you know it will be most appreciated. Watching a still-fisherman at play, you think, "Oh, what a chump, sitting there in the sun or rain waiting for a bite!" But save your pity; the still-fisherman is glad enough in his heart. He is watching the lake, the woods, the lights and shadows, the fish-hawk wheeling, the deer and her fawns on the shore, the clouds drifting over the mountain. Far down under the delicate tip of his rod there is a minnow quivering about in the changing currents, and just six feet under the minnow two or three pairs of eyes are looking up steadily, watching it. No hurry, no worry. It is not in trout nature to watch a tidbit like that for many hours without rising at last to sample it. Then the still-fisherman will "get busy." When he comes into camp he will have one trout that will make the dozen you caught with the fly look like smelts



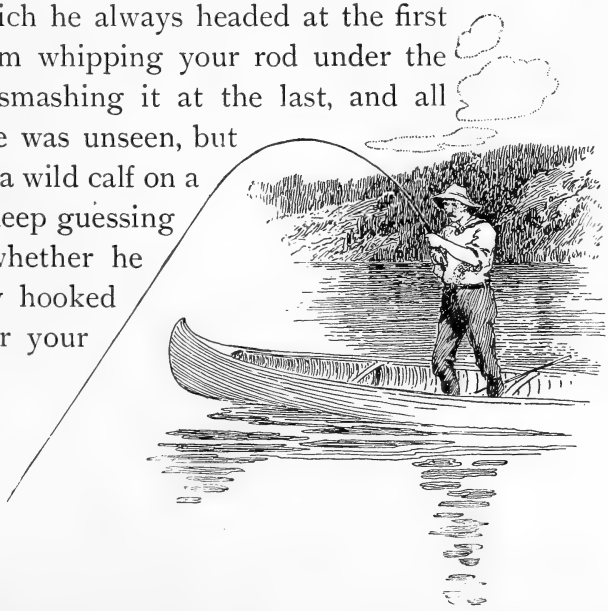
and chub-bait. He will have seen more, thought more, felt more, and enjoyed far more than you, with your ceaseless changing of flies and floundering; and you may even confess, as you think it all over from your blanket, looking up at the stars, that the art which located and enticed and caught that one huge fish and was perfectly satisfied, is on the whole quite worthy to stand with your own.

Among many such happy spots that I have found and fished on wilderness lakes, when trout would not rise to the fly or when I had enough of fly-fishing for the little fellows, there is one fountain of perpetual youth which makes me happy every time I think of it. It is on a large lake among the mountains, a beautiful place, where it is joy just to sit in your canoe, whether the trout bite or not, and lose yourself in the peace and silence and harmony of the world. Moreover, it is good fishing. It is near a town, so near that many sportsmen pass it by every year and use up all their time and patience in thrashing more distant lakes and rivers

for the little fellows. The guides all told me that it was useless to try this lake in midsummer; but I had heard all that before, in many places, and so left them to follow their own devices. One day, in sounding over the lake, I found a spot where a shoal ended in a ledge which dropped almost sheer from twenty to forty-two feet of water. Then there was a shelf, some ten or twelve feet wide, and beyond that another drop into sixty feet. This shelf was hardly a dozen yards long and hard enough to locate, with your canoe bobbing merrily and the waves dancing past your ranges; but when you did find it you camped right there, if you had wisdom and patience. The fish were under you, and it was simply a question of your own skill whether you ate a big one for your supper; though you might fish all around the spot for days and catch nothing worth taking home with you. Indeed, after finding the spot I gave the ranges to a dozen different guides and sportsmen; but they all came back empty-handed. They did not know

the virtue of an accurate sounding-line, and that in summer it is more essential for the fisherman to know the bottom of the lake than its surface.

