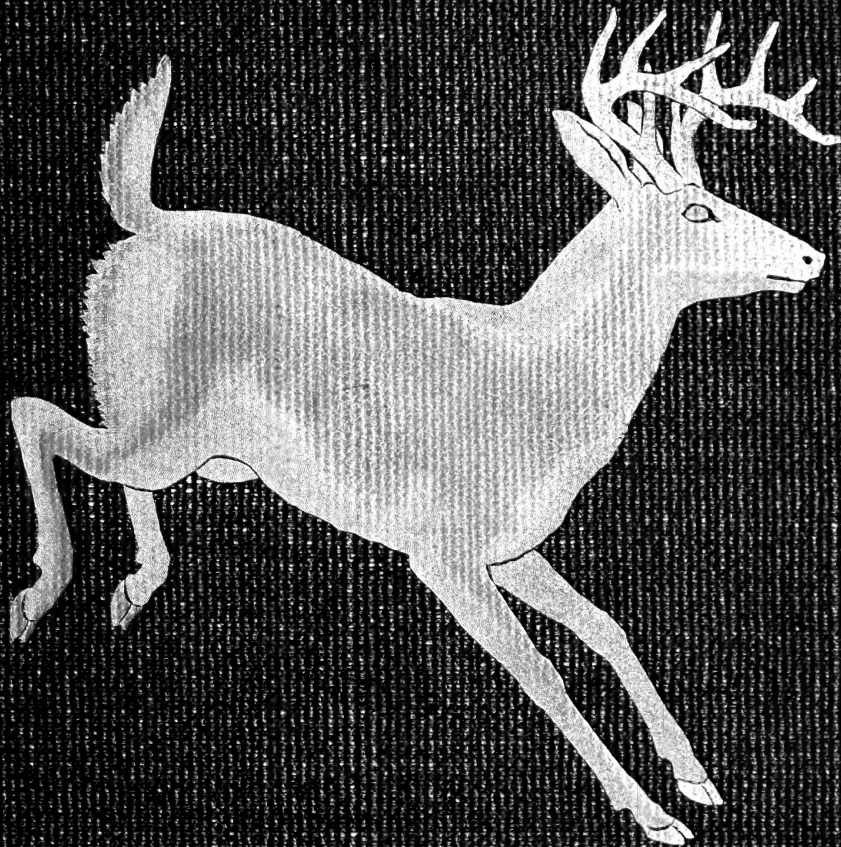


FOLLOWING THE DEER



WILLIAM J. LONG

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.



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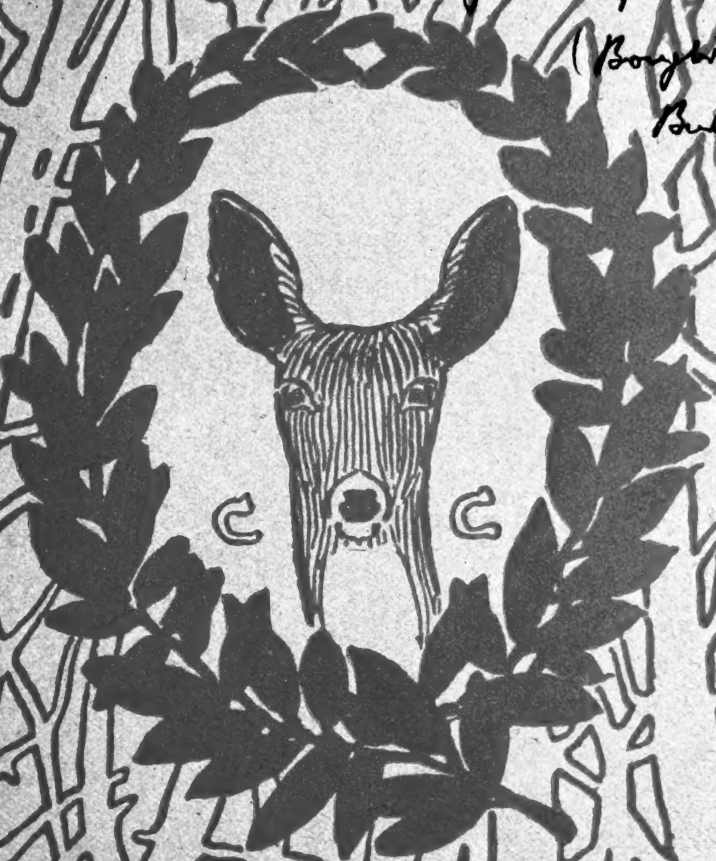
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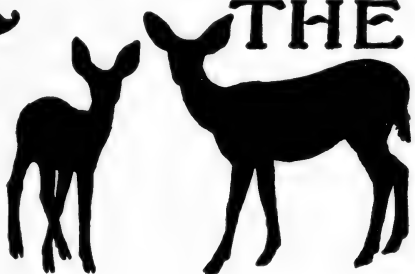
BOOKS BY

WILLIAM J. LONG





FOLLOWING 
 THE DEER














"But he never hesitated nor broke his splendid stride." See page 67

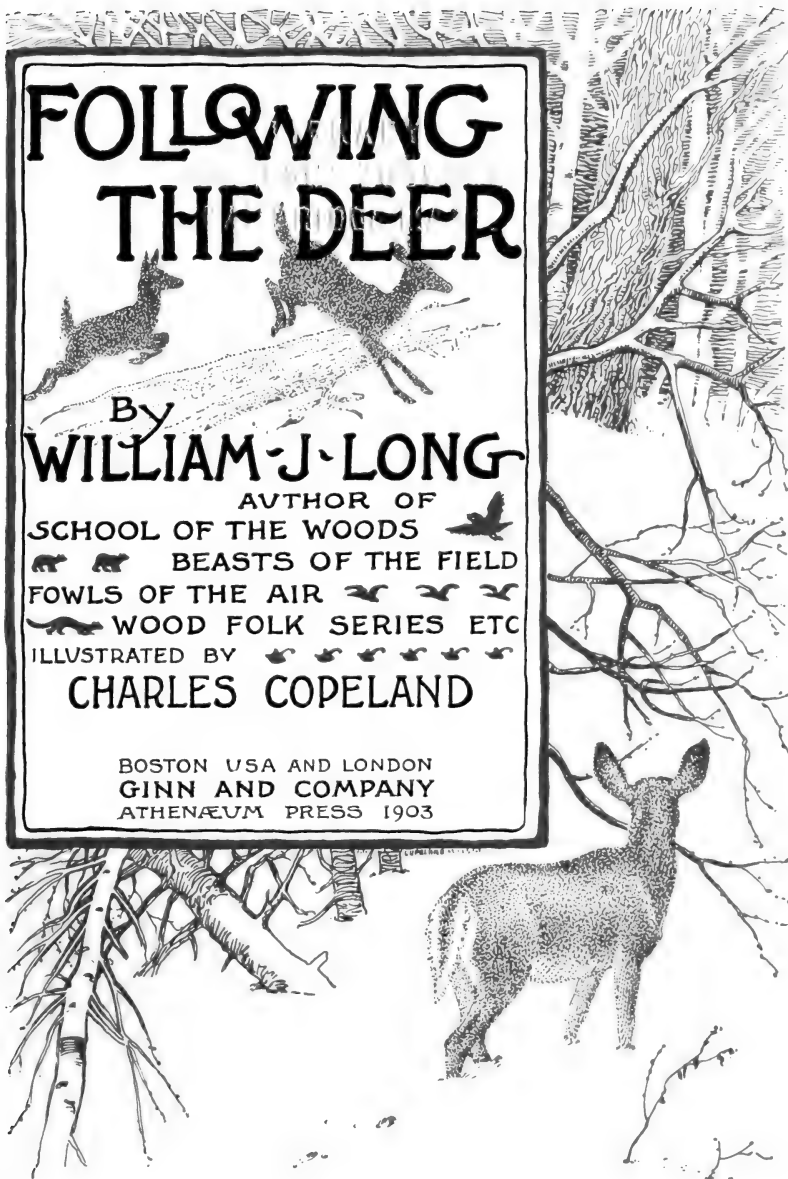
FOLLOWING THE DEER

By
WILLIAM J. LONG

AUTHOR OF
SCHOOL OF THE WOODS 
  BEASTS OF THE FIELD
FOWLS OF THE AIR   
 WOOD FOLK SERIES ETC

ILLUSTRATED BY     
CHARLES COPELAND

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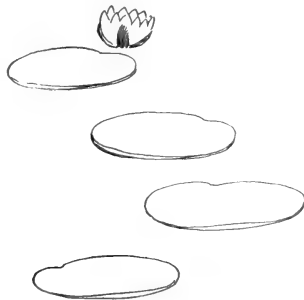
TO ALL SPORTSMEN
WITH KIND HEARTS, WHO
REJOICE IN THE AUTUMN
WOODS AND TO WHOM
KILLING IS LEAST OF
THE HUNTING, I DEDI-
CATE THIS LITTLE BOOK
OF A BOY'S FIRST EXPERI-
ENCES IN FOLLOWING
THE DEER

Preface



"Following the Deer" first appeared as a series of animal studies in a little book called "Secrets of the Woods." That book was primarily intended for a Nature Reader; but for the past few years there has been an increasing demand for it outside the schools, among children of a larger growth. It is in answer to that demand, especially from nature-lovers and campers in the wilderness, that this book of the deer has been prepared.

Old sportsmen, who have grown wise in following the deer with guides and Indian hunters, will smile, as I do now, at many



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Preface

of the mistakes which a boy made who had only his own eyes and wits to depend on for his knowledge of woodcraft. But after many years, and after watching and following hundreds of deer in the summer and winter woods, those early experiences, while everything was yet new and the wonder was on the world, are still the most fascinating of all. And so I venture to give them, mistakes and all, just as they occurred.

The only liberty I have taken here is with the big buck of the story, who is really two or three deer in one, deer that I first watched with a boy's jealous eyes, and then followed eagerly in a life-and-death chase as soon as the hunting season opened. They won the game fairly; keep-

FOLLOWING 
THE DEER

ing their own heads instead of yielding them up to a taxidermist to make a monstrosity of—for which I am now heartily glad. For the most wonderful lesson of all that year's keen hunting was that an animal's life is vastly more interesting than his death, and that of all the joys of the chase the least is the mere killing.

This is more general among hunters than the world supposes. I have never yet met an old sportsman worthy of the name, who has not, sooner or later, gone through with much the same experience and learned the same lesson, and who does not carry about with him, under his canvas jacket, the symptoms of a changed heart.

On this ground I venture to hope that my big buck may be followed indulgently

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Preface

by sportsmen as well as by those who have learned to "name the birds without a gun." If his cunning and splendid courage appeal to other boys — boys of twenty and boys of sixty who whoop with delight and find new life in the Northern woods every autumn — as they appealed to the boy that first followed him, then this little book will have done its work. Our hunting will be more tempered with humanity, and even in our hunting we shall find more joy in the life than in the death of the wild things.

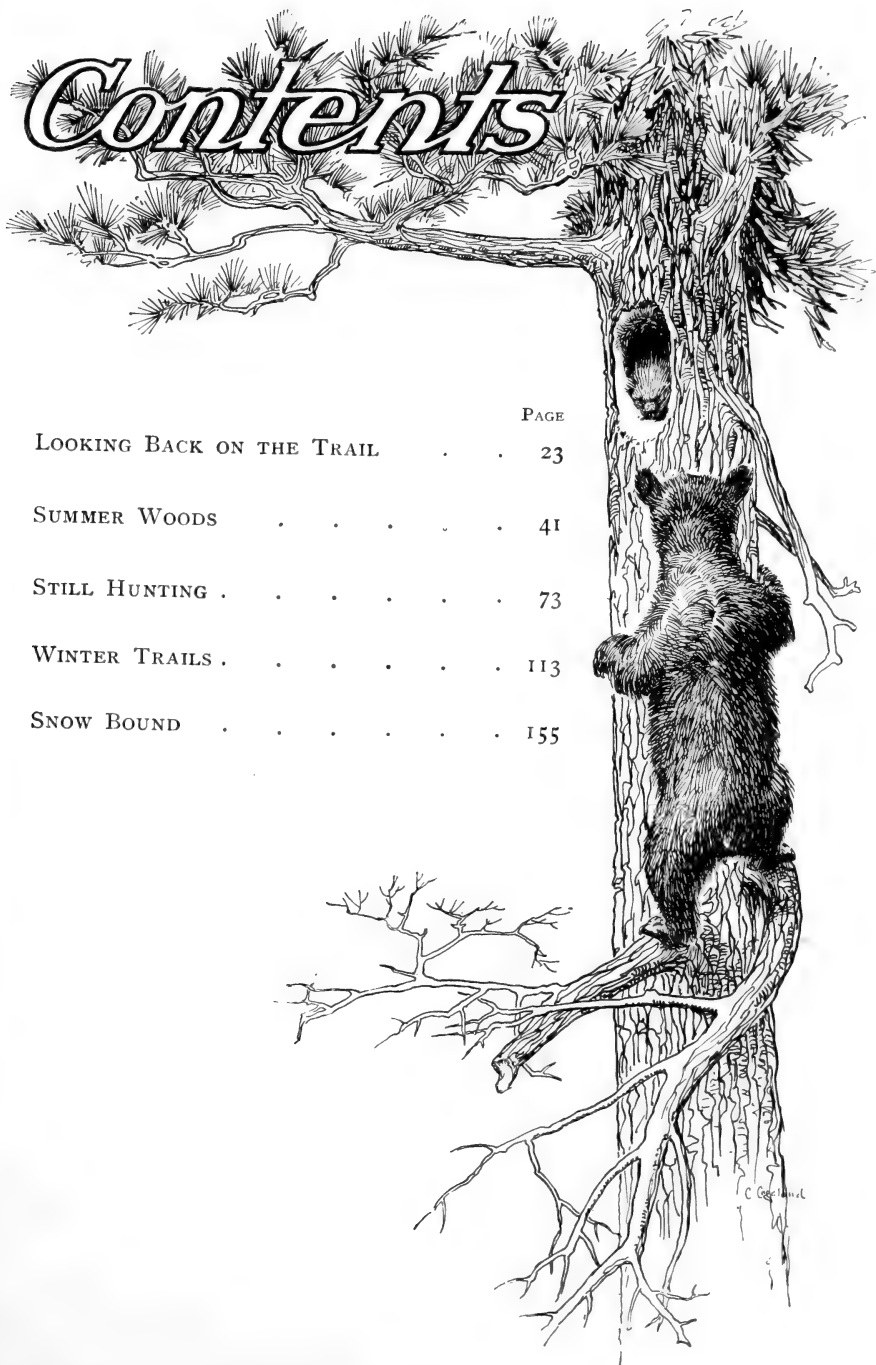
WM. J. LONG.

Stamford, Conn., June, 1903.



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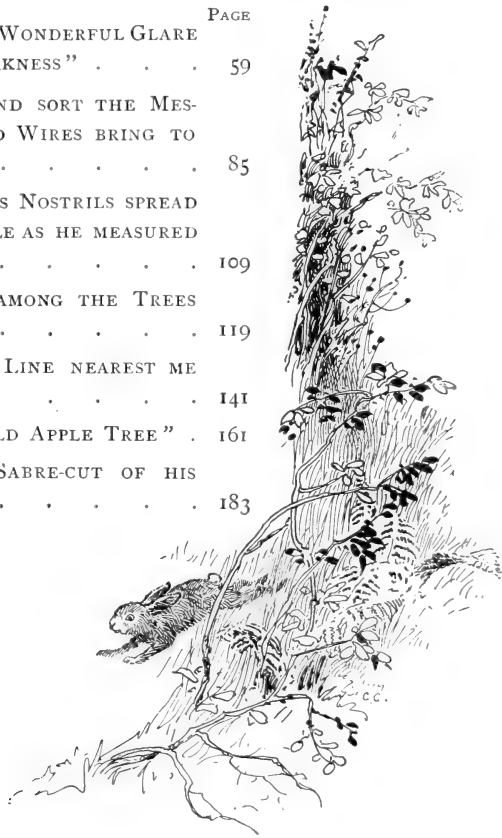
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*Looking Back
on the Trail ~*





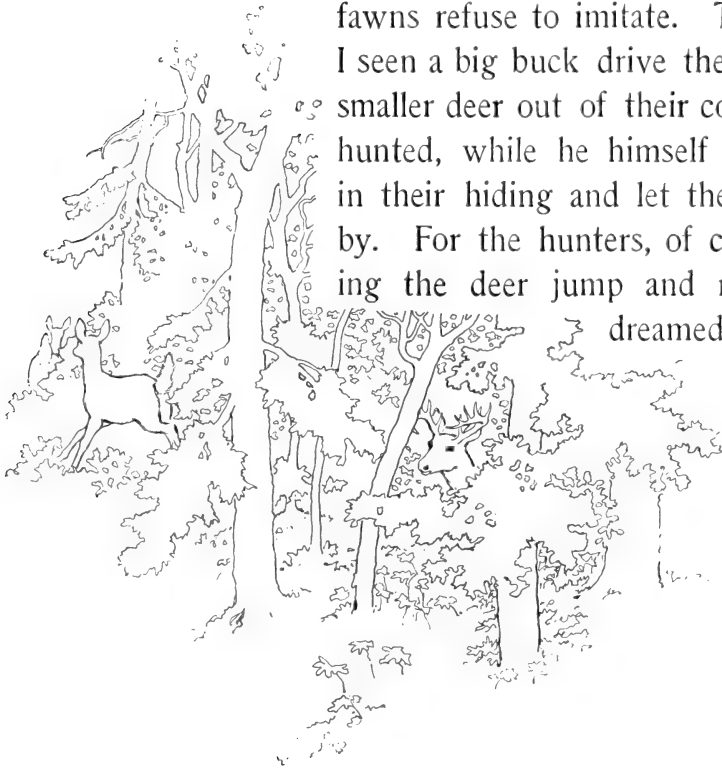


LOOKING BACK ON THE TRAIL

FROM the moment you first strike the trail of these deer until you leave it again, months later, in the gray March woods, one curious trait appears at every turn and halting place which may surprise you if you are accustomed to follow the deer only in the great wilderness. It is this: that, contrary to deer wisdom and your own experience, every sign here shows that a big buck has taken and is keeping the leadership of the herd you are following.

**LOOKING BACK ON
THE TRAIL**

· Generally the buck is a lazy and selfish brute, with small care or concern to save anything but his own whole skin; and when he is shot there are few tears shed. I have often seen a big buck leap away for cover, thinking only of himself and not even blowing an alarm signal to other deer that were feeding near him — a selfish, cowardly trick that even the little fawns refuse to imitate. Twice have I seen a big buck drive the does and smaller deer out of their covert to be hunted, while he himself lay down in their hiding and let the chase go by. For the hunters, of course, seeing the deer jump and run, never dreamed of looking



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THE DEER* 

in the thicket out of which the buck had driven them and in which he lay watching the effect cunningly.

Such selfishness is absolutely untrustworthy in a leader. The animals know it — better, perhaps, than do the citizens of a free republic; and so deer of all kinds will, in a natural state, intrust the safety of the herd to some wise old doe that has grown careful, as well as unselfish, in watching and caring for her own little ones.

There are few laws of the woods, however, that are not subject to exceptions; and an animal's habits are not fixed at all, any more than a man's, but are changing constantly to meet

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ON THE TRAIL*



new conditions. Deer are hunted now not so much for food as for sport, and most hunters want a good set of antlers to take home with them. The bucks, therefore, are the most hunted; and the bigger the buck, the keener and more relentless the chase to secure his head.

One who has followed the deer for the past few years must have noted the rapid change in their habits which has taken place in consequence. So long as the deer had to guard themselves only against teeth and claws, so long as danger moved on four feet and was harmless beyond the length of a deer's jump for safety, the big bucks, that recked little of

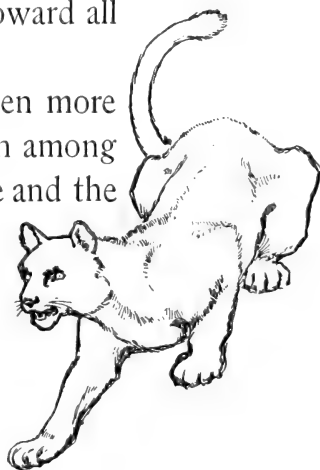
**FOLLOWING
THE DEER** 

wolf or panther, were too careless to head a herd composed largely of weaker animals; and the leadership fell naturally to the more timid and watchful does. Now the natural order of things is reversed. The mighty bucks, the brave strong fighters of old, grow yearly more timid and cunning before the new danger of the rifle; and the erstwhile timid does and fawns grow bolder and bolder with the passing seasons that have driven wolf and panther far away and changed the hearts of men toward all the wilderness creatures.

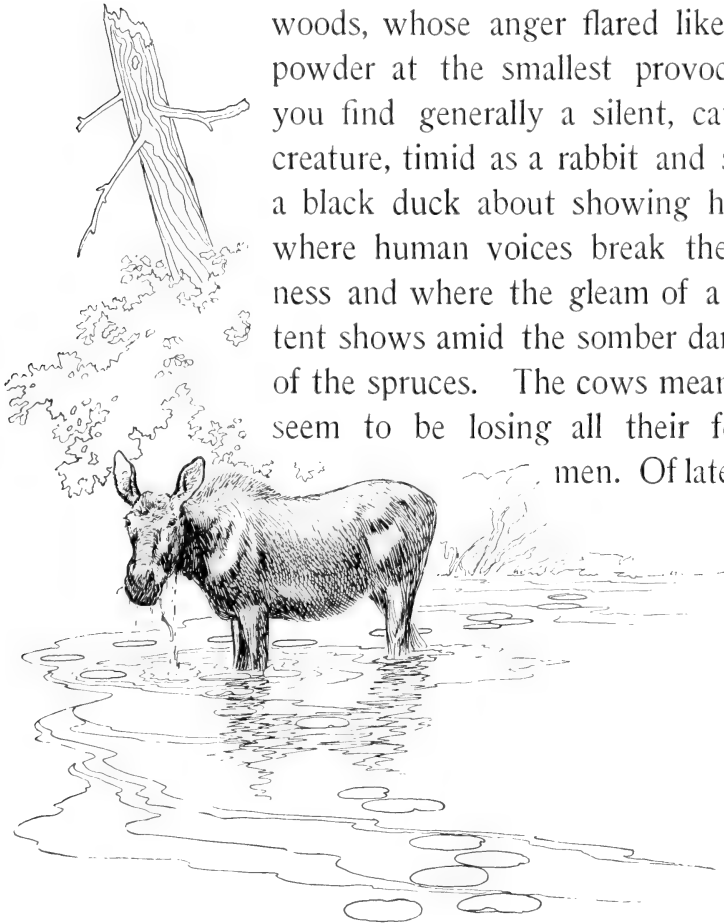
This change of habit is even more marked among the moose than among the red deer. The cow moose and the

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ON THE TRAIL**



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**LOOKING BACK ON
THE TRAIL**



yearlings are protected by law at all seasons ; the big bulls only are hunted. In consequence the bull moose, like the bear and wolf, seems to have laid aside all his truculent boldness. Now instead of the mighty, ramping brute of old that feared nothing in the woods, whose anger flared like gunpowder at the smallest provocation, you find generally a silent, cautious creature, timid as a rabbit and shy as a black duck about showing himself where human voices break the stillness and where the gleam of a white tent shows amid the somber darkness of the spruces. The cows meanwhile seem to be losing all their fear of men. Of late years

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THE DEER** 

I have repeatedly passed close by without alarming them on wilderness rivers, and have stopped my canoe to watch them feeding after they had stared at me awhile to satisfy their curiosity.

The first result of all this is that the bucks and bulls live more by themselves than ever, and are shy about showing themselves in the open with the more fearless does. A second and more interesting result is that where deer go in bands, especially in the autumn when hunters are abroad in the land, you will sometimes find a much-hunted old buck at the head of the herd. He is more cunning, and so the natural leadership of

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LOOKING BACK



the doe gives place to the better leadership of experience. This is increasingly true, not only near the settlements where deer are most familiar with man and his devices, but also deep in the once silent wilderness that of late has learned to rouse its warning echoes and jump all its shy dwellers out of their coverts at the voice of "villainous saltpeter."

Last summer, in the deer country at the headwaters of the Penobscot, there were two big bucks with splendid heads that never, spite of all my watching, gave me more than a glimpse of tossing antlers or the flash of a white tail over the windfalls. Other deer would come boldly to

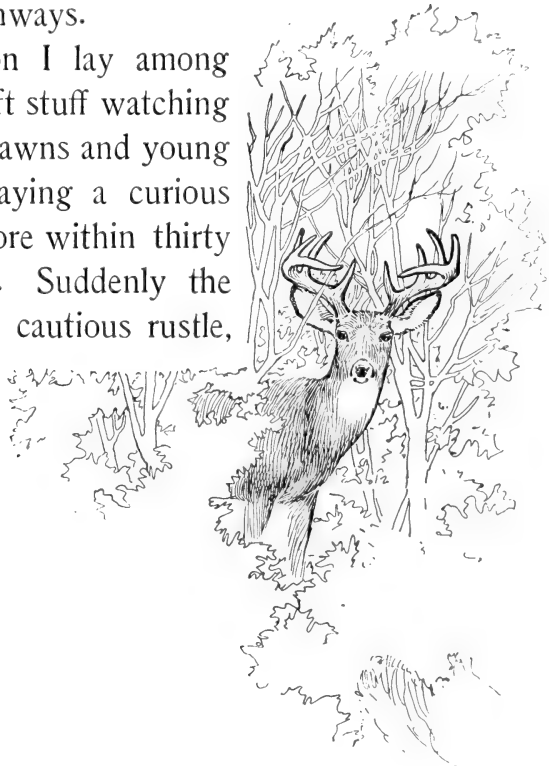
water, by day or night, to drink and feed and play. Most of them were full of a childish curiosity when they discovered me watching them quietly; but these two big bucks, and one white deer that roused all the natural covetousness of the hunters, would steal down at twilight, drink hurriedly, and bound back to cover as if a panther, instead of a harmless man, were watching over the runways.

One late afternoon I lay among some old logs and drift stuff watching nine deer, does and fawns and young bucks, that were playing a curious game on the open shore within thirty yards of my hiding. Suddenly the bushes parted with a cautious rustle,

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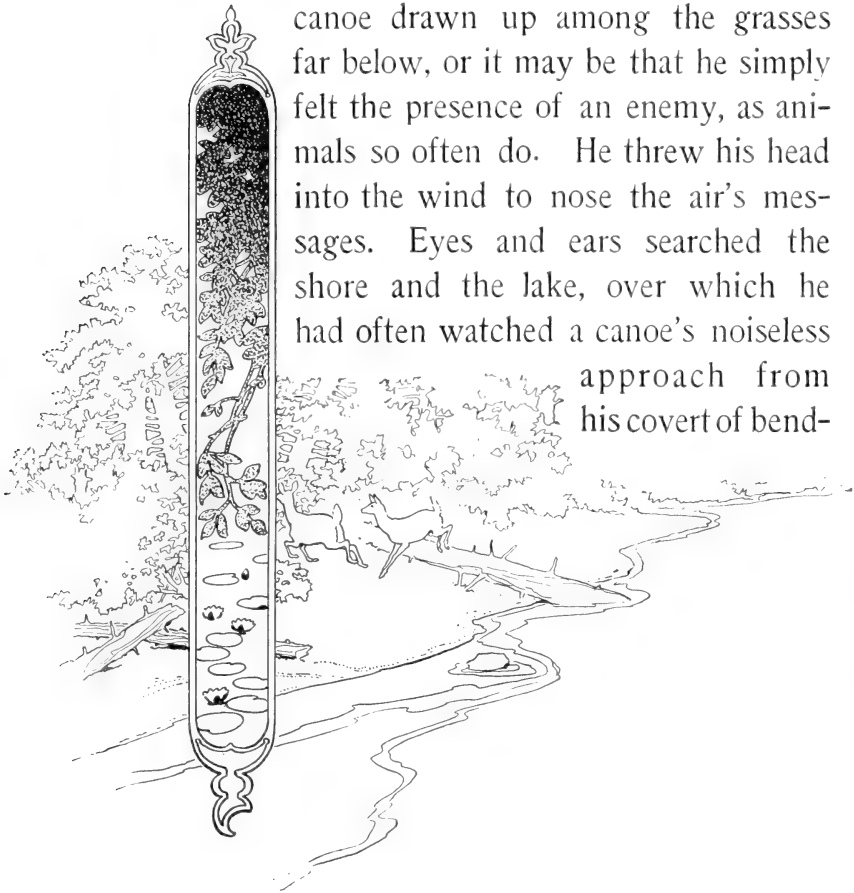
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**LOOKING BACK
ON THE TRAIL**



**LOOKING BACK ON
THE TRAIL**

and I turned my glass upon a magnificent buck that thrust his head out to look up and down the shore. A moment only he watched the pretty scene; then he came swiftly out into the open. A stamp of his forefoot and a sharp snort stopped the play instantly. Perhaps he had seen my canoe drawn up among the grasses far below, or it may be that he simply felt the presence of an enemy, as animals so often do. He threw his head into the wind to nose the air's messages. Eyes and ears searched the shore and the lake, over which he had often watched a canoe's noiseless approach from his covert of bend-



ing fir tips. Then with a low warning he seemed to fade away into the friendly woods; and every deer on the shore followed him without a question.

This was certainly an exception to the bucks' usual selfishness; but it serves to show that animals are quick to learn and heed the intimations that are lost on less sensitive natures, and that they are more ready than men to recognize and follow a safe leader. We have an amusing mote-and-beam way sometimes of speaking of animals as creatures of habit, forgetting how in manners and dress, in food and drink, in work and play, in sleeping and waking, and in all things else we



36 are clogged, bound and fettered by a hundred habits that no free brute would endure for a moment. Possibly we shall find that animals are less creatures of habit than we are; and one is sometimes forced by the evidence of his own eyes to the startling conclusion that some animals are quicker than either governments or churches, which are certainly among the best of our human institutions, to change their habits or adopt new ones when the need arises.

A curious emphasis is laid, by contrast, on this adaptability when you note the habits of sheep, which still follow a leader after the old wild manner. Unfortunately they follow

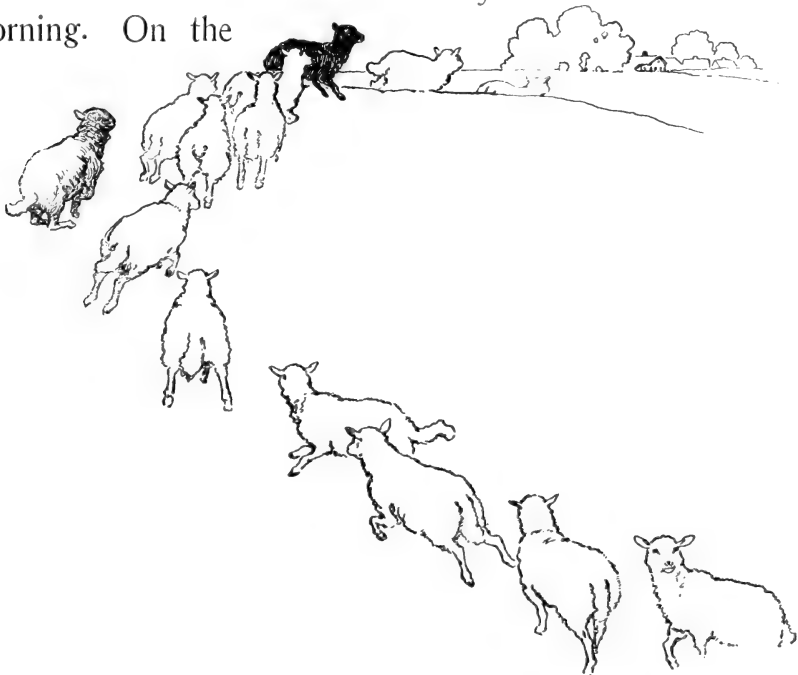
**FOLLOWING
THE DEER** 

blindly, and they follow any fool that happens to be at their head, instead of a leader, the best in the band, selected because of his special fitness for the work in hand. And sheep, of all animals, are most like men, if the Prophets' analogies are to be trusted.

Once, on the island of Nantucket, a flock of sheep strayed from the moors into the town in the early morning. On the

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**LOOKING BACK
ON THE TRAIL**



**LOOKING BACK ON
THE TRAIL**

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lower square something frightened them, and the leader plunged head-long through the plate-glass front of a butcher's window. There the butcher with a howl and a wild waving of arms frightened him again and *shooed* him out in a twinkling, not through the open door, but through the glass of another window that stood close beside it. Half



the flock had followed him blindly, in at one window, out at the other, before the butcher, who was raving and *shooing* like a madman, could stop the senseless procession.

**FOLLOWING
THE DEER** 

Those were tame animals that, by contact with man largely, had kept the habit of following, without, however, keeping the wild sheep's habit of carefully selecting its leaders, — leaders who know how to change their habits quickly to meet changing conditions, as the deer do. And there is undoubtedly a parable here, "would men observingly distil it out."

Whether this new leadership is assumed by the bucks, which shed their selfishness and grow generous to their kind under persecution from without, or whether it is thrust upon them by the does, which have learned quickly that where the big bucks are

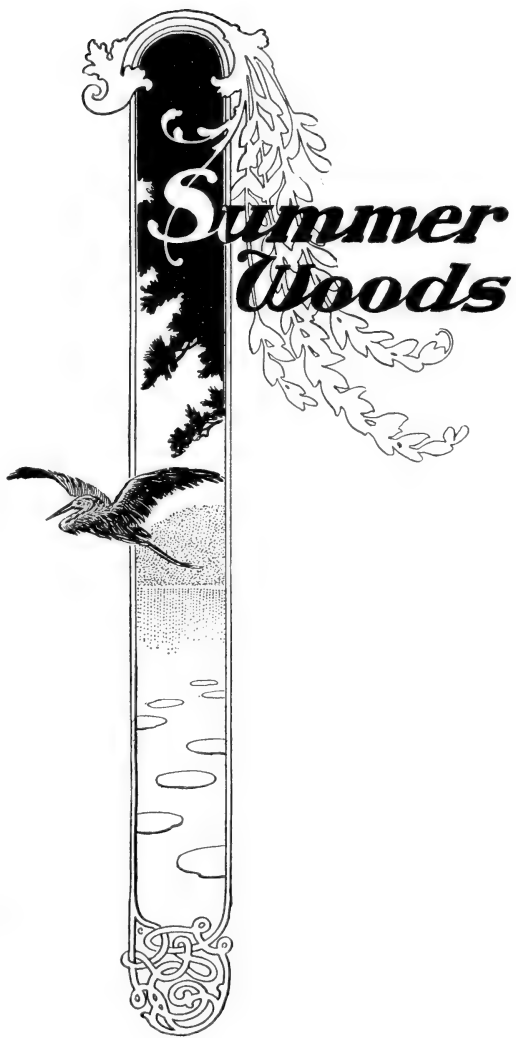
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**LOOKING BACK
ON THE TRAIL**



40 there is safety and peace and good feeding, is an open and interesting question. The point is, that this cunning old buck of my story is no rare exception; for I have seen his kind repeatedly in the moose ranges and on the caribou barrens. And if you follow the deer you will find him still, occasionally, ranging wide and wild through the woods, intent on the chief end of a buck—which is to keep his head on his own shoulders.





*Summer
Woods*





SUMMER WOODS

DACK in the big woods, some five or six miles from a village on the Maine coast, there is a little lake sleeping and dreaming its time away. On the south side the wooded hills rise up and shelter it from the rough touch of the ocean winds and from the *clunk* of cow-bells and the disturbing noises of the farms on the sunny slopes. On another side is a vast and gloomy marsh where the bittern bumps all night



SUMMER WOODS



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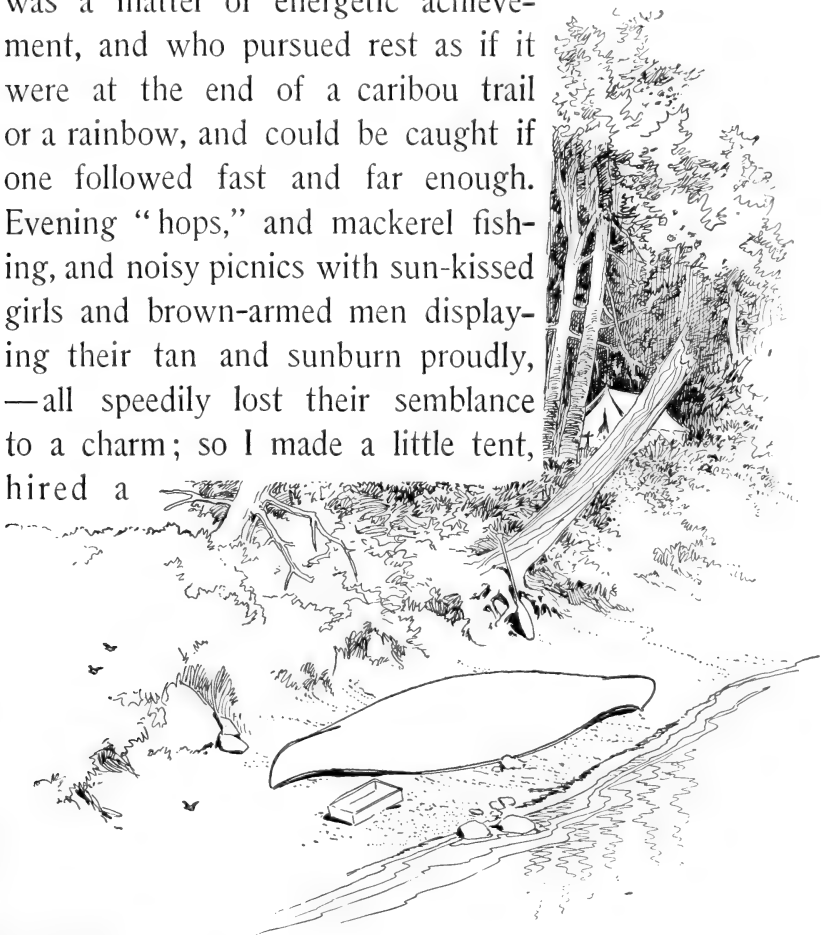
long, and where the musquash builds his domed houses every autumn, all unconscious of traps and undismayed by the fear of losing his warm jacket ere the spring comes.

Though the village is visited every summer by a few score of people in search of recreation, no man ever visits the lonely little pond; for the evergreens stand close about it and hide it so well that you cannot see it from any road or hilltop. Even the natives are, with few exceptions, unaware of its existence. It sleeps there among its evergreens as wild to-day as when the first man found it and called it Deer Pond from what he saw on the shore.

I was camping alone on this little pond, one summer, when I first met and followed the deer. I had gone first to the summer resort in search of rest and peace, but soon wearied of people who thought that peace was a matter of energetic achievement, and who pursued rest as if it were at the end of a caribou trail or a rainbow, and could be caught if one followed fast and far enough. Evening "hops," and mackerel fishing, and noisy picnics with sun-kissed girls and brown-armed men displaying their tan and sunburn proudly,—all speedily lost their semblance to a charm; so I made a little tent, hired a

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SUMMER WOODS



SUMMER WOODS



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canoe, and moved back into the woods.

It was better here. The days were still and long, and the nights full of peace. The air was good, for nothing but the wild creatures breathed it, and the firs had touched it with their fragrance. The far-away surge of the sea came up faintly till the spruces answered it, and both sounds went gossiping over the hills together. On all sides were the woods which, on the north especially, stretched away over a broken country beyond my farthest explorations.

Over against my tenting place on the lake a colony of herons had their nests in some dark hemlocks. They



were interesting as a camp of gypsies, some going off in straggling bands to the coast at daybreak, others frogging in the streams, and a few solitary, patient, philosophical ones joining me daily in following the gentle art of Izaak Walton. When the sunset came and the deep red glowed just behind the evergreens, and the gypsy bands came home, I would see their sentinels posted here and there among the hemlock tips — still, dark, graceful silhouettes etched in sepia against the gorgeous afterglow — and hear the mothers croaking their ungainly babies to sleep in the tree tops.

Down at one end of the pond a brood of young black ducks were



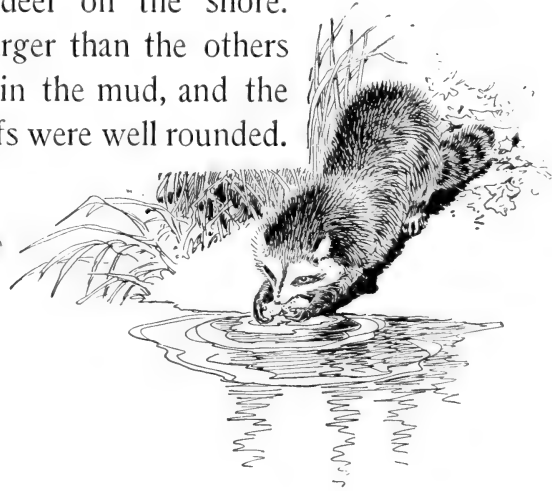
SUMMER WOODS


48 learning their daily lessons in hiding ;
at the other end a noisy kingfisher,
an honest blue heron, and a thieving
mink shared the pools and watched
each other as rival fishermen. Hares
by night, and squirrels by day, and
wood mice at all seasons played round
my tent, or came shyly to taste my
bounty. A pair of big owls lived
and hunted nightly in a swamp hard
by. They hooted dismal prophecies
before the storms came ; and some-
times, for company's sake, they would
glide out of the inky darkness into
the circle of my camp-fire, sweeping in
and out on noiseless wings amid the
jumping shadows and *boo-boo-booing*
hysterically in their uncanny play.