For some reason the big trout and salmon loved to lie on that shelf, hidden deep in the heart of the big lake. They were fat and full of smelts, and had to be coaxed with every variety of dainty, so that often you must wait for hours before they would rise to your repeated and changing invitation. When you did get a rise out of one, he kept you guessing. With a five-ounce rod and a delicate leader to take a large fish out of that deep, cold water; to keep him from tangling up in your anchor-line (for which he always headed at the first rush) or from whipping your rod under the canoe and smashing it at the last, and all the while he was unseen, but vigorous as a wild calf on a halter; to keep guessing by jumps whether he were lightly hooked and whether your



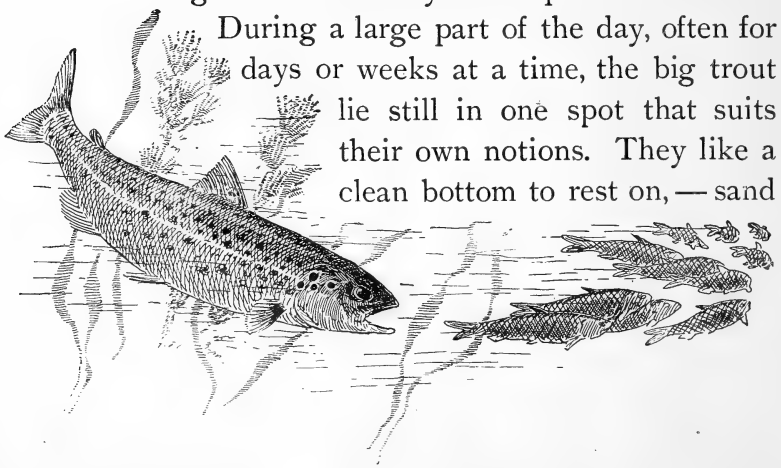
leader would stand the strain for another moment, — that would go a long way toward satisfying even the man who regards sport as the number of anxious minutes a fish gives you before you get him. Once a huge trout frayed my leader against the anchor-line. I left him to untangle himself — which is the only good way — and then played him up to the canoe. The delicate leader parted, and he lay there on the surface for a full moment, fanning the water with his broad tail, giving me a glimpse of the largest trout I have ever seen under my own rod. Another time, with a light fly-rod, I struck an eight-pound salmon there, and after ten minutes' hard play reached the landing-net for him. He went through it, and clear to the bottom again, and then fifty feet farther away, the rod bending double and the reel screaming like a lunatic behind him. Then, standing in the bobbing canoe with the handle of the landing-net under my arm, I played him through the bottom of the net for a full fifteen minutes more, till he came quietly

alongside. That was sport enough, from the man's viewpoint. I am not yet quite certain how the salmon regarded it.

In finding the hiding-places of these large fish it is useless to depend, as many fishermen do, on whipping the whole lake with your flies at evening. Once or twice in the course of a long summer you may get a shock when a big fellow rolls up at your Silver Doctor from the shallows near a cold brook, where he often goes hunting minnows in the late twilight; but your flies are useless by day, for these big trout never rise from deep water, and seldom from the cold springs near shore. A good way to find the springs is to drift about the lake on a still, clear day, watching the bottom keenly. It is a most pleasant task exploring this green, strange under-world, and you will double your pleasure by keeping your eyes and your heart wide open to what passes on the shore as you glide along. When you locate a spring in this way you will generally find fish at the same instant. Therefore your approach must be slow and silent as one of

the cloud shadows; otherwise you will not get even a glimpse of the trout as they dart aside. When searching in deep water you will, of course, use a thermometer. That will give you the exact temperature near bottom, and the difference of a degree or two spells trout or chub for supper.

Most important to the still-fisherman is to know the bottom of his lake. The big trout and salmon are not scattered around promiscuously, but gathered in groups here and there; and where they are you will find no other fish. Now and then they leave their comfortable beds to follow the shoals of smelt and minnows; but at such times you will catch one only by happy accident and by a different kind of fishing, using a live or a trolling bait and keeping it moving rapidly just under where the little fish are breaking water frantically to escape their enemies.



During a large part of the day, often for days or weeks at a time, the big trout lie still in one spot that suits their own notions. They like a clean bottom to rest on, — sand

or gravel covered with a soft black sediment, or, best of all, a bed of dead wood finely broken and gathered together by the eddies and changing currents. The way to find this is to fasten to your sounding-line a heavy lead with a hollow end filled with white soap or tallow. Whenever this strikes it picks up a little of the bottom and tells you at a glance just what you want to know.