Every morning a raccoon stopped at a little pool in the brook above my tent to wash his food carefully ere taking it home. So there was plenty to watch and plenty to learn, and the days passed all too swiftly.

I had been told by the village hunters that there were no deer in the vicinity; that they had vanished long since, hounded and crusted and chevied out of season till life was not worth the living. So it was with a start of surprise and a thrill of new interest that I came one morning upon the tracks of three deer on the shore. One track was larger than the others and sank deeper in the mud, and the points of the hoofs were well rounded.

SUMMER WOODS





“A big buck,” I told myself with elation, remembering what I had read of woodcraft, “and that track of the pointed hoof and short stride is the doe; and this little one that never goes straight is her fawn.” I was following them eagerly, noting every detail of bent grass and muddied water and nibbled lily pads, when I ran plump upon Old Wally, the cunningest hunter and trapper in the whole region.

“Sho! Mister, what yer follerin?”

“Why, these deer tracks,” I said simply.

Wally gave me a look of great pity.

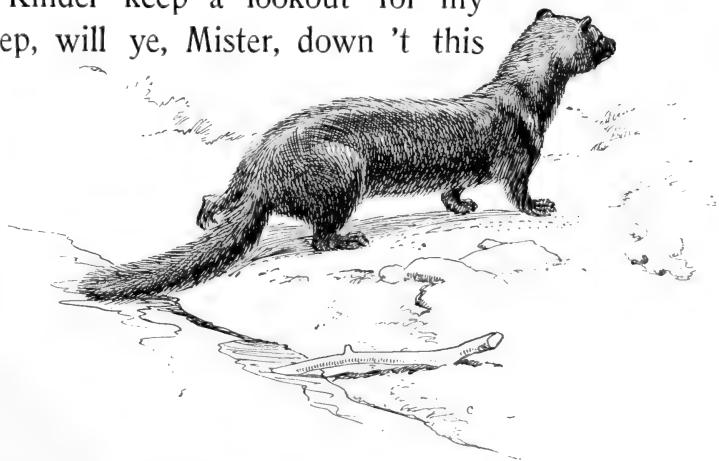
“Guess you’re green — one o’ them city fellers, ain’t ye, Mister?”

Them ere's sheep tracks— my sheep. Wandered off int' th' woods a spell ago, and I hain't seen the tarnal critters since. Came up here lookin' for um this mornin'."

I glanced at Wally's fish basket, and thought of the nibbled lily pads; but I said nothing. Wally was a great hunter, albeit jealous; apt to consider every grouse and mink and otter in the wood as his private property, specially sent by Providence to help him get a lazy living; and I knew little about deer at that time. So I took him to camp, fed him, and sent him away.

"Kinder keep a lookout for my sheep, will ye, Mister, down 't this

SUMMER WOODS



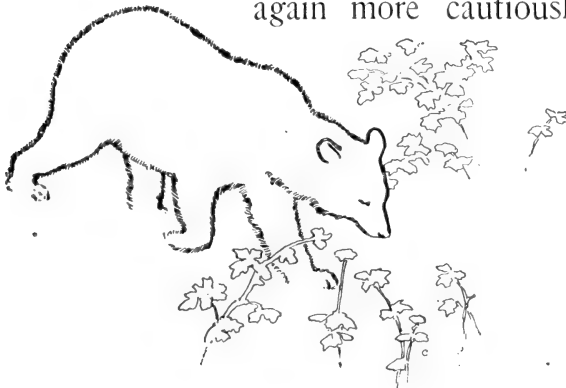
SUMMER WOODS



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end o' the pond?" he said, pointing away from the deer tracks. "If ye see ary one, send out word, and I'll come and fetch 'im. — Need n't foller the tracks though; they wander like an old he-bear this time o' year," he added earnestly as he went away.

That afternoon I went over to a little pond, a mile distant from my camp and deeper in the woods. The shore was well cut up with numerous deer tracks, and among the lily pads everywhere were signs of recent feeding. There was a man's track here too, which came cautiously out from a thick point of woods, and spied about on the shore, and went back again more cautiously than before.



**FOLLOWING
THE DEER** 

I took the measure of it back to camp and found that it corresponded perfectly with the boot tracks of Old Wally. There were a few deer here, undoubtedly, which he was watching jealously for his own benefit in the fall hunting.

When the next still, misty night came, it found me afloat on the lonely little pond, with a dark lantern fastened to an upright stick just in front of me in the canoe. In the shadow of the shores all was black as Egypt; but out in the middle the outlines of the pond could be followed vaguely by the heavy cloud of woods against the lighter sky. The stillness was intense; every slightest

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SUMMER WOODS



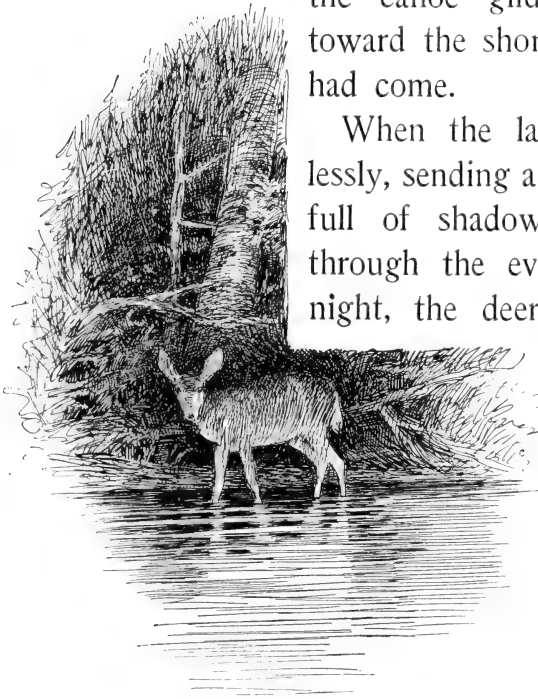
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sound, — the creak of a bough or the ripple of a passing musquash, the *plunk* of a water drop into the lake or the snap of a rotten twig, broken by the weight of clinging mist, — came to the strained ear with startling suddenness. Then, as I waited and sifted the night sounds, a dainty *plop, plop, plop!* the alert tread of a deer walking in shallow water, sent the canoe gliding like a shadow toward the shore whence the sounds had come.

When the lantern opened noiselessly, sending a broad beam of gray, full of shadows and misty lights, through the even blackness of the night, the deer stood revealed—a



beautiful creature, shrinking back into the forest's shadow, yet ever drawn forward by the sudden wonder of the light.

She turned her head towards me, and her eyes blazed like great colored lights in the lantern's reflection. They fascinated me; I could see nothing but those great glowing spots, blazing and scintillating with a kind of intense fear and wonder out of the darkness. How an animal's eyes can be so big and blazing-bright — that was, and still is to me, after many years, the wonder and fascination of jacking.

She turned away at last, unable to endure the glory any longer; then,





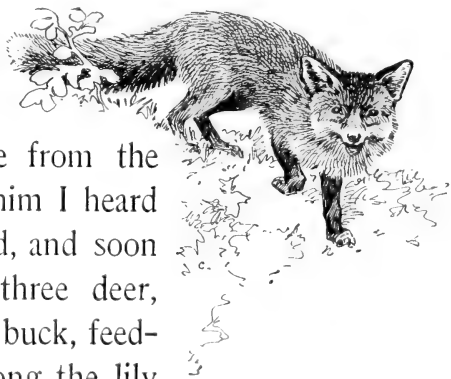
released from the spell of her eyes, I saw her hurrying along the shore, a graceful living shadow among the shadows, rubbing her head among the bushes in a blinded, bewildered way, as if to brush away from her eyes the charm that dazzled them.

I followed a little way, watching every move, till she turned again and for a longer time stared steadfastly at the light. It was harder this time to break away from its power. She came nearer two or three times, halting between dainty steps to stare and wonder, while her eyes blazed into mine. Then, as she faltered irresolutely, I reached forward and closed the lantern, leaving lake and woods

in deeper darkness than before. At the sudden release I heard her plunge out of the water; but a moment later she was moving nervously among the trees, trying to stamp herself up to the courage point of coming back to investigate. And when I flashed my lantern at the spot she threw aside caution and came hurriedly down the bank again.

Later that night a fox stared and yapped at me from the shore. While I watched him I heard other footsteps in the pond, and soon opened my lantern upon three deer, a doe, a fawn and a large buck, feeding at short intervals among the lily pads. The buck was wild; after

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one look he plunged into the woods, whistling danger to his companions. But the fawn heeded nothing, knew nothing for the moment save the fascination of the wonderful glare out there in the darkness. Had I not shut off the light, I think he would have climbed into the canoe in his intense wonder.

I saw the little fellow again, in a curious way, a few nights later. A wild storm was raging over the woods. Under its lash the great trees writhed and groaned; and the "voices," that strange phenomenon of the forest and rapids, were calling wildly through the roar of the storm and the rush of rain on innumerable leaves. I had



Charles Cleveland

"The fascination of the wonderful glare
out there in the darkness"



**FOLLOWING
THE DEER** 

gone out on the old wood road, to lose myself for a little while in the intense darkness and uproar, and to feel again the wild thrill of the elements. But the night was too dark, the storm too fierce. Every few moments I would blunder against a tree, which told me I was off the road; and to lose the road meant to wander all night in the storm-swept woods. So I went back for my lantern, with which I again started down the old cart path, a little circle of wavering, jumping shadows about me, the one gray spot in the midst of universal darkness.

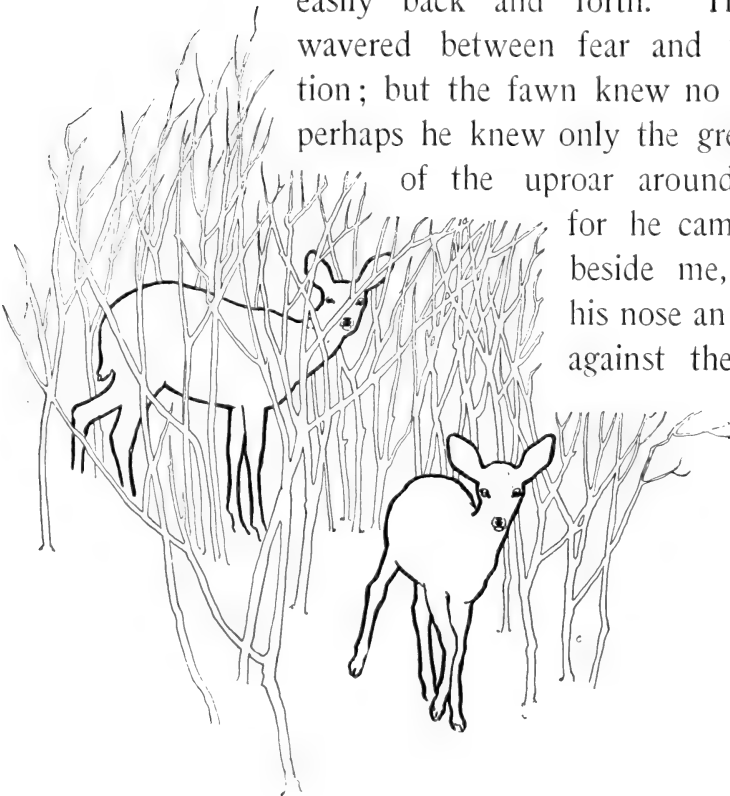
I had gone but a few hundred yards when there was a rush—it was not

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WOODS**



the wind or the rain — in a thicket on my right. Something jumped into the circle of light. Two bright spots burned out of the darkness, then two more; and with strange bleats a deer came towards me with her fawn. I stood stock-still, with a thrill in my spine that was not altogether of the elements, while the deer moved uneasily back and forth. The doe wavered between fear and fascination; but the fawn knew no fear, or perhaps he knew only the great fear of the uproar around him; for he came close beside me, rested his nose an instant against the light,

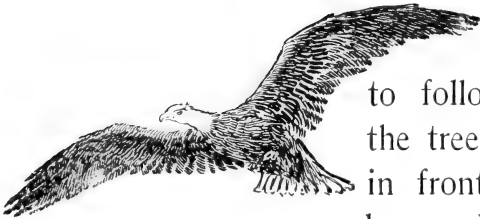


then thrust his head between my arm and body, so as to shield his eyes, and pressed close against my side, shivering with cold and fear, pleading dumbly for my protection against the pitiless storm.

I refrained from touching the little thing, for no wild creature likes to be handled, while his mother called to him in vain from the leafy darkness. When I turned to go he followed me close, still trying to thrust his face under my arm; and I had to close the light with a sharp click before he bounded away down the road, where one who knew better than I how to take care of a frightened innocent was waiting to receive him.



I gave up everything else but fishing after that, and took to watching the deer; but there was little to be learned in the summer woods. Once I came upon the big buck lying down in a thicket. I was following his track, trying to learn the Indian trick of sign-trailing, when, as I turned for a moment to follow an eagle's flight over the tree tops, the buck shot up in front of me like Jack-in-a-box, and was gone before I knew what it meant. From the impressions in the moss I concluded that he slept with all four feet under him, ready to shoot up at an instant's notice with power enough in his spring to clear



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any obstacle near him. And then I thought of the way a cow gets up, first one end, then the other, rising from the fore knees at last with puff and grunt and clacking of joints; and I took my first lesson in wholesome respect for the creature whom I already considered mine by right of discovery, and whose splendid head I saw, in anticipation, adorning the hall of my house — to the utter discomfiture of Old Wally.

At another time I crept up to an old road beyond the little deer pond, where three deer, a mother with her fawn, and a young spike-buck, were playing. The two larger deer kept running up and down, leaping over

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WOODS**



the trees that lay across the road with marvelous ease and grace, and trying in twenty pretty ways to make the fawn join them. It was plain kindergarten training; the mother by the methods of play and imitation was teaching her young the difficult trick of jumping. The little fellow followed his leaders awkwardly; but he had the spring in him, and was learning rapidly to gather himself for the rise, and lift his hind feet at the top of his jump, and come down with all fours together, instead of sprawling clumsily as a horse does.

I saw the perfection of it a few days later. I was sitting before my tent door at twilight, watching the



herons, when there was a shot and a sudden crash over across the pond. In a moment the big buck plunged out of the woods and went leaping along the shore, his head high, antlers back, and the mighty muscles driving him up and onward as if invisible wings were bearing him. A dozen great trees lay fallen across his path, one of which, as I afterwards measured, lay a clear eight feet above the sand. But he never hesitated nor broke his splendid stride. He would rush at a tree; rise light and swift till above it, where he turned as if on a pivot, with head thrown back to the wind, actually resting an instant in air at the very top of his



jump; then shoot downward, not falling but driven still by the impulse of his great muscles. When he struck, all four feet were close together; and almost quicker than the eye could follow he was in the air again, sweeping along the water's edge like a living spring of tempered steel, or rising like a bird over the next obstacle.

Just below me was a stream with muddy shores on both sides. I looked to see if he would stog himself there or turn aside; but he knew the place better than I, and that just under the soft mud the sand lay firm and sure. He struck the muddy place only twice, once on either side of the fifteen-

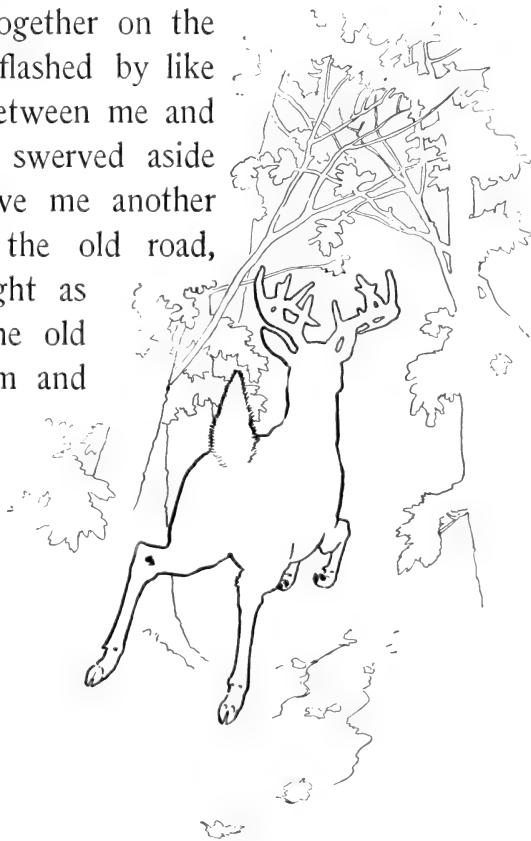
FOLLOWING 
THE DEER

foot stream, spattering out a light shower of mud around him; then, because the banks on my side were steep and there was no open stretch of shore, he leaped for the cover of the woods and was gone.

I thought I had seen the last of him, when I heard him coming, *bump! bump! bump!* the swift blows of his hoofs sounding all together on the forest floor. So he flashed by like a frightened grouse between me and my tent door, barely swerved aside for my fire, and gave me another beautiful run down the old road, rising and falling light as thistle-down, with the old trees arching over him and

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**SUMMER
WOODS**



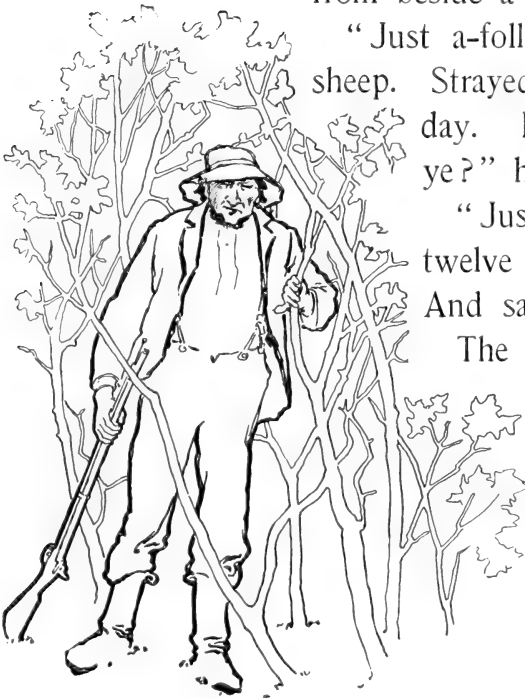
brushing his antlers as he swept along.

The last branch had hardly swished behind him when, across the pond, the underbrush parted cautiously and Old Wally appeared, trailing a long gun. He had followed scarcely a dozen of the buck's jumps when he turned and saw me watching him from beside a great maple.

"Just a-follerin' one o' my tarnal sheep. Strayed off day 'fore yesterday. Hain't seen 'im, hev ye?" he bawled across.

"Just went along; ten or twelve points on his horns. And say, Wally"—

The old sinner, who was



glancing about furtively to see if the white sand showed any blood stains, looked up quickly at the changed tone —

“You let those sheep of yours alone till the first of October; then I’ll help you round ’em up. Just now they’re worth forty dollars apiece to the state. I’ll see that the warden collects it, too, if you shoot another.”