As for your sounding-line, upon which you must depend for accurate information, have that on a free-running, multiplying reel. Let it be marked, not in feet — for you cannot measure your fishing-line with a yard-stick every time you reel in a fish — but in reaches; that is, the distance between your outstretched hands, which is a trifle less than your own height. And have bits of hard white cord fastened into your sounding-line by means of the knot known to sailors as a bowline on a bight, and have these bits of cord marked by tying in each one a number of simple knots corresponding to the number of reaches; or else fasten bits of fine white

tape into your sounding-line and mark the number of reaches, or fathoms, with indelible ink, so that when your lead touches bottom you know by a glance at the nearest mark on your sounding-line just how deep the water is. Then when you begin to fish, having found the right depth and temperature and the right kind of bottom, there will be no guesswork as to how much of your fishing-line you will need. Don't, please don't, do as your guide tells you: "Put a sinker on near your bait, let it touch bottom, and then haul it up a little." That is pure blundering, — "plugging," as they call it themselves, — which will never capture a wary fish. A light sinker — just enough to carry your line down, but not enough to keep it from swaying with the currents — is put at the end of your line, and below that you fasten six or eight feet of fine leader. Taking your bait in one hand, measure out your line exactly in reaches. If the water is nine reaches, or fifty-four feet deep, — and even when the lake is much deeper I have seldom found my best fish

beyond this limit, — you must measure out only eight, and allow a foot or two extra for the distance from the tip of your rod, as it rests idly over the side of your canoe, to the surface of the water. Then when you put your rod overboard and lie back comfortably for the happy hours of fishing, you have the reasonable assurance that your bait is swaying gently some five or six feet over the spot where your fish is resting. And that is exactly where your bait ought to be. If it is too near your trout, he will generally move aside and ignore it, perhaps because he notices the fraud attached. If it sways gently a few feet over his head, it seems to be a principle of trout psychology that after a certain time the bait gets on his nerves, or his stomach, and he rises to take it in.

Once, as an experiment, in a spring hole near the foot of a big lake, I swung a bait in this fashion over some big trout that I knew well were not hungry, for again and again, on previous visits, they had refused everything I offered them. They saw my bait

plainly enough, for at first one or another would slant up, almost touch it with his nose, and turn lazily to the bottom. Presently they ignored it altogether, and for five hours nothing happened. The trout lay on the bottom, idly wagging their fins. Then the largest fish rose like a flash and was away with my bait before I had time to lift the rod.

This may, of course, be exceptional, and it is certainly more fun to fish when you do not see your trout; but it explains the still-fisherman's faith and patience. It never troubles him that he does not get a bite. He knows just where his bait is, and that just under the bait there is probably a big fish waiting for the psychologic moment to make things interesting. So he never wearies or gets impatient, and after he has been waiting five or six hours without a bite and the sad time comes when he must reel up and go home, he still lingers expectantly, gets everything else ready before lifting his rod, and then winds in his line slowly, so as to give the trout a last chance. A score of times,

"Rose like a flash and was away with my bait before I had time to lift the rod"

at least, after waiting for hours without a nibble, I have felt a savage tug and struck a large fish just as I was reeling in to go home. And that suggests another curious bit of trout psychology. He may ignore a bait as long as it swings there over his head, but often dashes eagerly after it the moment he thinks it is gone for good.

Meanwhile, as you wait, you have the very best part of still-fishing; not catching fish, but better things, — sunshine and rain, light and shadow, clouds and mountain, lake and forest, birds and animals, — catching a whole heart full of good things to send you home contented. Once, when still-fishing day after day in the same good place, I made friends with a wild gull, who was shy enough at first and hardly recognized the numerous friendly invitations that I sent in her direction. These were in the shape of little fish, delicious fat smelts caught in deep water, or chubs and minnows which I sometimes used for bait. Whenever the wind was right I would set these adrift,

one by one, till I had a long string extending from my canoe down towards the rock where Queok the gull had her nest. Soon she began to follow up my line of silvery invitations, and gradually, in her own mind, she established a connection between her new supply of food and its unknown source. Then she seemed at last to recognize my friendliness, and would rise from her rock the moment she saw my canoe double the point and would fly ahead of me to my fishing-ground. There she would circle for hours around my canoe on tireless wings, ready to pick up any choice morsels that I set adrift for her. Again, on another lake, it was a fish-hawk that soon seemed to recognize the friendly fisherman who evidently had enough and to spare, and he would wheel up the lake, whistling shrilly, the moment he saw my old canoe heading for the fishing-grounds. And whenever, from fishing too deep or too near the surface, I had a cusk or a big chub that I did not want, it always

added to the weight of my own basket of trout or salmon to see Ismaques plunge down after my invitation and bear it swiftly away to his hungry little ones.