“Sho! Mister, I ain’t a-shootin’ no deer. Hain’t seen a deer round here in ten year or more. I just took a crack at a pa’tridge ’at *kwitted* at me, top o’ a stump” —

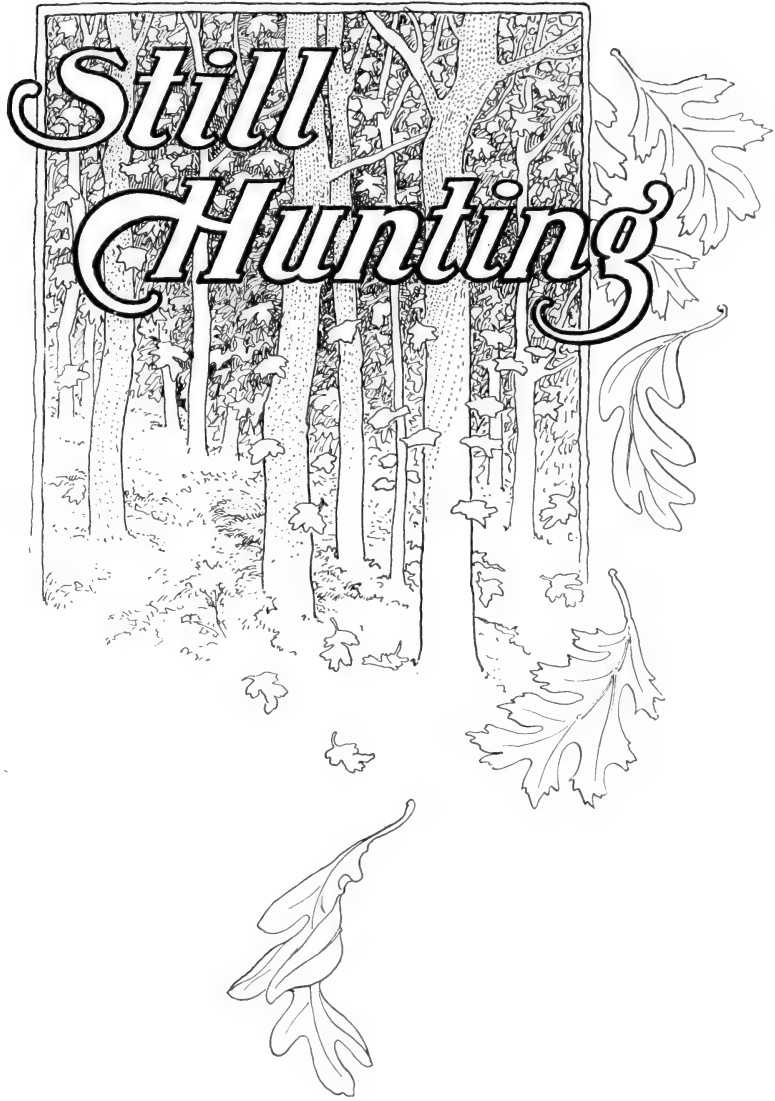
But as he vanished among the hemlocks, trailing his old gun, I knew

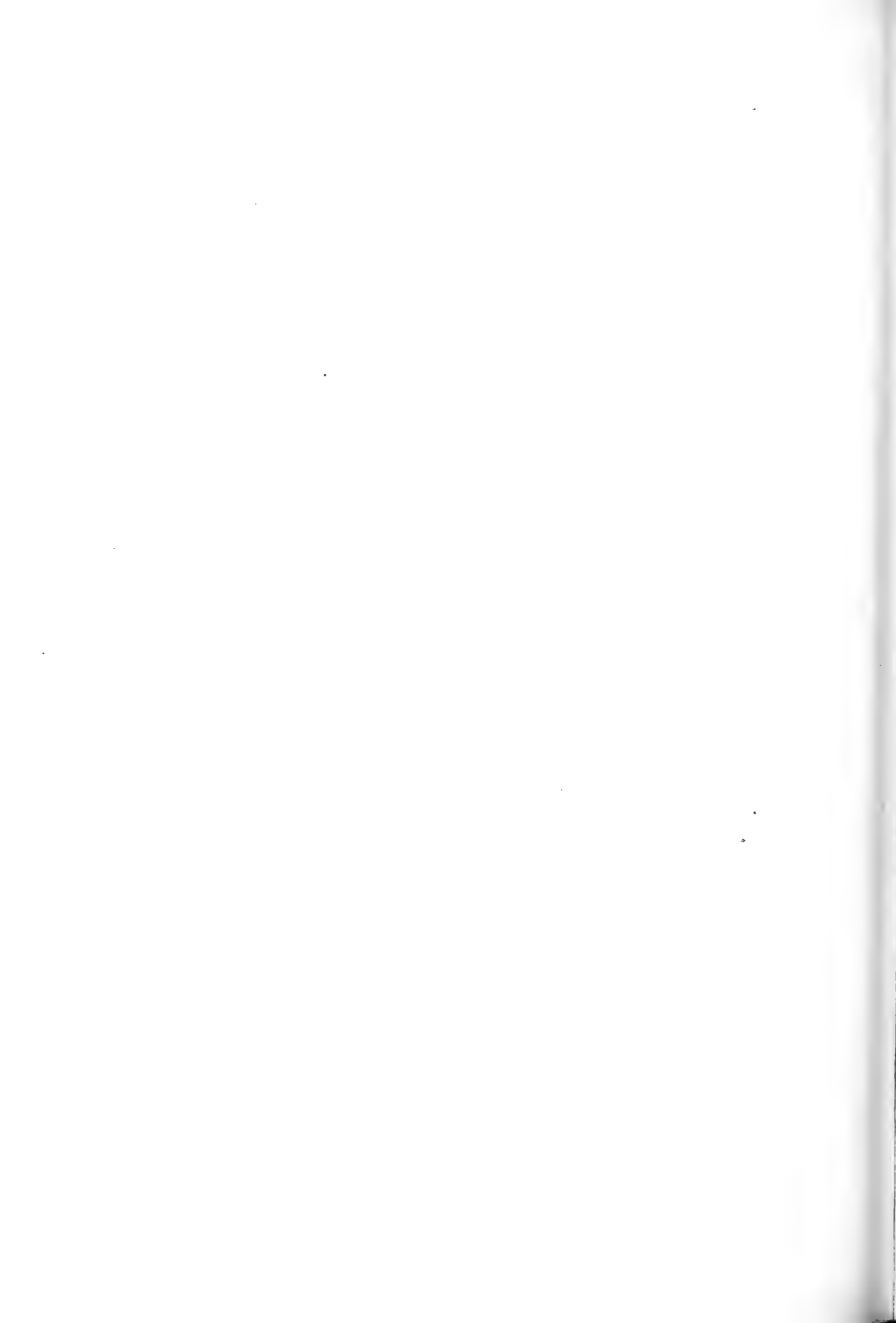


WOODS  **SUMMER**

that he understood the threat. To make the matter sure I drove the deer roughly out of the pond that night, giving them the first of a series of rude lessons in caution, until the falling leaves should make them wild enough to take care of themselves.









Still Hunting

OCTOBER, the superb month, found me again in the same woods, this time not to watch and learn, but to follow the big buck to his death. Old Wally was ahead of me; but the falling leaves had done their work well. The deer had deserted the pond ere he began to hunt them there in the early and late twilight. Here and there on the ridges I found their tracks and saw them at a distance, shy, wild, alert,



STILL HUNTING



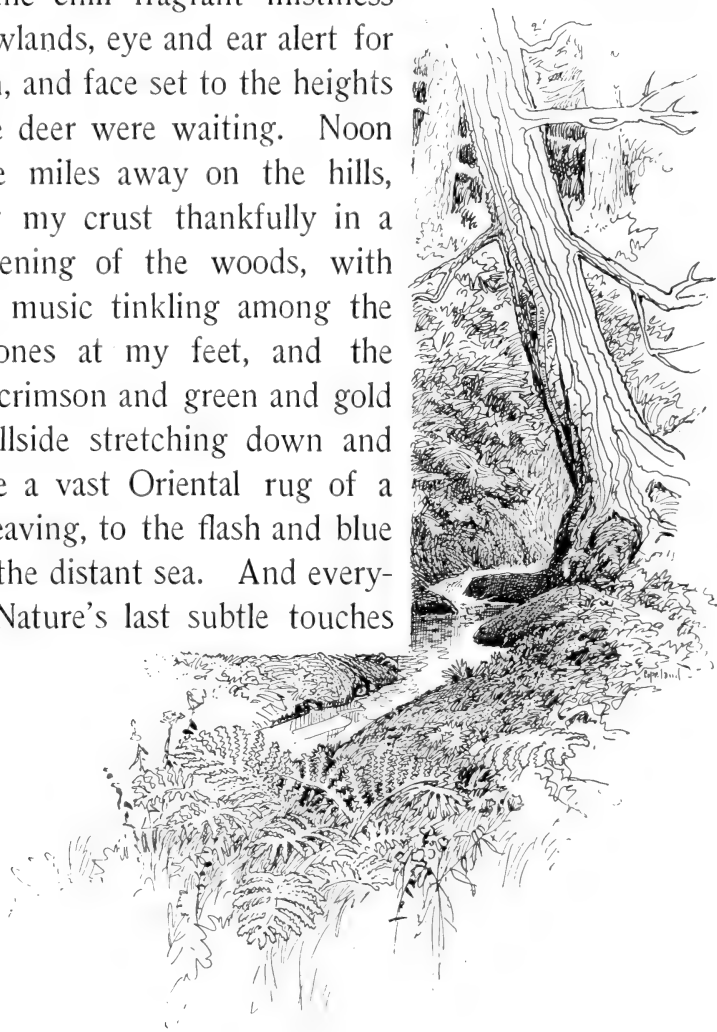
cautious as a fox and ready as Moon between the bear to take care of themselves in any emergency. The big buck led them everywhere. Already his spirit, grown keen and masterful in long battle against his enemies, seemed to dominate every deer in the woods. Even the fawns had learned his fear, and followed it as their salvation.

Then began the most fascinating experience that comes to one who haunts the woods—the first, thrilling, glorious days of the still-hunter's schooling, with the frost-colored October woods for a schoolroom and Nature herself for the all-wise teacher. Daylight found me far afield, while

the heavy mists hung low and the night smells still clung to the first fallen leaves, moving swift and silent through the chill fragrant mistiness of the lowlands, eye and ear alert for every sign, and face set to the heights where the deer were waiting. Noon found me miles away on the hills, munching my crust thankfully in a sunny opening of the woods, with a brook's music tinkling among the mossy stones at my feet, and the gorgeous crimson and green and gold of the hillside stretching down and away, like a vast Oriental rug of a giant's weaving, to the flash and blue gleam of the distant sea. And everywhere — Nature's last subtle touches

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to her picture — the sense of a filmy veil let down ere the end was reached, a soft haze on the glowing hilltops, a sheen as of silver mist along the stream in the valley, a fleecy light-shot cloud on the sea, to suggest more beautiful things beyond the veil where one could not see.

Evening found me loitering homeward through the short twilight, along silent wood roads from which the birds had departed, breathing deep of the pure air with its pungent tang of ripened leaves, sniffing the first night smells, listening now for the yap of a fox, and now for the distant bay of a dog

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to guide me in a short cut over the hills to where my room in the old farmhouse was waiting.

It mattered little that, far behind me (though not so far from where the trail ended), the big buck began his twilight wandering along the ridges, sniffing alertly at the vanishing scent of the man on his feeding ground. The best things that a hunter brings home are in his heart, not in his game bag; and a free deer meant another long glorious day, following him through the October woods, making the tyro's mistakes, to be sure, but feeling also the tyro's thrill and the tyro's wonder, and the consciousness of growing power and

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skill to read in a new language the secrets that the moss and leaves hide so innocently.

There was so much to note and learn and remember in those days! This bit of moss with the curiously measured angular cut in it, as if the Wood Folk had taken to studying Euclid,—how wonderful it was at first! The game has been here; it was a deer's foot that drew that sharp triangle; and I must measure and feel it carefully, and press aside the moss and study the leaves to know whether it were my big buck or no, and how long since he passed, and whether he were feeding or running or just nosing about and watching the valley



below. And all that is much to learn from a tiny triangle in the moss, with imaginary *a, b, c*'s clinging to the dried moss blossoms.

How careful one had to be! Every shift of wind, every cloud shadow had to be noted. The lesson of a dew-drop splashed from a leaf in the early morning; the testimony of a crushed flower, or a broken brake, or a bending grass blade; the counsel of a bit of bark frayed from a birch tree, with a shred of deer-velvet clinging to it,—all these were vastly significant and interesting. Every copse and hiding place and cathedral aisle of the big woods in front must be searched with quiet eyes far ahead, as one

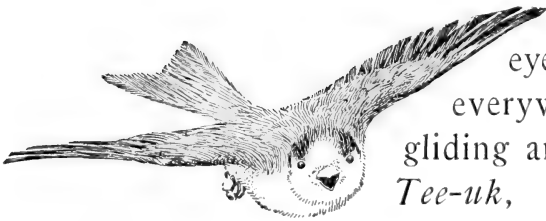
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82 glided silently from tree to tree. That depression in the gray moss of a fir thicket, with two others near it—three deer lay down there last night; no, this morning; no, scarcely an hour ago, and the dim traces along the ridge show no sign of hurry or alarm. So I move on, following surely the trail that, only a few days since, would have been invisible as the trail of a fish in the lake



to my unschooled eyes, searching, searching everywhere for dim forms gliding among the trees, till—
Tee-uk, tee-tee-uk! Kaaab! Crash-bump! There are three messages coming all at once like electric

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shocks from a thicket scarcely fifty yards ahead. The first is the meddlesome cry of Deedeaskh the jay, with a tingling note of danger in it. The second is the throaty alarm blast of a frightened deer. The third—no need of woodcraft to understand that. And so I know, with curious feelings of irritation and intense admiration, that the bluejay, which has been gliding after me curiously the last ten minutes, has fathomed my intentions at last and flown ahead to alarm the deer, which are now bounding away for denser cover.

I brush ahead heedlessly, knowing that caution here only wastes time, and study the fresh trail where

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the quarry jumped away in alarm. Straight down the wind it goes. Cunning old buck! He has no idea what Deedeeaskh's alarm was about; but a warning, whether of crow or jay or tainted wind or snapping twig, is never lost on the Wood Folk. Now as he bounds along, cleaving the woods like a living bolt, yet stopping short every hundred yards or so to whirl and listen and sort the messages that the wood wires bring to him, my big buck is perfectly sure of himself and of his little flock, knowing that, if danger follow down wind, his own nose will tell him all about it. I glance at the sun; only another hour of light; and I am six miles from



“To whirl and listen and sort the messages
that the wood wires bring to him”



home. I glance at the jay flitting about restlessly in a mixture of mischief and curiosity, whistling his *too-loo-loo* loudly as a sign to the fleeing game that I am right here and that he is watching me. Then I take up the back trail, planning the morrow's hunt.

So the days went by, one after another; and still the big buck, aided by his friends the birds, held his own against my craft and patience. He grew more wild and alert with every hunt, and kept so far ahead of me that only once before snow blew did I have even the chance of stalking him, and then the cunning old fellow foiled me again masterfully.



STILL HUNTING



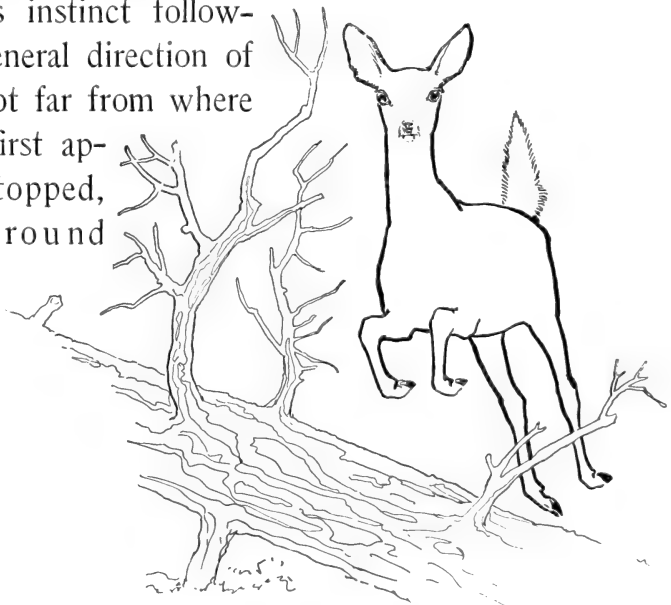
88

Old Wally was afield too; but, so far as I could read from the woods' record, he fared no better than I on the trail of the buck. Once, when I knew my game was miles ahead, I heard the long-drawn *wbang* of Wally's old gun across a little valley. Presently the brush began to crackle, and a small doe came jumping among the trees straight towards me. Within thirty feet she saw me and caught herself at the very top of her jump by a curious wriggle that all deer have for stopping themselves in mid-air, and which, it would seem, must unjoint every bone in her delicate body. Instead of falling forward she seemed to drop perpendicularly after

her wriggle, and stood for an instant as if turned to stone, with a spruce branch bending over to hide her from my eyes. Then, when I moved not, having no desire to kill a doe but only to watch the beautiful creature, she turned, glided a few steps, and went bounding away along the ridge.

Old Wally came in a little while, not following the trail, — he had no skill nor patience for that, — but with a woodsman's instinct following up the general direction of his game. Not far from where the doe had first appeared he stopped, looked all around

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keenly, then rested his hands on the end of his long gun barrel, and put his chin on his hands.

“Drat it all! Never tetched ’im again. That paowder o’ mine hain’t wuth a cent. You wait till snow blows,” — addressing the silent woods at large, — “then I’ll get me some paowder as is paowder, and foller the critter, and I’ll show ye” —

Old Wally said never a word, but all this was in his face and attitude as he leaned moodily on his long gun. And I watched him, chuckling, from my hiding among the rocks, till with curious instinct he vanished down the ridge behind the very thicket where I had seen the doe

flash out of sight a few moments before.

When I saw him again he was deep in less creditable business. It was a perfect autumn day, the air full of light and color, the fragrant woods resting under the soft haze like a great bouquet of Nature's own culling, birds, bees and squirrels frolicking all day long amidst the trees, yet doing an astonishing amount of work in gathering each one his harvest for the cold dark days that were coming.



At daylight, from the top of a hill, I looked down on a little clearing and saw the first signs of the game I was seeking. There had been what



STILL HUNTING



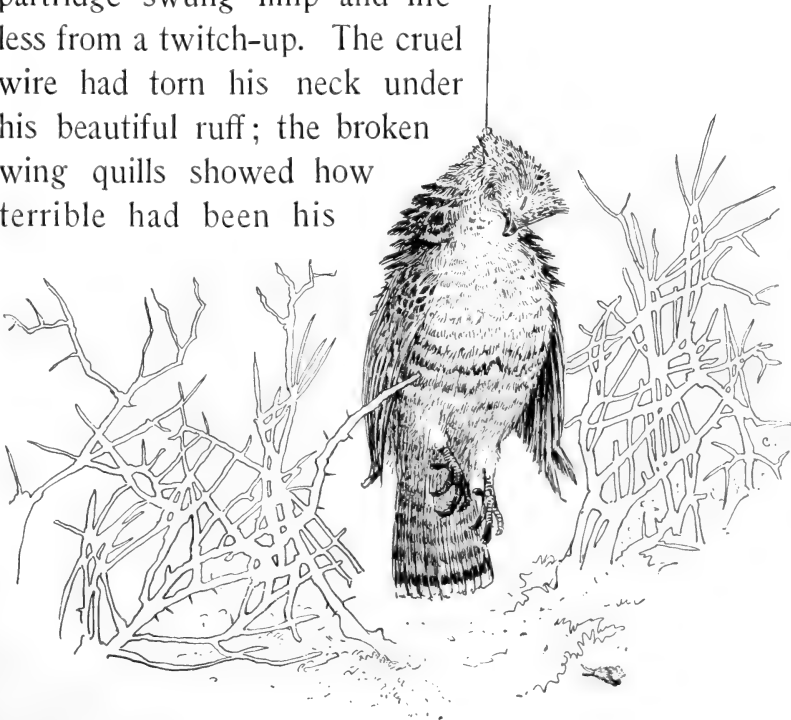
old people call a duck-frost. In the meadows and along the fringes of the woods the white rime lay thick and powdery on grass and dead leaves; every foot that touched it left a black mark, as if seared with a hot iron, when the sun came up and shone upon it. Across the field three black trails meandered away from the brook; but alas for my hunting! under the fringe of evergreen was another trail, that of a man, which crept and halted and hid, yet drew nearer and nearer the point where the three deer trails vanished into the wood. Then I found powder marks, and some brush that was torn by buckshot, and three trails that

bounded away, and a tiny splash of deeper red on a crimson maple leaf. So I left the deer to the early hunter and wandered away up the hill for a long, lazy, satisfying day in the woods alone.

Presently I came to a low brush fence running zigzag through the woods, with snares set every few yards in the partridge and rabbit runs. Over the third opening a fine cock partridge swung limp and lifeless from a twitch-up. The cruel wire had torn his neck under his beautiful ruff; the broken wing quills showed how terrible had been his

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struggle. Hung by the neck till dead! —an atrocious fate to mete out to a noble bird. I followed the hedge of snares for a couple of hundred yards, finding three more strangled grouse and a brown rabbit. Then I sat down in a beautiful spot to watch the life about me, and to catch the snarer at his abominable work.



The sun climbed higher and blotted out the four trails in the field below. Red squirrels came down close to my head to chatter and scold and drive me out of the solitude. A beautiful gray squirrel went tearing by among the branches, pursued by one of the savage little reds that nipped and snarled at his heels. The two cannot

live together, and the gray must always go. Jays stopped spying on the squirrels — to see and remember where their winter stores were hidden, and later to steal them — and lingered near me, whistling their curiosity at the silent man below. None but jays gave any heed to the five grim corpses swinging by their necks over the deadly hedge, and to them it was only a new sensation.

Then a cruel thing happened, one of the many tragedies that pass unnoticed in the woods. There was a scurry in the underbrush, and strange cries like those of an agonized child, only tiny and distant, as if heard in a phonograph. Over the sounds a



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96 crow hovered and rose and fell, in his intense absorption seeing nothing but the creature below. Suddenly he swooped like a hawk into a thicket, and out of the cover sprang a young hare, only to crouch shivering in the open space under a hemlock's drooping branches. There the crow



headed him, struck once, twice, three times, straight hard blows with his powerful beak; and when I ran to the spot the leveret lay quite dead with his skull split, while the crow went flapping wildly to the tree tops, giving the danger cry to the flock that were gossiping in the sunshine on the ridge across the valley.

The woods were all still after that; jays and squirrels seemed appalled at the tragedy, and avoided me as if I were responsible for the still little body under the hemlock tips. An hour passed; then, a quarter-mile away, in the direction that the deer had taken in the early morning, a single jay set up his cry, the cry of something new passing in the woods. Two or three others joined him; the cry came nearer. A flock of cross-bills went whistling overhead, coming from the same direction. Then, as I slipped away into an evergreen thicket, a partridge came whirring up and darted by me like a brown arrow driven by the bending branches be-

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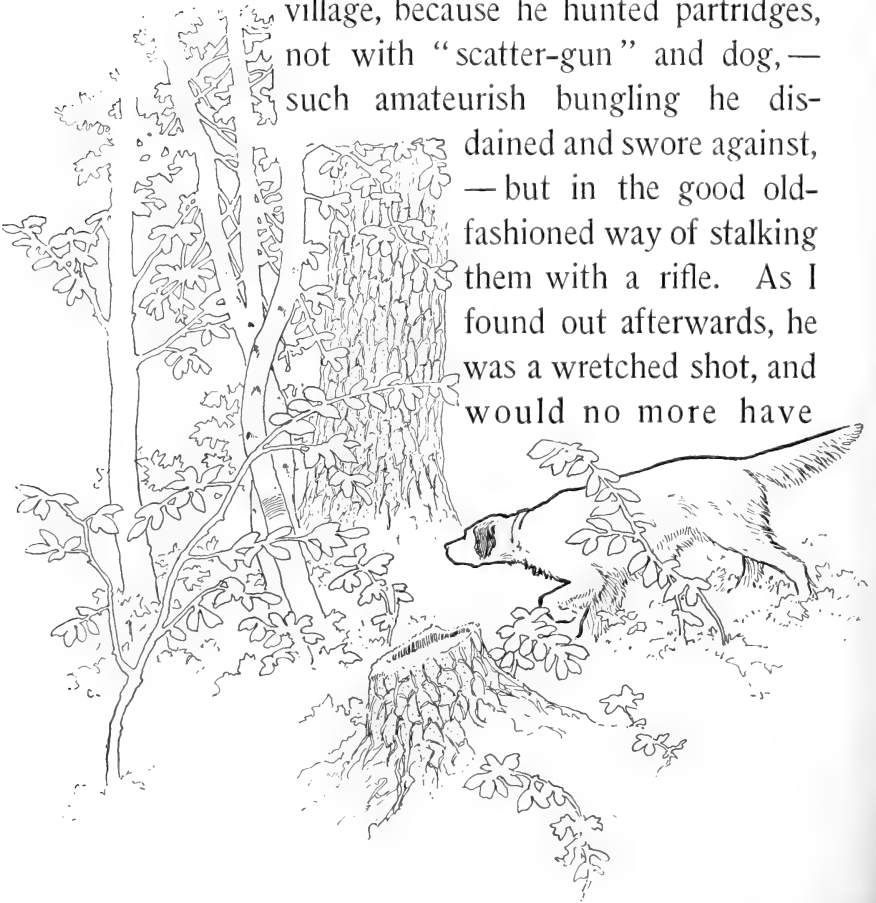


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hind him, flicking the twigs sharply with his wings as he drove along. And then, on the path of his last forerunner, Old Wally appeared, his keen eyes searching his murderous gibbet-line expectantly.

Now Old Wally was held in great reputation by the Nimrods of the village, because he hunted partridges, not with "scatter-gun" and dog,—such amateurish bungling he disdained and swore against,—but in the good old-fashioned way of stalking them with a rifle. As I found out afterwards, he was a wretched shot, and would no more have



dreamed of giving a grouse a flying chance in the thick woods than of flapping his arms expecting to fly himself. Therefore he affected supreme contempt for the method; and he was a perfect actor. When he brought his bunch of birds to market his admirers pointed with pride to the marks of his wondrous skill. Here was a bird with the head hanging by a thread of skin; there one with its neck broken; there a furrow along the top of a crested head; and here — perfect work! a partridge with both eyes gone, showing the course of Old Wally's unerring bullet.

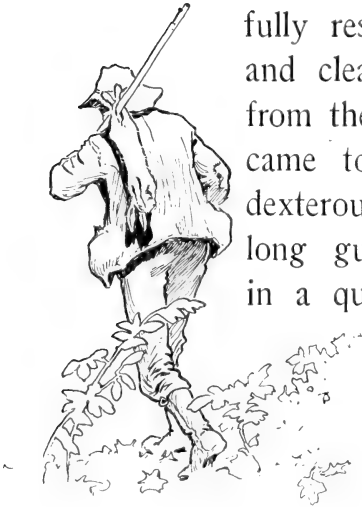
Not ten yards from my hiding place he took down a partridge from



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its gallows, fumbled a pointed stick out of his pocket, ran it through the bird's neck to make a bullet hole, and stowed the poor creature that had died miserably, without a chance for its life, away in one of his big pockets, a self-satisfied grin on his face as he glanced down the hedge and saw another bird swinging. So he followed his hangman's hedge, treating each bird to his pointed stick, carefully resetting the snares after him and clearing away the fallen leaves from the fatal pathways. When he came to the rabbit he harled him dexterously, slipped him over his long gun barrel, took his bearings in a quick look around, and struck



over the ridge for another southern hillside.

Here, at last, was the secret of Wally's boasted skill in partridge hunting with a rifle. Spite of my indignation at the snare line, the cruel death which gaped day and night for the game as it ran about heedlessly in the fancied security of its own coverts, a humorous, half-shamefaced feeling of admiration would creep in as I thought of the old sinner's cunning, and remembered his look of disdain when he met me, one day, with a "scatter-gun" in my hands and old Don following obediently at heel. Thinking that in his long life he must have learned many things in

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the woods that I would be glad to know, I had invited him cordially to join me. But he only withered me with the contempt in his hawk eyes, and wiggled his toe as if holding back a kick from my honest dog with difficulty.

“Go huntin’ with ye? Not much, Mister. Scarin’ a pa’tridge to death with a dum dog, and then turnin’ a handful o’ shot loose on the critter, an’ call it huntin’! Here’s the way to kill a pa’tridge, the on’y decent way” — and he pulled a bird out of his pocket, pointing to a clean hole through the head where the eyes had been.

When he had gone I kicked the hedge to pieces quickly, cut the



twitch-ups at the butts and threw them with their wire nooses far into the thickets, and posted a warning in a cleft stick on the sight of the last gibbet. Then I followed Wally to a second and third line of snares, which were treated in the same rough way, and watched him with curiously mingled feelings of detestation and amusement as he sneaked down the dense hillside with tread light as Leatherstocking, the old gun over his shoulder, his pockets bulging enormously, and a string of hanged rabbits swinging to and fro on his gun barrel, as if in death they had caught the dizzy motion and could not quit it while the woods they had loved and

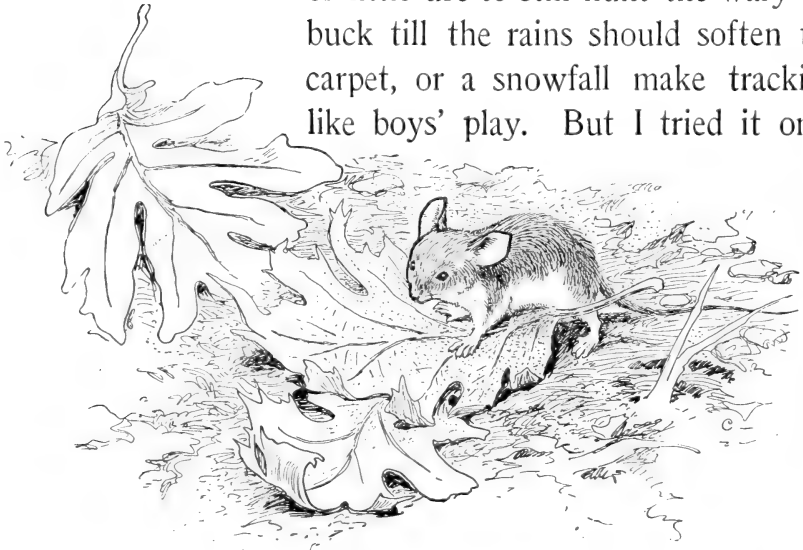


STILL HUNTING



lived in threw their long sad shadows over them. So they came to the meadow, into which they had so often come limping down to play or feed among the twilight shadows, and crossed it for the last time on Wally's gun barrel, swinging, swinging.

The leaves were falling thickly now; they formed a dry, hard carpet over which it was impossible to follow game accurately, and they rustled a sharp warning under foot if but a wood-mouse ran over them. It was of little use to still-hunt the wary old buck till the rains should soften the carpet, or a snowfall make tracking like boys' play. But I tried it once



more; found the quarry on a ridge deep in the woods, and followed—more by good luck than by good management—till, late in the afternoon, I saw the buck with two smaller deer standing far away on a half-cleared hillside, quietly watching a wide stretch of country below. Beyond them the ridge narrowed gradually to a long neck, ending in a high open bluff above the river.

There I tried my last hunter's dodge, which was to approach craftily to where the deer were hiding in dense thickets and rush straight at them, knowing they must either break away down the open hillside, and so give me a running shot, or

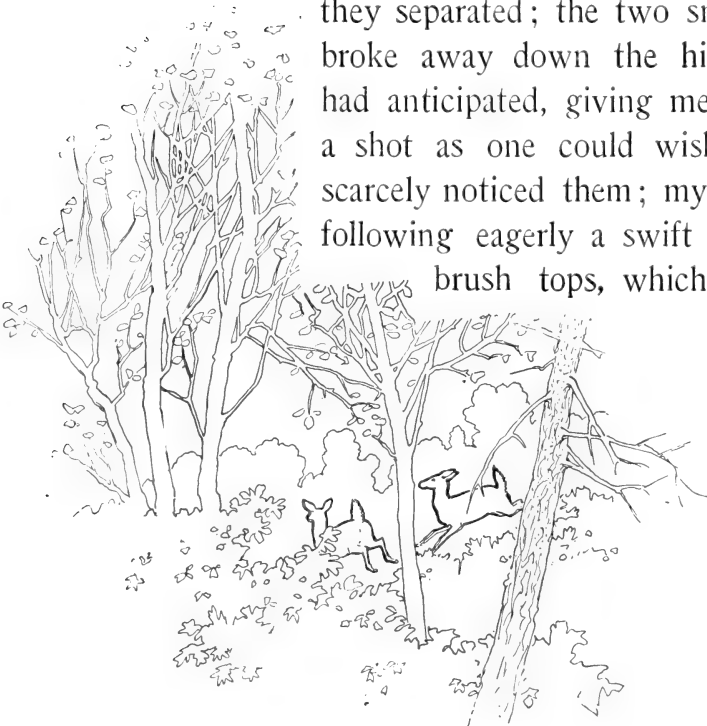


STILL HUNTING



else rush straightaway at the sudden alarm and be caught on the bluff beyond, where the river would hold them as in a pen.

Was it simple instinct, I wonder, or did the buck that had grown old in hunter's wiles feel what was passing in my mind, and like a flash take the chance that would save, not only his own life, but the lives of the two that followed him? At the first alarm they separated; the two smaller deer broke away down the hillside as I had anticipated, giving me as pretty a shot as one could wish. But I scarcely noticed them; my eyes were following eagerly a swift waving of brush tops, which told me



that the big buck was jumping away, straight into the natural trap ahead.

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I followed on the run till the ridge narrowed so that I could see across it on either side; then slowly, carefully, steadying my nerves for the shot. The river was all about him now, too wide to jump, too steep-banked to climb down; the only way out was past me. I gripped the rifle hard, holding it at a ready as I moved forward, watching either side for a slinking form among the scattered coverts. At last, at last! and how easily, how perfectly I had trapped him! My heart was singing as I stole along.



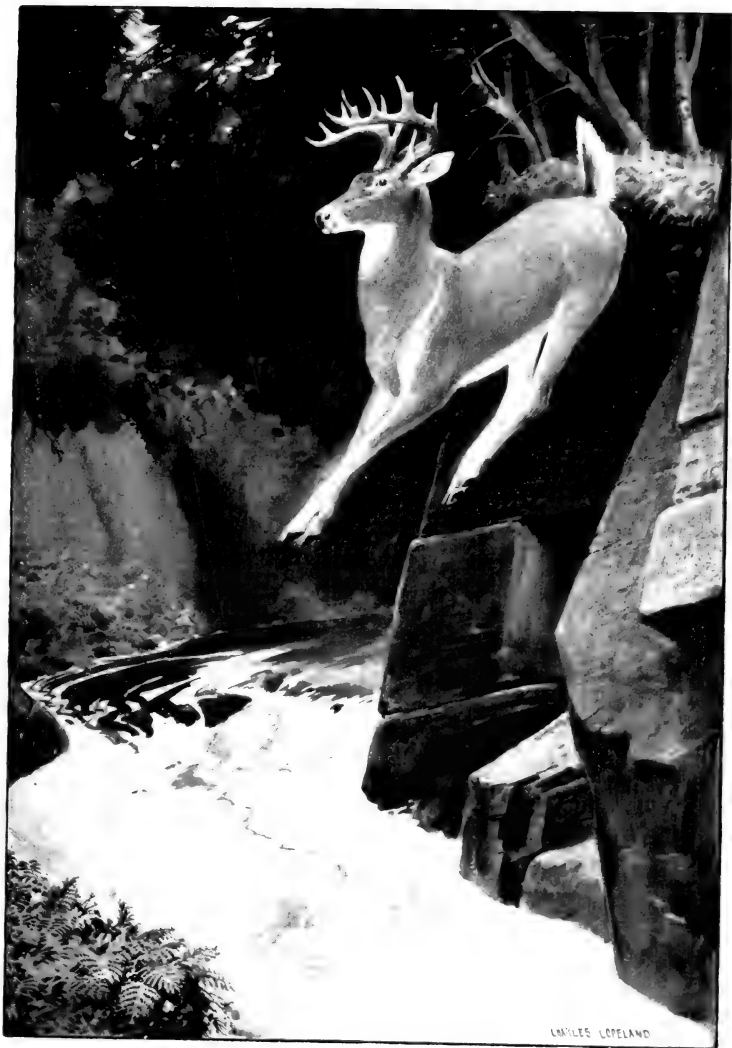
The tracks moved straight on; first an easy run, then a swift, hard rush

STILL HUNTING



as they approached the river. But what was this? The whole end of the bluff was under my eye, and no buck standing at bay or running wildly along the bank to escape. The tracks were farther apart now, rushing straight at the edge of the cliff in great leaps. My heart quickened its beat, as if I were nerving myself for a supreme effort. Would he do it? would he dare?

A foot this side the brink the lichens were torn away where the sharp hoofs had cut down to solid earth. Thirty feet beyond, well over the farther bank and ten feet below the level where I stood, the fresh earth showed clearly among the hoof-



“A jump that made one’s nostrils spread and his nerves tingle as he measured it with his eye”



torn moss. Far below the river fretted and roared in a white rush of rapids. He had taken the jump, a jump that made one's nostrils spread and his nerves tingle as he measured it with his eye. Somewhere, over in the spruces' shadow there, he was hiding, watching me no doubt to see if I would dare follow.

That was the last of the autumn woods for me; and never did I leave them with a lighter heart. No man could measure that last splendid jump, or think of the brave heart and steady head and the mighty muscles which made it possible, without taking off his hat in honest pride to the game he had followed. Though I had



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hunted the buck for weeks, I think I was glad at heart that it was he and not I that had won. If I had only seen him—just one splendid glimpse as he shot over and poised in mid-air, turning for the down plunge! That was my only regret as I turned slowly away, the river singing beside me and the shadows lengthening along the home trail.









THE snow had come, and with it a Christmas holiday. For weeks I had looked longingly out of college windows as the first tracking-snows came sifting down, my thoughts turning from books and the problems of human wisdom to the winter woods, with their wide white pages written all over by the feet of wild things. Then the sun would shine again, and I knew that the records were washed clean and

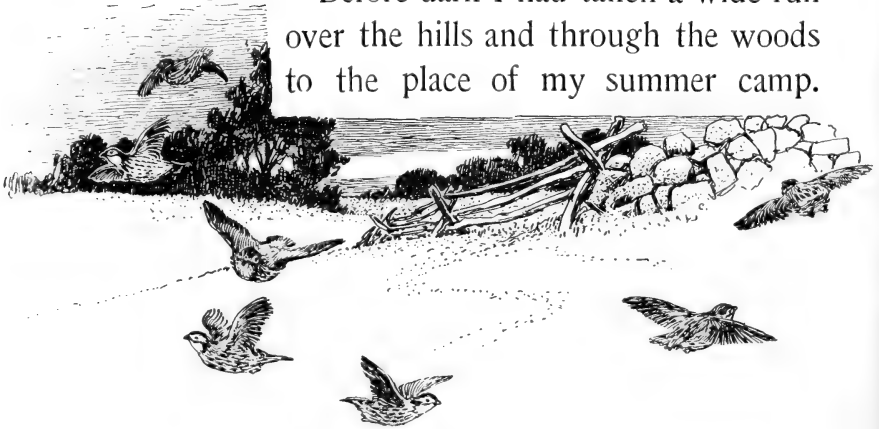


WINTER TRAILS



the hard-packed leaves had become as innocent of footmarks as the beach where plover feed when a great wave has chased them away. On the twentieth of December a change came. Outside the snow fell heavily, two days and a night; inside books were packed away, professors said Merry Christmas, and students were scattering, like a bevy of flushed quail at twilight, to all points of the compass for the holidays. The afternoon of the twenty-first found me again in my room under the eaves of the old farmhouse.

Before dark I had taken a wide run over the hills and through the woods to the place of my summer camp.



How wonderful it all was! The great woods were covered deep with their pure white mantle; not a fleck, not a track soiled its even whiteness; for the last soft flakes were lingering in the air, and fox and grouse and hare and lucivee were still keeping the storm-truce, hidden deep in their coverts. Every fir and spruce and hemlock had gone to building fairy grottoes as the snow packed their lower branches, under which all sorts of wonders and beauties might be hidden, to say nothing of the wild things for whom Nature had been building innumerable tents of white and green as they slept. The silence was absolute, the forest's uncon-

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scious tribute to the Wonder Worker. Even the trout brook, running black as night among its white-capped boulders and delicate arches of frost and fern work, between massive banks of feathery white and green, had stopped its idle chatter and tinkled a low bell under the ice, as if only the Angelus could express the wonder of the world.

As I came back softly in the twilight a movement in an evergreen ahead caught my eye, and I stopped for one of the rare sights of the woods, a grouse going to sleep in a warm room of his own making. He looked all about among the trees most carefully, listened, *kwit-kwitied*



“He looked all about among the trees most carefully”



in a low voice to himself, then with a sudden plunge swooped downward head-first into the snow. I stole to the spot where he had disappeared, noted the direction of his tunnel, and fell forward with arms outstretched, thinking perhaps to catch him under me, as I had occasionally done before, and examine his feet to see how his natural snowshoes (Nature's winter gift to every grouse) were developing, before letting him go again. But the grouse was an old bird, not to be caught napping, who had thought on the possibilities of being followed, ere he made his plunge. He had ploughed under the snow for a couple of feet, then swerved sharply to the

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left and made a little chamber for himself just under some snow-packed spruce tips, with a foot of snow for a blanket over him. When I fell forward, disturbing his rest most rudely ere he had time to wink the snow out of his eyes, he burst out with a great whirr and sputter between my left hand and my head, scattering snow all over me, and thundered off through the startled woods, flicking a branch here and there with his wings, and shaking down a great white shower to hide his flight as he rushed away for deeper solitudes. There, no doubt, he went to sleep in the evergreens, congratulating himself on his escape and preferring to take his chances

with the owl rather than with some other ground-prowler that might come nosing into his hole before the light snow had time to fill it up effectually behind him.

Next morning I was early afield, heading for a ridge where I thought the deer of the neighborhood might congregate with the intention of yarding for the winter. At the foot of a wild little natural meadow, made centuries ago by the beavers, I found the trail of two deer which had been helping themselves to some hay that had been cut and stacked there the previous summer. My big buck was not with them; so I left the trail in peace to push through a belt of woods and

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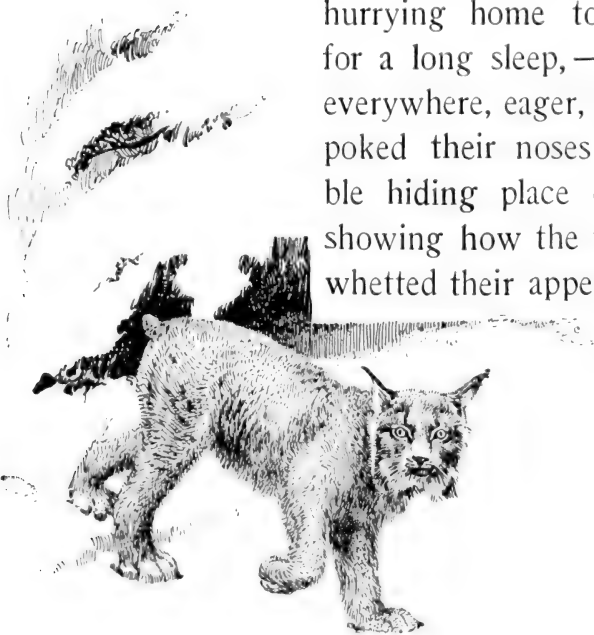


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across a pond to an old wood road that led for a mile or two towards the ridge I was seeking.