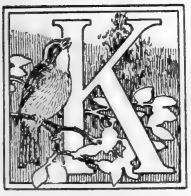
I know not how to describe the joy of these simple experiences; I am only sure that it adds enormously to the gladness of fishing whenever you find that you have bridged the chasm which separates these wild, shy lives from your own, and they lay aside their fears and learn to recognize and trust you. And besides the gull and the fish-hawk there are the loon and her two little fledgeling fishermen, a roving mink leaving his arrowy trail across the bay, the deer and her fawns feeding shyly in the cove yonder, stopping now and then to watch you, and one solitary, magnificent eagle resting on the winds high over the mountain top, whom you follow only with your eyes, and who presently leads you off, far away to a beautiful land of dreams, as you wait here contentedly for a bite. Soon you return with a sense of joy to the same pleasant spot, day after day, perfectly sure that you will have

good fishing. You sit in the bottom of your old canoe, leaning comfortably against an air-cushion; the sunshine warms you; the winds fan your cheek; the birds call for your ear alone; and your light craft veers just enough to keep your bait moving, or goes *canoedling* over the waves just to make you comfortable or sleepy. No worry about results. Far below you, out of sight, your minnow or grub is moving naturally, and below him the trout are watching. They will take care of your fish-basket, while nature meanwhile fills your heart with light and melody and peace to take home with you.

This is the real joy of still-fishing, — to get acquainted with your own better nature and with the simple gladness of the world. I have seen a hundred fly-fishermen give up their sport, growing impatient or dissatisfied after an hour's steady casting with no results; but I have never yet seen a real still-fisherman who wanted to stop, or who was not perfectly content with the little fish or the large mercies that he was catching.


HIMSELF

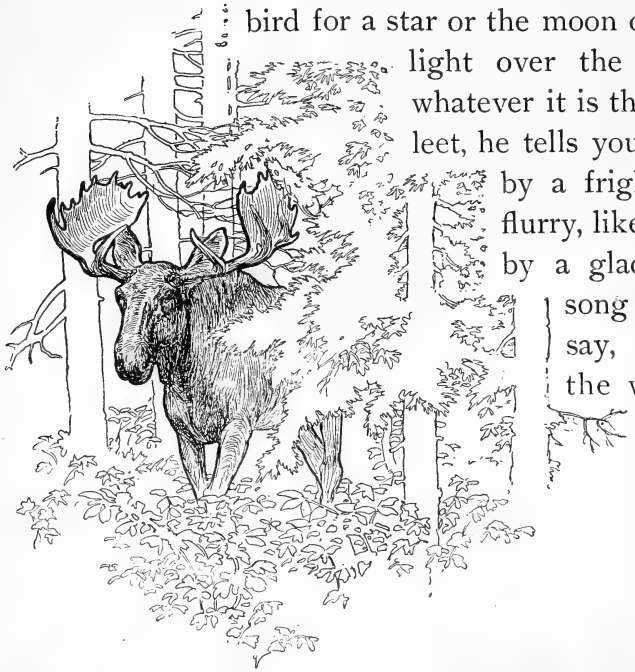
HIMSELF



ILLOOLEET the white-throated sparrow, Little Sweet Voice, as my Indians call him, sums up for me the peace and gladness of the big wilderness. The most interesting thing about him, during the spring and early summer when I meet him on the northern trout-streams and the salmon-rivers, is that he is always singing. Not only by day when all the woods are vocal, but by night also when all other little singers are still as the sleeping earth, Killooleet's heart seems full of the gladness that is breaking into life all around him. Whenever

he wakes up his first impulse is always to sing, and the Micmacs call him the hour-bird, because they think he wakes and sings at regular intervals all night long.