Early as I was, the Wood Folk were ahead of me. Mice, squirrels, martens, crows, grouse, foxes; here the round pugs of a lynx, there the long slide of an otter going after open water; yonder a print as of a baby's feet, showing where the coon had been stormbound in a poor place and was hurrying home to his hollow tree for a long sleep, — their tracks were everywhere, eager, hungry tracks, that poked their noses into every possible hiding place of food or game, showing how the two-days' fast had whetted their appetites and set them



to running keenly the moment the last flakes were down and the storm-truce ended.

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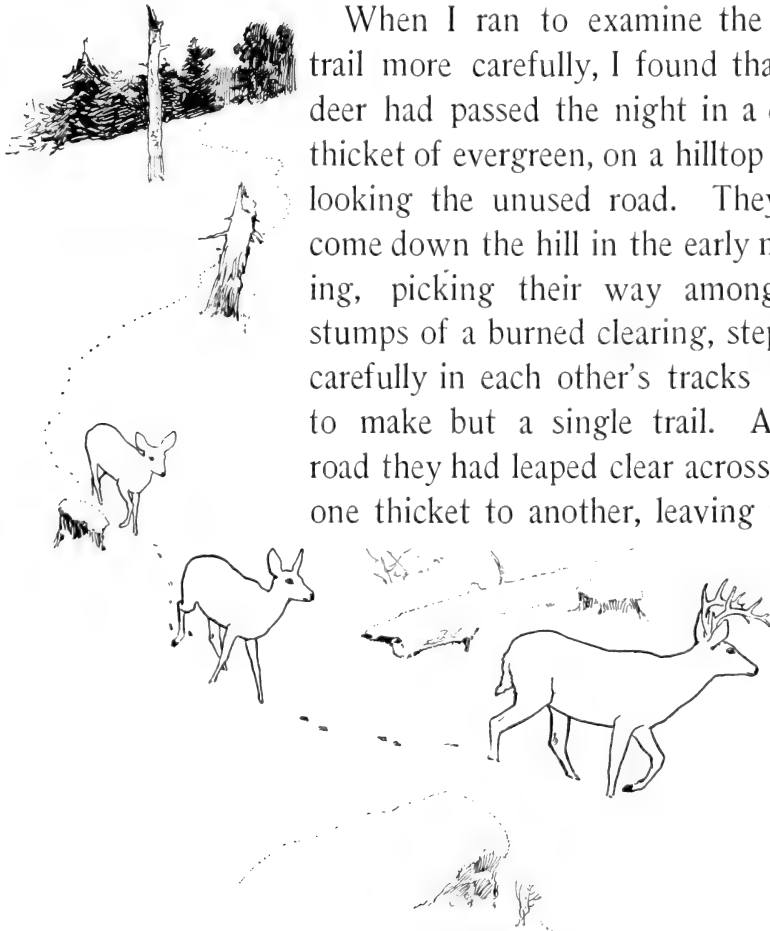


A suspicious-looking clump of evergreens, where something had brushed the snow rudely from the feathery tips, stopped me as I hurried down the old road. Under the evergreens was a hole in the snow, and at the bottom of the hole hard inverted cups made by deer's feet. I followed on to another hole in the snow, and then to another and another, some twelve or fifteen feet apart, leading in swift bounds to some big timber. There the curious track separated into three deer trails, one of which might well be that of a ten-point buck. Here

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was luck,—luck to find my quarry so early on the first day out, and better luck that, during my long absence, the cunning animal had kept himself and his consorts clear of Old Wally and his devices.

When I ran to examine the back trail more carefully, I found that the deer had passed the night in a dense thicket of evergreen, on a hilltop overlooking the unused road. They had come down the hill in the early morning, picking their way among the stumps of a burned clearing, stepping carefully in each other's tracks so as to make but a single trail. At the road they had leaped clear across from one thicket to another, leaving never



a trace on the bare even whiteness. One might have passed along the road a score of times without noticing that game had crossed. There was no doubt now that these were deer that had been often hunted, and that had learned their cunning from long experience.

I followed them rapidly till they began feeding in a little valley, then with much caution, stealing from tree to thicket, giving scant attention to the trail but searching keenly the woods ahead; for the last signs showed that I was now but a few minutes behind the deer, and I remembered what an old hunter had told me, that a man may track a

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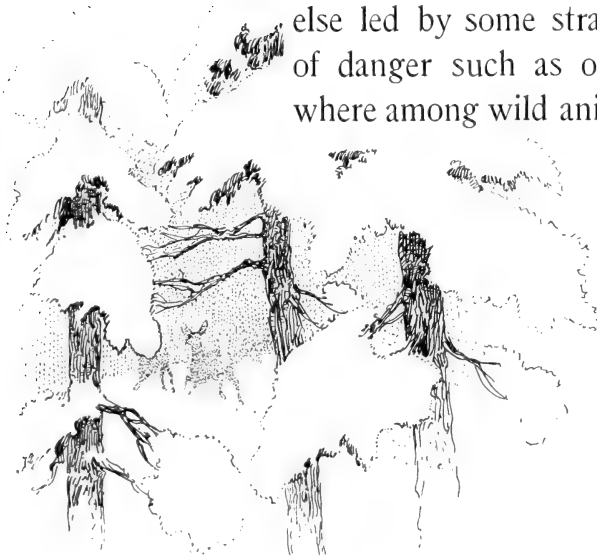
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dozen deer standing near him in the winter woods and yet see none of them. There they were at last, two graceful forms gliding like gray shadows among the snow-laden branches. But in vain I searched for a lordly head with wide rough antlers sweeping proudly over the brow. My buck was not there. Scarcely had I made the discovery when there was a snort and a plunge up on the hill on my left, and I had one swift glimpse of him, a splendid creature, as he bounded away.

By way of general precaution, or else led by some strange sixth sense of danger such as one finds everywhere among wild animals, he had left



his little flock feeding and mounted the hill where he could look back on his own track. There he had been watching me for half an hour, till I approached too near, when he sounded the alarm and was off. I read it all from the trail a few moments later.

It was of no use to follow him, for he ran straight down wind. The two others had gone quartering off at right angles to his course, obeying his signal promptly but having as yet no idea of what danger followed them. When alarmed in this way deer never run far before halting every few moments to sniff and listen. Then, if not disturbed, they run off again, circling

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back and down wind so as to catch from a distance the scent of anything that follows on their trail.

I sat still where I was for a good hour, watching the chickadees and red squirrels that found me speedily, and refusing to move for all the peekings and whistlings of a jay that would fain satisfy his curiosity as to whether I meant harm to the deer, or were just benumbed by the cold and incapable of further mischief. When I went on I left some scattered bits of meat from my lunch to keep him busy in case the deer were near; but there was no need of the precaution. The two had learned the leader's lesson of caution well, and ran for a mile with many



haltings and circlings before they began to feed again. Even then they moved along at a good pace as they fed, till another mile lay between them and the unknown danger, when, as I had forelayed, the buck came down from a hill to join them, and all three moved off toward the big ridge, feeding as they went.

Then began a long chase, a chase which for the deer meant a straight-away game, and for me a series of wide circles — never following the trail directly, but approaching it at intervals from leeward, hoping so to circle ahead of the deer and stalk them at last from an unexpected quarter.

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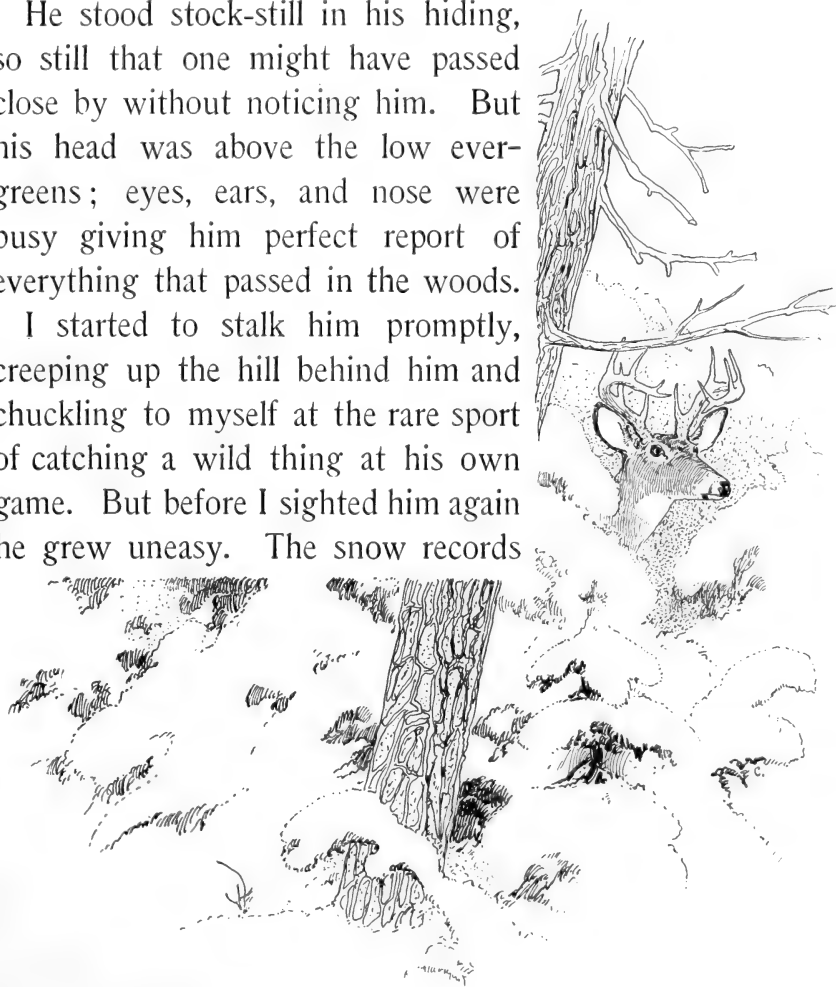


Once, when I looked down from a bare hilltop into a valley where the trail ran, I had a most interesting glimpse of the big buck doing the same thing from a hill farther on, too far away for a shot, but near enough to see plainly through my field glass. The deer were farther ahead than I supposed. They had made a run for it, intending to rest after first putting a good space between them and anything that might follow. Now they were undoubtedly lying down in some far-away thicket, their minds at rest and their four feet doubled under them for a jump at short notice. Trust your nose, but keep your feet under you — that is deer wisdom on going

to sleep. Meanwhile, to take no chances, the wary old leader had circled back to wind the trail and watch it awhile from a distance before joining them in their rest.

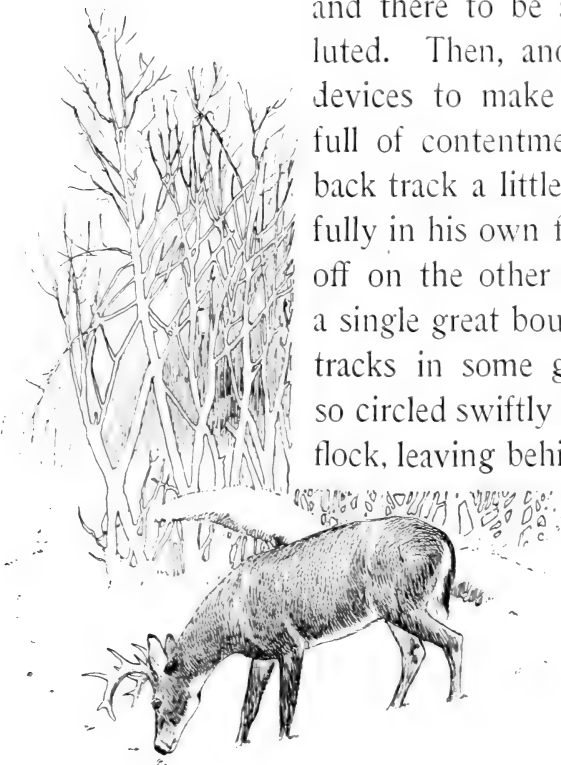
He stood stock-still in his hiding, so still that one might have passed close by without noticing him. But his head was above the low evergreens; eyes, ears, and nose were busy giving him perfect report of everything that passed in the woods.

I started to stalk him promptly, creeping up the hill behind him and chuckling to myself at the rare sport of catching a wild thing at his own game. But before I sighted him again he grew uneasy. The snow records



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told how he had broken his still watching and moved about the hilltop looking out of every opening, sniffing and listening to the four quarters, as if he felt that he were followed, and ending at last by trotting down hill to the trail and putting his nose into it here and there to be sure it was not polluted. Then, another of his endless devices to make the noonday *siesta* full of contentment, he followed the back track a little way, stepping carefully in his own footprints; branched off on the other side of the trail by a single great bound that hid his new tracks in some ground spruces, and so circled swiftly back to join his little flock, leaving behind him a sad puzzle



of disputing footprints for any novice that might follow him.

So the interesting chase went on all day, skill against cunning, knowledge against finer instinct, through the white wonder of the winter woods, till, late in the afternoon, it swung back towards the starting point. The deer had undoubtedly intended to begin their yard that day on the ridge I had selected; for at noon I crossed the trail of the two from the haystack, heading as if by mutual understanding in that direction. But the big buck, feeling that he was followed, cunningly led his charge away from the spot so as to give no hint of the proposed winter quarters to the enemy

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that was after him. Just as the long shadows were stretching across all the valleys from hill to hill, and the sun vanished into the last gray bank of clouds on the horizon, my deer recrossed the old road, leaping it, as in the morning, so as to leave no telltale track, and climbed the hill to the dense thicket where they had passed the previous night.

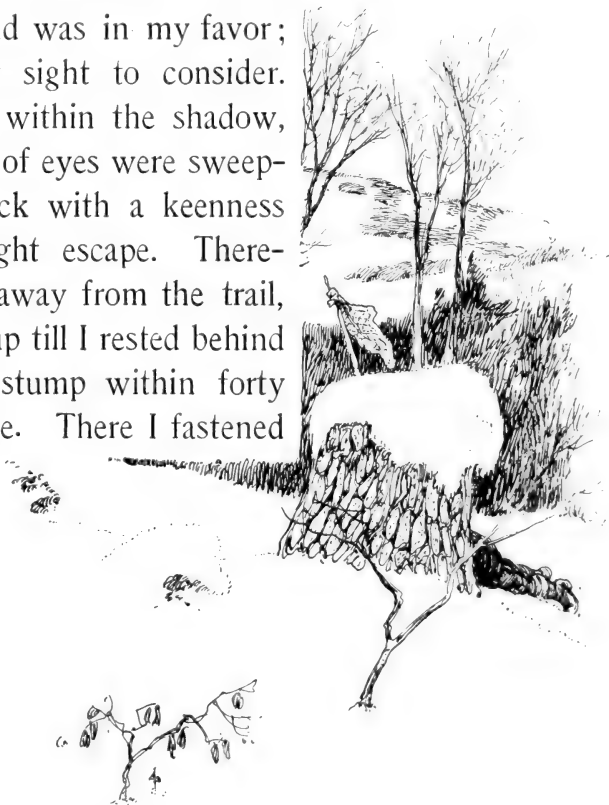
Here was my last chance, and I studied it deliberately. The deer were there, safe within the evergreens, I had no doubt, using their eyes for the open hillside in front and their noses for the woods behind. It was useless to attempt stalking from any direction, for the cover was so thick that a fox could

hardly creep through without alarming ears far less sensitive than a deer's. Skill had failed; their cunning was too much for me. I must now try an appeal to curiosity.

I crept up the hill flat on my face, keeping stump or scrub spruce always between me and the thicket on the hilltop. The wind was in my favor; I had only their sight to consider. Somewhere, just within the shadow, at least one pair of eyes were sweeping the back track with a keenness that nothing might escape. Therefore I kept well away from the trail, creeping slowly up till I rested behind a great burned stump within forty yards of my game. There I fastened

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a red bandanna handkerchief to a stick and waved it slowly above the stump.

Almost instantly there was a snort and a rustle of bushes in the thicket above me. Peeking out I saw the evergreens moving nervously; a doe's head appeared, her ears set forward, her eyes glistening. I waved the handkerchief more erratically. My rifle lay across the stump's roots, pointing straight at her; but she was not the game I was hunting. Some more waving and dancing of the bright color, some more nervous twitchings and rustlings in the evergreens, then a whistle and a rush; the doe disappeared; the movement ceased; the

thicket was silent as the winter woods behind me.

“They are just inside those scrub firs,” I thought, “pawing the snow to get their courage up to come and see.” So the handkerchief danced on. One, two, five minutes passed in silence; then something for which I cannot account, but which I have often strongly felt in the woods when wild animals whose presence I did not suspect were watching me, made me turn around. It was as if some one were calling me to come quickly. And there in plain sight behind me, just this side the fringe of evergreen that lined the old road, stood my three deer in a row like three beautiful statues, their ears

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all forward, their eyes fixed with intensest curiosity on the man lying at full length in the snow with the queer red flag dancing over his head.

On the right of the line, nearest me, stood the big buck; and for the first and last time I saw some trace of hesitation in his attitude and in the nervous stroke of his forefoot in the snow. What a magnificent creature he was! And that head with its crown of antlers, — though I have followed hundreds of deer since in the wilderness, I have never yet met its equal. My heart jumped at the sight of him standing there so still and so near.

My first motion broke up the pretty tableau. Before I could swing my



"On the right of the line, nearest me, stood the big buck"

rifle into position the deer whirled and vanished like three winks, leaving the heavy evergreen tips nodding and blinking behind them in a shower of snow.

Tired as I was, I took a last run to see from the trail how it all happened. The deer had been standing just within the thicket as I approached. All three had seen the handkerchief; the tracks showed that they had pawed the snow and moved about nervously. When the leader whistled they had bounded away down the steep on the other side. But the farms lay in that direction, so they had skirted the base of the hill, keeping within the fringe of woods and heading back



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for their morning trail, till the red flag caught their eye again, and strong curiosity had halted them and brought them nearer for another look.

Thus the long hunt ended at twilight within sight of the spot where it began in the gray morning stillness. With marvelous cunning the deer circled into their old tracks and followed them till night turned them aside into a thicket. This I discovered at daylight next morning.

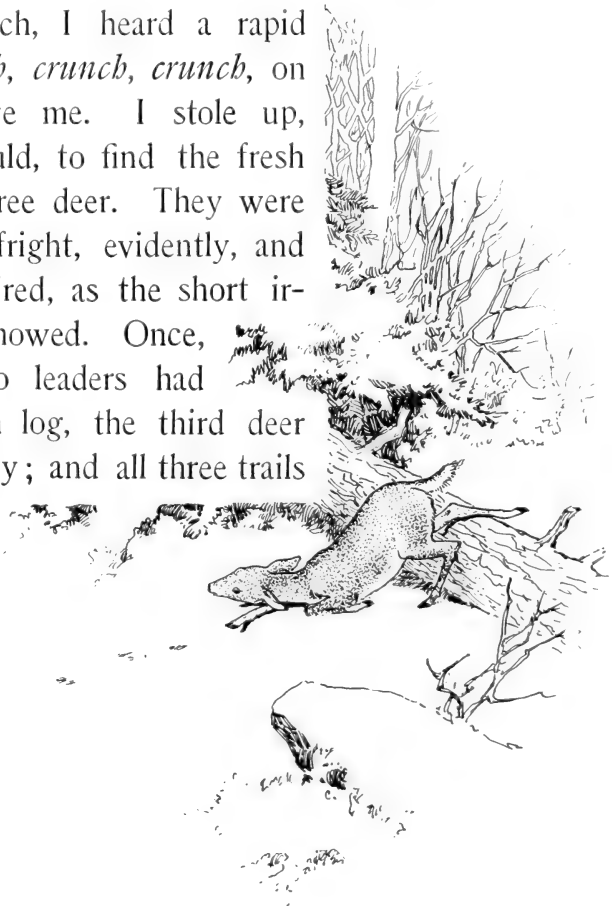
That day a change came; first a south wind, then in succession a thaw, a mist, a rain turning to snow, a cold wind and a bitter frost. Next day when I entered the woods a brittle

crust made silent traveling impossible, and over the rocks and bare places was a sheet of ice covered thinly with snow.

I was out all day, less in hope of finding deer than of watching the wild things; but at noon, as I sat eating my lunch, I heard a rapid running, *crunch, crunch, crunch*, on the ridge above me. I stole up, quietly as I could, to find the fresh trails of my three deer. They were running from fright, evidently, and were getting tired, as the short irregular jumps showed. Once, where the two leaders had cleared a fallen log, the third deer had fallen heavily; and all three trails

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showed blood stains where the crust had cut into their legs.

I waited there on the trail to see what was following, ready to give right of way to any hunter, but with a good stout stick at hand for dealing with dogs, which sometimes ran wild in the woods and harried the deer. For a long quarter-hour the woods were all still; then the jays, which had come whistling up on the trail, flew back screaming and scolding, and a huge yellow mongrel showing hound's blood in his ears and nose came slipping, limping, whining over the crust. I waited behind a tree till he was up with me, when I jumped out and caught him a resounding



thump on the ribs. As he ran yelping away I fired my rifle over his head, and sent the good club whirling over the crust like a boomerang to knock his heels from under him. A fresh outburst of howls inspired me with hope. Perhaps he would remember now to let deer alone for the winter.

Above the noise of canine lamentation I caught the faint click of snowshoes, and hid again to catch the cur's owner at his contemptible work. But the sound stopped far back on the trail at the sudden uproar. Through the trees I caught glimpses of a fur cap and a long gun and the hawk face of Old Wally,

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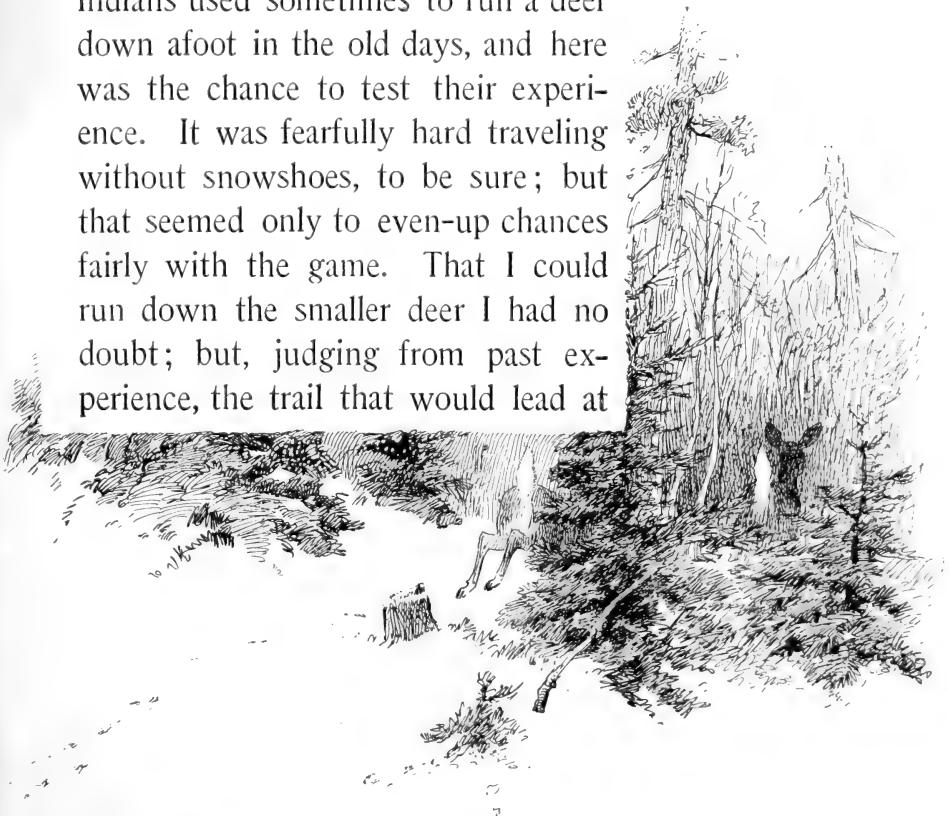
peeking, listening, creeping on the trail, and stepping gingerly at last down the valley, ashamed or afraid of being caught at his unlawful hounding. "An ill wind, but it blows me good," I thought, as I took up the trail of the deer, half ashamed myself to take advantage of them when tired by the dog's chasing.

There was no need of commiseration, however; now that the dog was out of the way they could take care of themselves very well. I found them resting only a short distance ahead; but when I attempted to stalk them from leeward the noise of my approach on the crust sent them off with a rush before I caught

even a glimpse of them in their thicket.

I gave up caution then and there. I was fresh and the deer were tired, — why not run them down and get a fair shot before the sun went down and left the woods too dark to see a rifle sight? I had heard that the Indians used sometimes to run a deer down afoot in the old days, and here was the chance to test their experience. It was fearfully hard traveling without snowshoes, to be sure; but that seemed only to even-up chances fairly with the game. That I could run down the smaller deer I had no doubt; but, judging from past experience, the trail that would lead at

WINTER TRAILS



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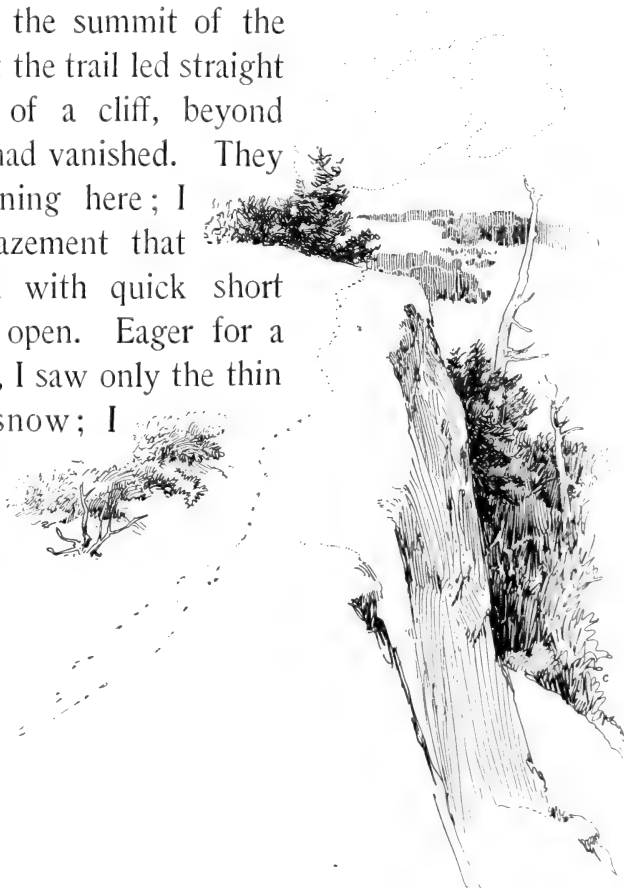
last to my big buck would be no short nor easy one. At the thought I ran on, giving no heed when the quarry jumped again just ahead of me, but pushing them steadily, mile after mile, till I realized with a thrill that I was gaining rapidly, that their pauses grew more and more frequent, and I had constant glimpses of deer ahead among the trees; never of the big buck but of the two does, which were struggling desperately to follow their leader as he kept well ahead of them breaking the way. Then realizing, I think, that he was followed by strength rather than by skill or cunning, the noble old fellow tried a last trick, which came

near being the end of my hunting altogether.

The trail turned suddenly to a high open ridge with scattered thickets here and there. As they labored up the slope I had the does in plain sight. On top the snow was light, and they bounded ahead with fresh strength. When I reached the summit of the ridge I found that the trail led straight along the edge of a cliff, beyond which the deer had vanished. They had stopped running here; I noticed with amazement that they had walked with quick short steps across the open. Eager for a sight of the buck, I saw only the thin powdering of snow; I

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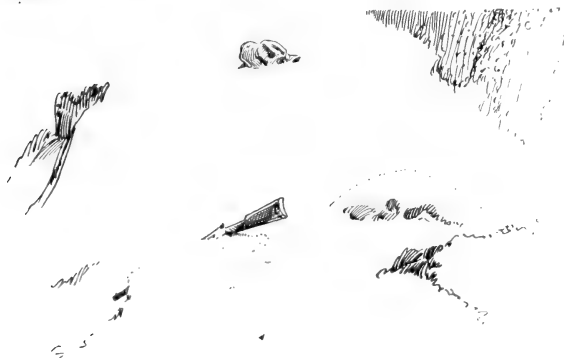
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forgot the glare ice that covered the rock beneath. The deer's sharp hoofs had clung to the very edge securely. My heedless feet had barely struck the rock when they slipped and I shot over the cliff thirty feet to the rocks below. Even as I fell and the rifle flew from my grasp I heard the buck's loud whistle from the thicket where he was watching me, and then the heavy plunge of the deer as they jumped away.

A great drift at the foot of the cliff saved me. I picked myself up, fearfully bruised but with nothing broken, found my rifle and limped away four miles through the woods to the road, thinking as I went that I was well



served for having delivered the deer “from the power of the dog,” only to take advantage of their long run to secure a head that my skill had failed to win. I wondered, with an extra twinge in my limp, whether I had saved Old Wally by taking the chase out of his hands unceremoniously. Above all I wondered—and here I would gladly follow another trail over the same ground—whether the noble beast, grown weary with running, his splendid strength failing for the first time, and his little, long-tended flock ready to give in and have the tragedy over, knew just what he was doing in mincing along the cliff’s edge with

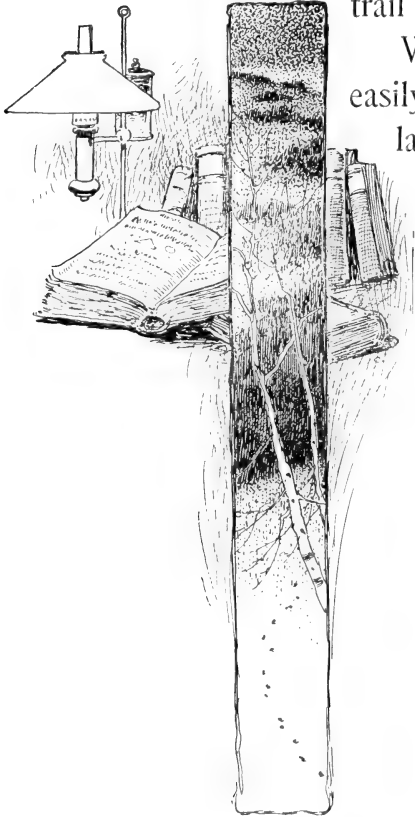


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his heedless enemy close behind. What did he think and feel, looking back from his hiding, and what did his loud whistle mean? But that is always the despair of studying the wild things. When your problem is almost solved, night comes and the trail ends.

When I could walk again easily vacation was over, the law was on, and the deer were safe.



Snow Bound







SNOW BOUND

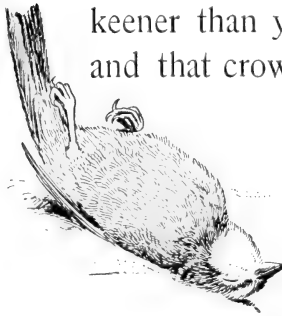
ARCH is a weary month for the Wood Folk. One who follows them then has it borne in upon him continually that life is a struggle, a keen, hard, hunger-driven struggle to find enough to keep a-going and sleep warm till the tardy sun comes north again with his rich living. The fall abundance of stored food has all been eaten, except in out-of-the-way corners that one

SNOW BOUND



stumbles upon in a long day's wandering; the game also is wary and hard to find from being constantly hunted by eager enemies.

It is then that the sparrow falleth. You find him on the snow, a wind-blown feather guiding your eye to the open where he fell in mid-flight, or to the foot of the evergreen, which shows that he lost his grip in the night. His empty crop tells the whole pitiful story, and why you find him there cold and dead, his toes curled up and his body feather-light. You would find more but for the fact that hunger-pointed eyes are keener than yours and earlier abroad, and that crow and jay and mink and



wildcat have greater interest than you in finding where the sparrow fell.

It is then also that the owl, who hunts the sparrow o' nights, grows so light from scant feeding that he cannot fly against the wind. If he would go back to his starting point while the March winds are out, he must needs come down close to the ground, where the breeze is not so boisterous, and yew-yaw towards his objective, making leeway like an old boat without ballast or centerboard.

The grouse have taken to bud-eating from necessity, birch buds mostly, with occasional trips to the orchards for variety. They live much now in the trees, which they dislike;

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BOUND**



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but with a score of hungry enemies prowling for them day and night, what can a poor grouse do?

When a belated snow falls, you follow their particular enemy, the fox, where he wanders, wanders, wanders on his night's hunting. Across the meadow he goes to dine on the remembrance of field mice, alas! safe now under the crust; along the brook, where he once caught frogs; through the thicket, where the grouse were hatched; past the bull-brier tangle, where the covey of quail once rested nightly; into the farm-yard, where the dog is loose and the chickens are safe under lock and key, instead of roosting carelessly in the



CHARLES COVENEY.

"He digs under the wild
apple tree"

orchard; across the highway, and through the swamp, and into the big bare empty woods, mile after weary mile, till in the sad gray morning light, after toiling all night and taking nothing, he digs under the wild apple tree and sits down on the snow to eat a frozen apple, lest his stomach cry too loudly while he sleeps the day away and tries to forget that he is hungry.

Everywhere it is the same story: hard times and poor hunting. Even the cheerful chickadees are hard pressed to keep up appearances and have their sweet love-note ready at the first smell of spring in the air.

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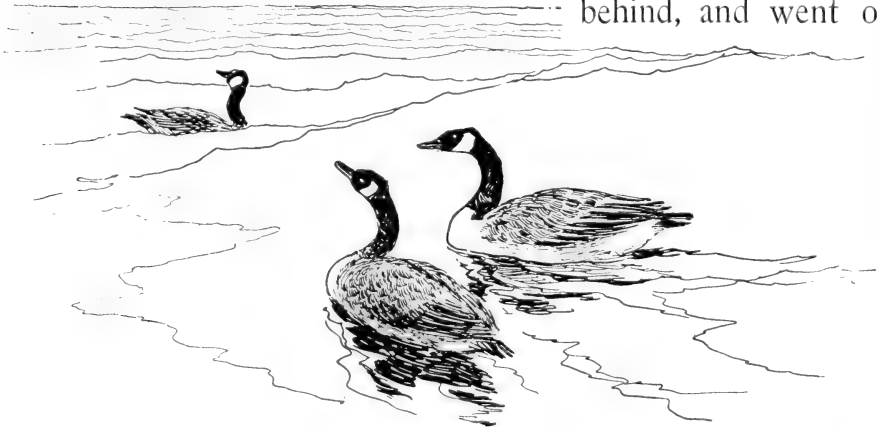
**SNOW
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SNOW BOUND



This was the lesson that the great woods whispered sadly when a few idle March days found me gliding on snowshoes over the old familiar ground. Wild geese had honked an invitation from the South Shore; but one can never study a wild goose there. His whence and whither no man knows, and the interesting details of his life he hides on the wide ocean or the far-off lonely sand flats. The only satisfaction is to see him swing in on broad wings over the decoys— one glorious moment ere the gun speaks and the dog jumps, and the goose is dead and everything is spoiled. So I left gun and rifle behind, and went off

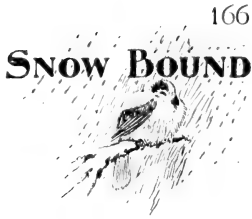


to the woods of happy memories to see how my deer were faring.

The wonder of the snow was gone; there was left only its cold bitterness and a vague sense that it ought no longer to cumber the ground, but would better go away as soon as possible and spare the Wood Folk any more suffering. The litter of a score of storms covered its soiled rough surface; every shred of bark had left its dark stain where the decaying sap had melted and spread in the midday sun. The hard crust, which made such excellent running for my snowshoes, seemed bitterly cruel when I thought of the starving wild things and of the abundance of food on the

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brown earth, just four feet below their hungry bills and noses.

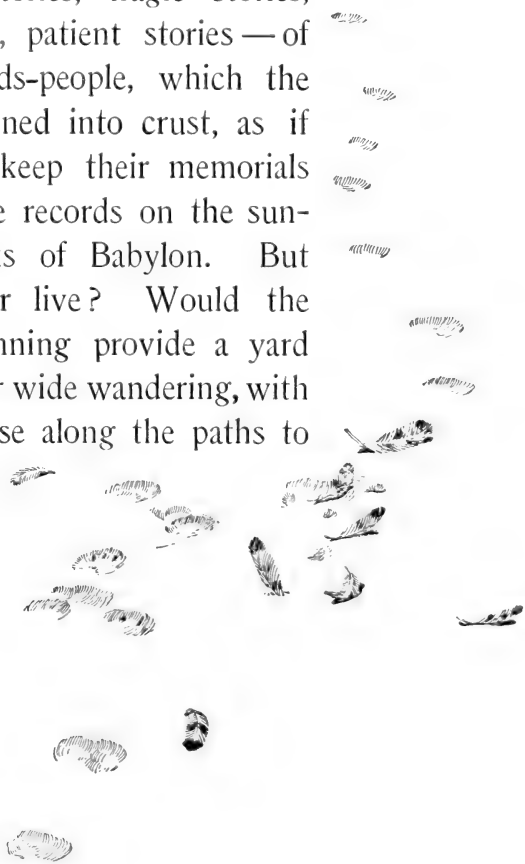
The winter had been unusually severe. Reports had come to me from the North Woods of deep snows, and of deer dying of starvation and cold in their yards. I confess that I was anxious as I hurried along. Now that the hunt was over and the deer had won, they belonged to me more than ever, even more than if the stuffed head of the buck looked down on my hall, instead of resting proudly over his own strong shoulders. My snowshoes clicked a rapid march through the sad gray woods, while the March wind thrummed an accompaniment high up among the

bare branches, and the ground-spruce
nodded briskly, beating time with
their green tips, as if glad of any
sound or music that would break
the chill silence until the birds came
back.

Here and there the snow told
stories—gay stories, tragic stories,
sad, wandering, patient stories—of
the little woods-people, which the
frost had hardened into crust, as if
Nature would keep their memorials
forever, like the records on the sun-
hardened bricks of Babylon. But
would the deer live? Would the
big buck's cunning provide a yard
large enough for wide wandering, with
plenty of browse along the paths to

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BOUND**

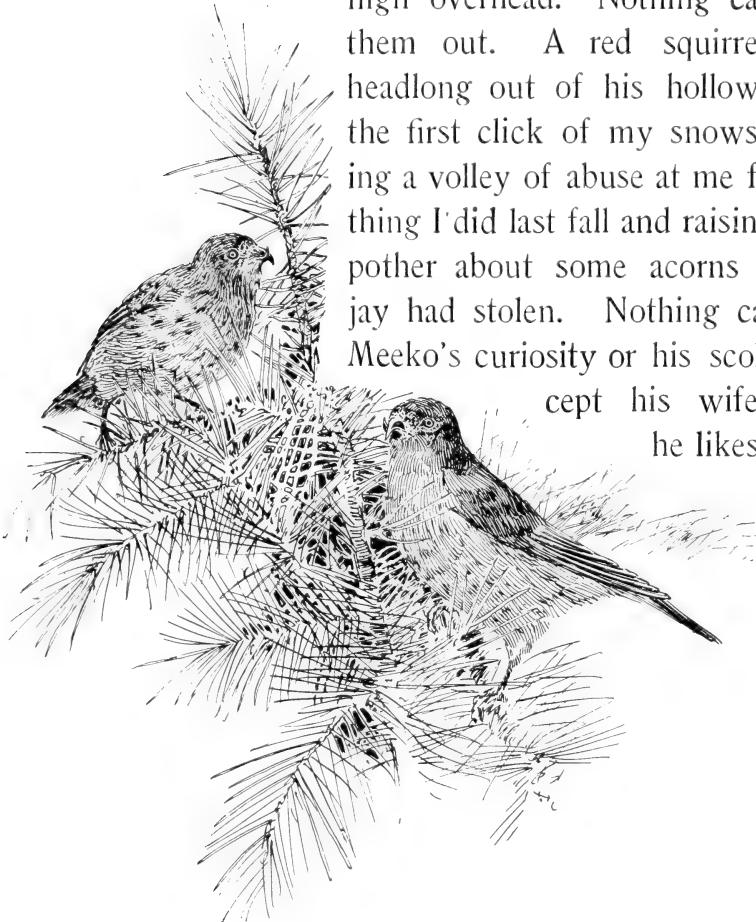


SNOW BOUND



carry his flock safely through the winter's hunger? That was a story, waiting somewhere ahead, which made me hurry away from the foot-written records that otherwise would have kept me busy for hours.