Sometimes as he sleeps on his fir-twig, just over the hidden nest of his mate, the moon peeps in and wakes him up; sometimes a big moose glides by and brushes his little fir-tree; sometimes he hears your canoe grate on the pebbles as you come home; and sometimes it is only Simmo the Indian taking a squint at the weather and lighting his pipe for a last smoke before he goes to sleep, and the flash of the match is mistaken by a sleepy bird for a star or the moon or the first dawn light over the mountain; but whatever it is that wakes Killooleet, he tells you he is there not by a frightened chirp or flurry, like other birds, but by a glad, tinkling little song that seems to say, "All's well in the wilderness." A



hundred times I have heard him by my camp-fire, or when following the animals after dark in the big woods, but only once when it seemed to me that his song had any other message or meaning than simple gladness.

The wind was howling across the big lake and the little canoe was jumping like a witch when we paddled ashore, Simmo and I, at the first inviting beach and jumped out on either side to ease our frail craft ashore. A storm was coming with the night, and we had little time to make all snug before it would break over our heads. First we threw our stuff out, turned the canoe over, and carried it well up out of reach of waves and wind. Then we whipped up my little tent, double-staked it down, and guyed the ridge-pole fore and aft to two big trees. "No time to build your *commoosie;* sleep with me to-night," I called to Simmo as I gathered fir-boughs for a bed, while he started a fire and scrambled together a supper of tea, bacon and trout, dried-apple sauce, and good ash-bread.

They were barely ready when the rain came down in torrents, and we grabbed everything from the fire and scuttled into my dry little tent. There we ate our supper with immense thankfulness, and then Simmo smoked his pipe, squinting out quizzically at the rain and the gale.

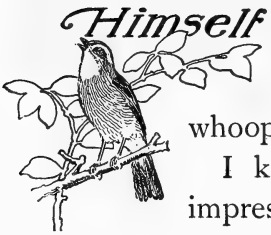
"Fool-um rain dat time," he said contentedly. "Now I goin' make him do my work." He pushed all the dishes out where the rain would wash them well before morning, then gathered his old blanket around him and, with a sigh of profound satisfaction, lay down to sleep.

The night was intensely black, the rain falling, the gale roaring over the woods, and the waves lashing the shore wildly, when I threw a poncho over my head and slipped away into the darkness, following an old logging-road that I had noticed when I gathered the fir-boughs. What was I doing out in the woods at that hour? I don't exactly know; partly following my instincts, which always drive me out in a storm and make me long for a boat and the open sea,

and partly trying to find or lose myself — I don't know which — in the darkness and uproar of a wilderness night.

One of our greatest philosophers has analyzed the human soul in his own way and finds that it consists at each moment of a single impression, which vanishes into another even as you find it; so that a man is not even like a drop in a river, but like a point between top and bottom over which an endless succession of drops passes constantly day and night. And his soul, he thinks, is like that point of space with single impressions flowing over it continually. Strange as it may seem, it was just to find myself, to know what that elusive thing is which at each moment constitutes a man, that I had left Simmo sleeping philosophically while I wandered out into the night.

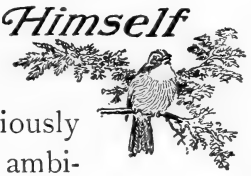
Farther and farther into the forest I drifted, till the roar of the smitten lake was utterly lost in the nearer roar of the struggling woods. The great trees groaned and cracked at the strain; the rain rushed over innumerable



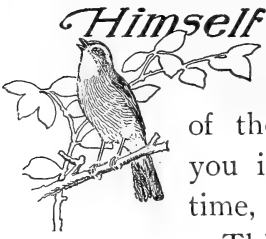
leaves with the sound of a waterfall; the gale rumbled and roared over the forest, hooting in every hollow tree and whining over every dry stub, and suddenly "the voices" began wildly to whoop and yell.

I know not how to explain this curious impression of human voices calling to you from the stormy woods or the troubled river. Some men feel it strongly, while others simply cannot understand it. I have been waked at night in my tent by a man new to the wilderness, who insisted that somebody was in trouble and shouting to us from the rapids; and then I have waked another man lying close beside me, who listened and who heard nothing. To-night the delusion was startling in its vivid reality; above the roar of the gale and the rush of the rain a multitude of wild human voices seemed to be laughing, wailing, shrieking, through the woods.

In the intense blackness of the night, wherein eyes were utterly useless, I presently lost the old road, blundered along



through the woods and underbrush, and then stood still among the great trees, — which I could not see, though my hands touched them on every side, — trying to lose or to find myself in the elemental uproar and confusion. Curiously enough, a man loses all memory, all ambition, all desire, at such a time. An overwhelming sense of fear rushes over you at first; but that only marks the contrast between your ordinary and your present surroundings, and the feeling passes speedily into a sense of exultation, as life stirs wildly and powerfully within you in answer to the uproar without. Presently you become just a part of the big struggling world, an atom in the gale, a drop rushing over the leaves with a multitude of other drops. That also is only a momentary impression, the curious inner reflection of the storm without, as if a man were only a looking-glass in which the world regarded itself. Soon this feeling also passes with the fear, and then, deep in your soul, the elemental power that makes you what you are wakens and asserts itself,



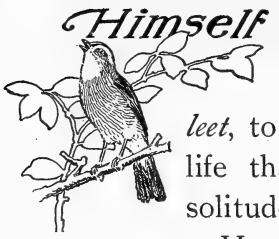
telling you in the sudden stillness that you are not an atom, not a drop, not a part of the world, but something radically and absolutely different, and that all the change and confusion and struggle of the universe can never touch or harm you in the least. And then, for the first time, you really find yourself.

Thinking only of the first feeling, of fear, your imagination peoples the unseen world with demons or hostile forces. Thinking of the second, you become pantheistic, regarding your little life as part of the big whole, — a drop gathered for an instant out of the ocean, a grain quarried from the side of the great mountain. Thinking of the third, you become a man, strong and personal and responsible, knowing yourself to be son or brother of the God who owns the world, sharing his power and knowledge. So that the long spiritual history of the race, with its endless struggle and slow growth from fear to faith, is all lived over again in that brief moment when you wander out alone at night into the stormy woods to find yourself.

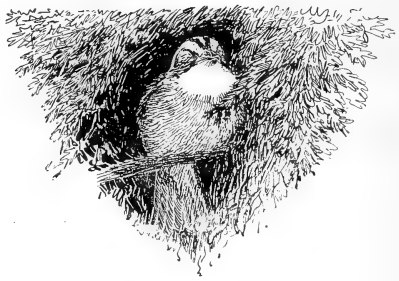
"A little white-throated sparrow nestled close against the stem of a fir"

I had vaguely felt all this, which can never be analyzed or described, when I was brought back from the elemental to the present world by discovering with a shock that I did not know where to turn to find my camp. I had started to go back when I blundered into a dense fir-thicket that I had not passed before, and I knew instantly that I had lost my direction. The wind was east, but it whirled high over the trees where I could not locate its source, and the sound of the waves, only a few hundred yards away, was utterly lost in the uproar of the wind and the rain. In the midst of the fir-thicket I stopped and took out my compass and steadied it. Then, under shelter of my poncho, I struck a match. As the light flared up there was a stir close beside my head, which was not the wind, and which made me forget instantly what I wanted to know. In the moment's glare I saw him plainly, a little white-throated sparrow, nestled close against the stem of a fir, with a branch drooping over him to shield him from the rain. The match blew out,

leaving the world in blacker darkness than ever before. Then, out of the wild storm, out of the very heart of the night, a glad little song rippled forth: *I'm here, sweet Killooleet, lillooleet, lillooleet*, to tell me that mine was not the only life that had lost or found itself in the solitude.



He, too, had been alone in the vast, elemental confusion. Darkness had wrapped him about; the gale roared over his head; the rain rushed like a river over innumerable leaves. And he had slept quietly on his twig under his bending fir-tip, unmindful of it all. The sudden light had wakened him, and in the first moment he had proclaimed just one thing, — small enough, it may be, but still the only little thing in a vast, dark, stormy world of which he was perfectly sure, — himself.

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