Crossbills called welcome to me high overhead. Nothing can starve them out. A red squirrel rushed headlong out of his hollow tree at the first click of my snowshoes, firing a volley of abuse at me for something I did last fall and raising a shrill pother about some acorns that the jay had stolen. Nothing can check Meeko's curiosity or his scolding except his wife, whom he likes, and the



weasel, whom he is mortally afraid of. Chickadees followed me shyly with their blandishments. *Tsic-a-deeee?* with that gentle up-slide of questioning. "Is the spring really coming? Are — are you a harbinger?"

But the snowshoes clicked on, away from the sweet blarney, leaving behind the little flatterers who were honestly glad to see me in the woods again, and who would fain have delayed me. Other questions, stern ones, were calling ahead. Would the cur dogs find the yard and exterminate the innocents? Would Old Wally — but no; Wally had the "rheumatiz," and was out of the running. Ill wind blew the deer

**SNOW
BOUND**





good that time; else he would long ago have run them down on snowshoes and cut their throats, as if they were indeed his “tarnal sheep” that had run wild in the woods.

At the southern end of a great hardwood ridge I found the first path of their yard. It was half filled with snow, unused since the last two storms. A glance on either side, where everything eatable within reach of a deer’s neck had long ago been cropped close, showed plainly why the path was abandoned. I followed it a short distance before running into another path, and another, then into a great tangle of deer ways spreading out crisscross over

the eastern and southern slopes of the ridge.

In some of the paths were fresh deer tracks and the signs of recent feeding. My heart jumped at sight of one great hoof mark. I had measured and studied it too often to fail to recognize its owner. There was browse here still, to be had for the cropping. I began to be hopeful for my little flock and to feel a higher regard for their leader, who could plan a yard, it seemed, as well as a flight, and who could not be deceived by early abundance into outlining a narrow range, forgetting the late snows and the spring hunger.

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BOUND**





I was stooping to examine the more recent signs, when a sharp *kaab!* made me raise my head quickly. In the path before me stood a doe all a-quiver, her feet still braced from the suddenness with which she had stopped at sight of an unknown object blocking the path ahead. Behind her two other deer checked themselves and stood like statues, unable to see, but obeying their leader promptly.

All three were frightened and excited, not simply curious, as they would have been had they found me in their path unexpectedly. The widespread nostrils and heaving sides showed that they had been running

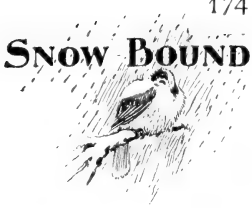
hard. Those in the rear (I could see them over the top of the scrub spruce, behind which I crouched in the path) said in every nerve and muscle: "Go on! No matter what it is, the danger behind is worse. Go on, go on!" Insistence was in the air. The doe felt it and bounded aside. The crust had softened in the sun, and she plunged through it when she struck, *cr-r-runch, cr-r-runch*, up to her sides at every jump. The others followed, just swinging their heads for a look and a sniff at me, springing from hole to hole in the snow, and making but a single trail. A dozen jumps and they struck another path and turned into it, running

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as before down the ridge. In the swift glimpses they gave me I noticed with satisfaction that, though thin and a bit ragged in appearance, they were by no means starved. The veteran leader had provided well for his little family.

More curious to know what had driven them than to study them just now, I followed their back tracks up the ridge for perhaps half a mile, when another trail made me turn aside. Two days before, a single deer had been driven out of the yard at a point where three paths met. She had been running down the ridge when something in front met her and drove her headlong out of her course.

The soft edges of the path were cut and torn by suspicious claw marks.

I followed her flight anxiously, finding here and there, where the snow had been softest, dog tracks big and little. The deer was tired from long running, apparently; the deep holes in the snow, where she had broken through the crust, were not half the regular distance apart. A little way from the path I found her cold and stiff, her throat horribly torn by the pack which had run her to death. Her hind feet were still doubled under her, just as she had landed from her last despairing jump, when the tired muscles could do no more and she sank

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BOUND**



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down without a struggle to let the dogs do their cruel work.

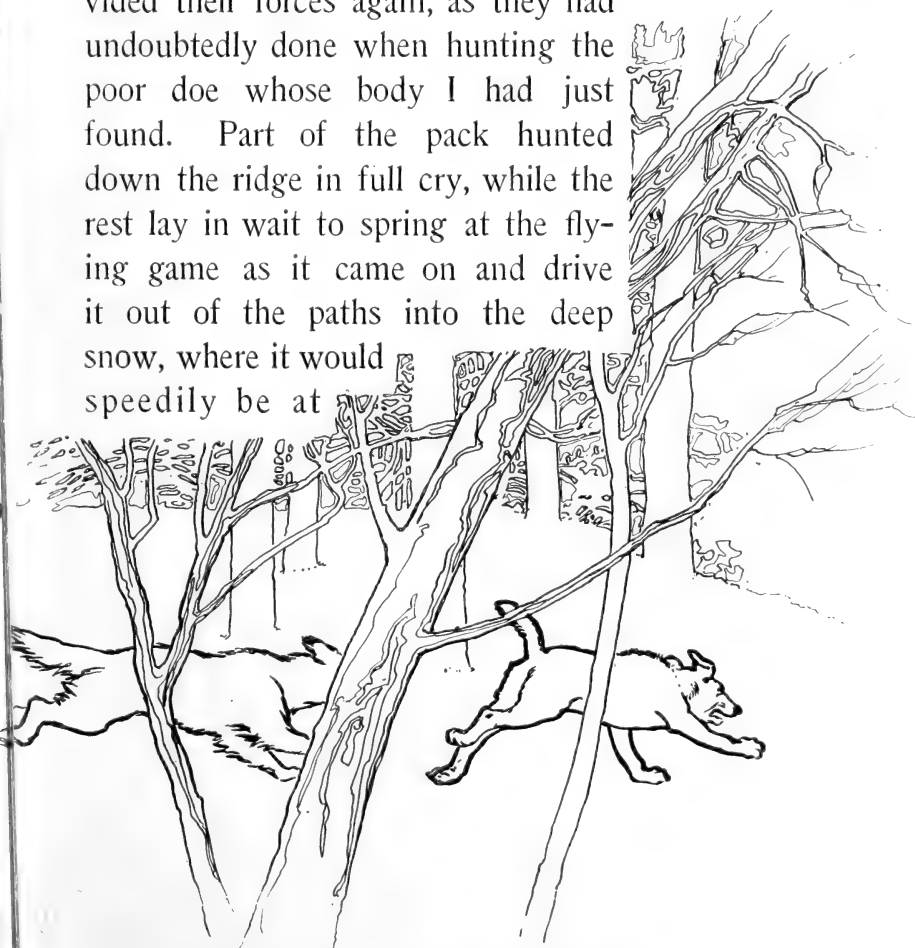
I had barely read all this, and had not yet finished measuring the largest tracks to see if it were her old enemy that, as dogs frequently do, had gathered a pirate band about him and led them forth to the slaughter of the innocents, when a faint cry came stealing down through the gray woods. Hark! the eager yelp of curs and the leading hoot of a hound. I whipped out my knife to cut a club, and was off for the sounds on a galloping run, which is the swiftest possible gait on snowshoes.

There were no deer paths here; for the hardwood browse, upon which

deer depend for food, grew mostly on the other sides of the ridge. That the chase should turn this way, out of the yard's limits, showed the dogs' cunning, and that they were not new at their evil business. They had divided their forces again, as they had undoubtedly done when hunting the poor doe whose body I had just found. Part of the pack hunted down the ridge in full cry, while the rest lay in wait to spring at the flying game as it came on and drive it out of the paths into the deep snow, where it would speedily be at

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BOUND**



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their mercy. At the thought of their wolfish cunning I gripped the club hard, promising to stop that kind of hunting for good, if only I could get half a chance.

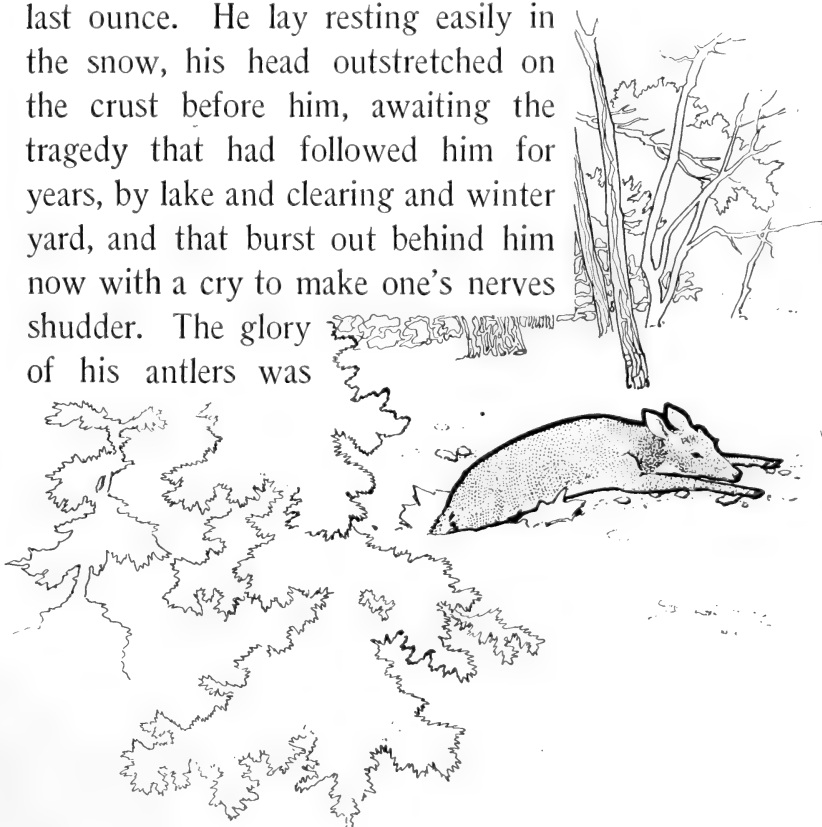
Presently, above the scrape of my snowshoes, I heard the deer coming, *cr-r-runch! cr-r-runch!* the heavy plunges growing shorter and fainter, while behind the sounds an eager, whining trail-cry grew into a fierce howl of canine exultation. Something was telling me to hurry, hurry; that the big buck I had so often hunted was in my power at last and that, if I would square accounts, I must beat the dogs, though they were nearer to him now than I. The

excitement of a new kind of hunt, a hunt to save, not to kill, was tingling all over me when I circled a dense thicket of firs with a rush,— and there he lay, up to his shoulders in the snow before me.

He had taken his last jump. The splendid strength which had carried him so far was spent now to the last ounce. He lay resting easily in the snow, his head outstretched on the crust before him, awaiting the tragedy that had followed him for years, by lake and clearing and winter yard, and that burst out behind him now with a cry to make one's nerves shudder. The glory of his antlers was

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gone ; he had dropped them months before ; but the mighty shoulders and sinewy neck and perfect head showed how well, how grandly he had deserved my hunting.

He threw up his head as I burst out upon him from an utterly unexpected quarter, the very thing that I had so often tried to do, in vain, in the old glorious days. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? Well, here am I." That is what his eyes, great, sad, accusing eyes, were saying as he laid his head down on the snow again, quiet as an Indian at the torture, too proud to struggle where nothing was to be gained but pity or derision.

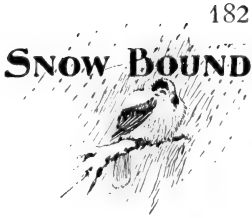
A strange, uncanny silence had settled over the woods. Dogs, like wolves, are apt to cease their cry in the last swift burst of speed that will bring the game in sight. Then the pack broke out of the cover behind him with a fiercer howl that was too much for even his nerves to stand. Nothing on earth could have met such a death unmoved. No ears, however trained, could hear that fierce cry for blood without turning to meet it face to face. With a mighty effort the buck whirled in the snow and gathered himself for the tragedy.

Far ahead of the pack came a small, swift bulldog that, with no nose of

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his own for hunting, had followed the pirate leader for mere love of killing. As he jumped for the throat, the buck, summoning all his failing strength, reared high out of the snow, and plunged down again with a hard, swift sabre-cut of his left hoof. It caught the dog fairly as he rose on the spring, and ripped him from ear to tail. Deer and dog came down together. Then the noble beast rose swiftly for his last blow and the knife-edged hoofs shot down like lightning; one straight, hard drive with the crushing force of a ten-ton hammer behind it, and his first enemy was out of the hunt forever. Before he had time to gather himself



Charles Caproni

"With a hard, swift saber-cut
of his left hoof"

again the big yellow brindle with hound's blood showing in nose and ears, Old Wally's dog, leaped into sight. His whining trail-cry changed to a fierce growl as he sprang for the buck's nose.

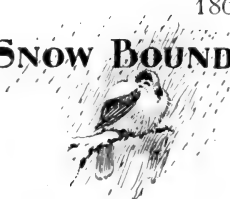
I had waited for just this moment in hiding, and jumped to meet it. The club whistled down between the two heads; and there was no reserve this time in the muscles that swung it. It caught the brute fair on the head, where the nose begins to dome up into the skull; and he too had harried his last deer.

Two other curs had leaped aside with quick instinct the moment they saw me and vanished into the thickets,

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as if conscious of their evil doing and anxious to avoid detection. But the third, a large collie—a dog that, when he does go wrong, becomes the most cunning and vicious of brutes—flew straight at my throat with a snarl like a gray wolf cheated of his killing. I have faced bear and panther and bull moose when the red danger-light blazed into their eyes; but never before or since have I seen such awful fury in a brute's face. It swept over me in an instant that it was his life or mine; there was no question or alternative. A lucky cut of the club disabled him, and I



finished the job on the spot for the good of the deer and the community. 187

The big buck had not moved, nor tried to, after his last great effort. Now he only turned his head and lifted it wearily, as if to get away from the intolerable smell of his dog enemies that lay dying under his very nose. His great, sorrowful, questioning eyes were turned on me continually with a look that only innocence could possibly meet. No man on earth, I think, could have looked into them for a full moment and then raised his hand to slay.

I approached very quietly and dragged the dogs away from him, one by one. His eyes followed me

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always. His nostrils spread, his head came up with a start when I flung the first cur aside to leeward; but he made no motion, only his eyes had a wonderful light in them, when I dragged his last enemy, the one he had killed himself, from under his very head and threw it after the others. Then I sat down in the snow, and we were face to face at last.

He feared me—I could hardly expect otherwise, while a deer has memory—but he lay perfectly still, his head extended on the snow, his sides heaving. After a little while he made a few bounds forward, at right angles to the course he had been running, with marvelous instinct remembering



the nearest point in the many paths out of which the pack had driven him. But he stopped and lay quiet at the first sound of my snowshoes behind him. "The chase law holds. You have caught me; I am yours." — This is what his sad eyes were saying. And sitting down quietly near him again, I tried to reassure him. "You are safe. Take your own time. Nothing shall harm you now." — That is what I tried to make him feel by the very power of my own feeling, never more strongly roused than now for any wild creature.

I whistled a little tune softly, which always rouses the Wood Folk's curi-

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BOUND**



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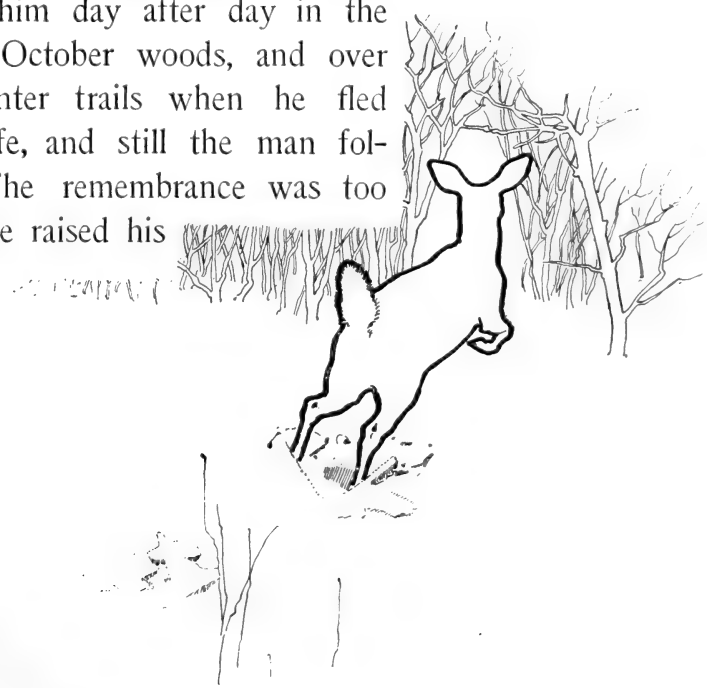
osity; but as he lay quiet, listening, his ears shot back and forth nervously at a score of sounds that I could not hear, as if above the music he caught faint echoes of the last fearful chase. Then I brought out my lunch and, nibbling a bit myself, pushed a slice of black bread over the crust towards him with a long stick.

It was curious and intensely interesting to watch the struggle. At first he pulled away, as if I would poison him. Then a new rich odor began to steal up into his hungry nostrils. For weeks he had not fed full; he had been running hard since daylight, and was faint and exhausted. And in all his life he had

never smelled anything so good. He turned his head to question me with his eyes. Slowly his nose came down, searching for the bread. "If he would only eat! Law or no law, that is a truce which I would never break," I kept thinking over and over, and stopped eating in my eagerness to have him share with me the hunter's crust. His nose touched it; then through his hunger came the smell of the man, the danger smell that had followed him day after day in the beautiful October woods, and over white winter trails when he fled for his life, and still the man followed. The remembrance was too much. He raised his

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BOUND**



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head with an effort and bounded away.

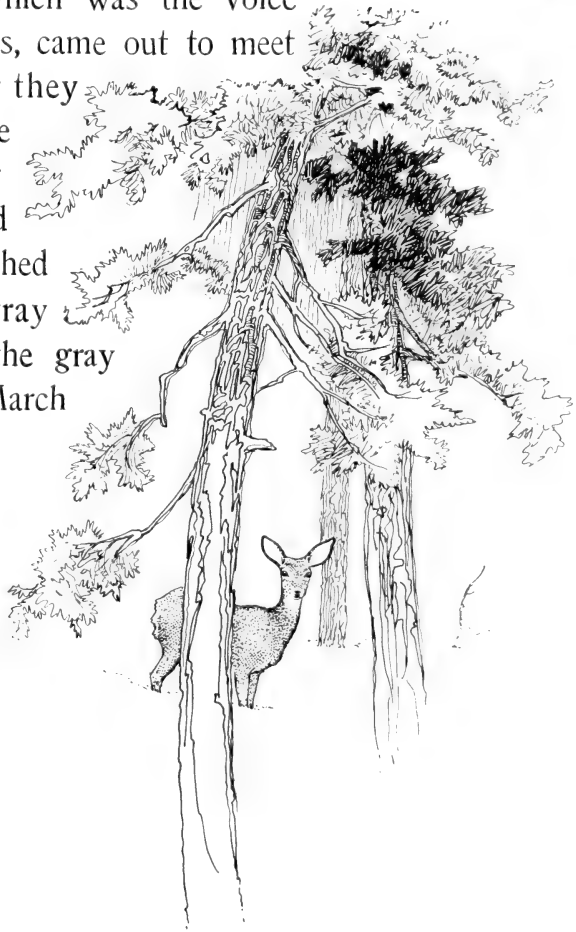
I followed slowly, keeping well out to one side of his trail and sitting quietly within sight whenever he rested in the snow. Wild animals soon lose their fear in the presence of man if one avoids all excitement, even of interest, and is quiet in his motions. His fear was gone now, but the old wild freedom and the intense desire for life — a life which he had resigned when I appeared suddenly before him and the pack broke out behind — were coming back with renewed force. His bounds grew firmer, his stops less frequent, till he broke at last into a deer path and

shook himself mightily, as if to throw off all memory of the experience.

From a thicket of fir a doe that had been listening in hiding to the sounds of his coming and to the faint unknown click, which was the voice of my snowshoes, came out to meet him. Together they trotted down the path, turning often to look and listen, and vanished at last, like gray shadows, into the gray stillness of the March woods.

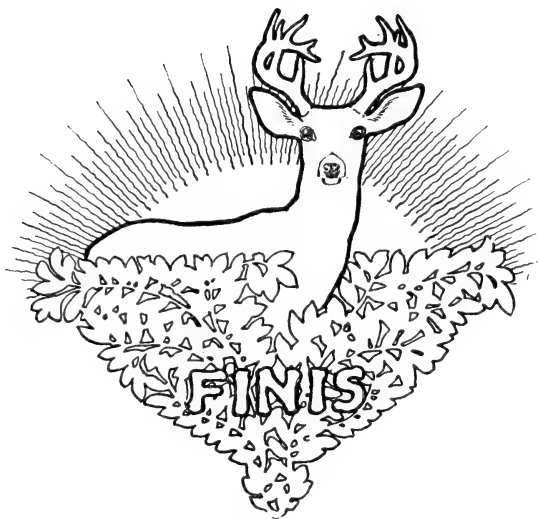
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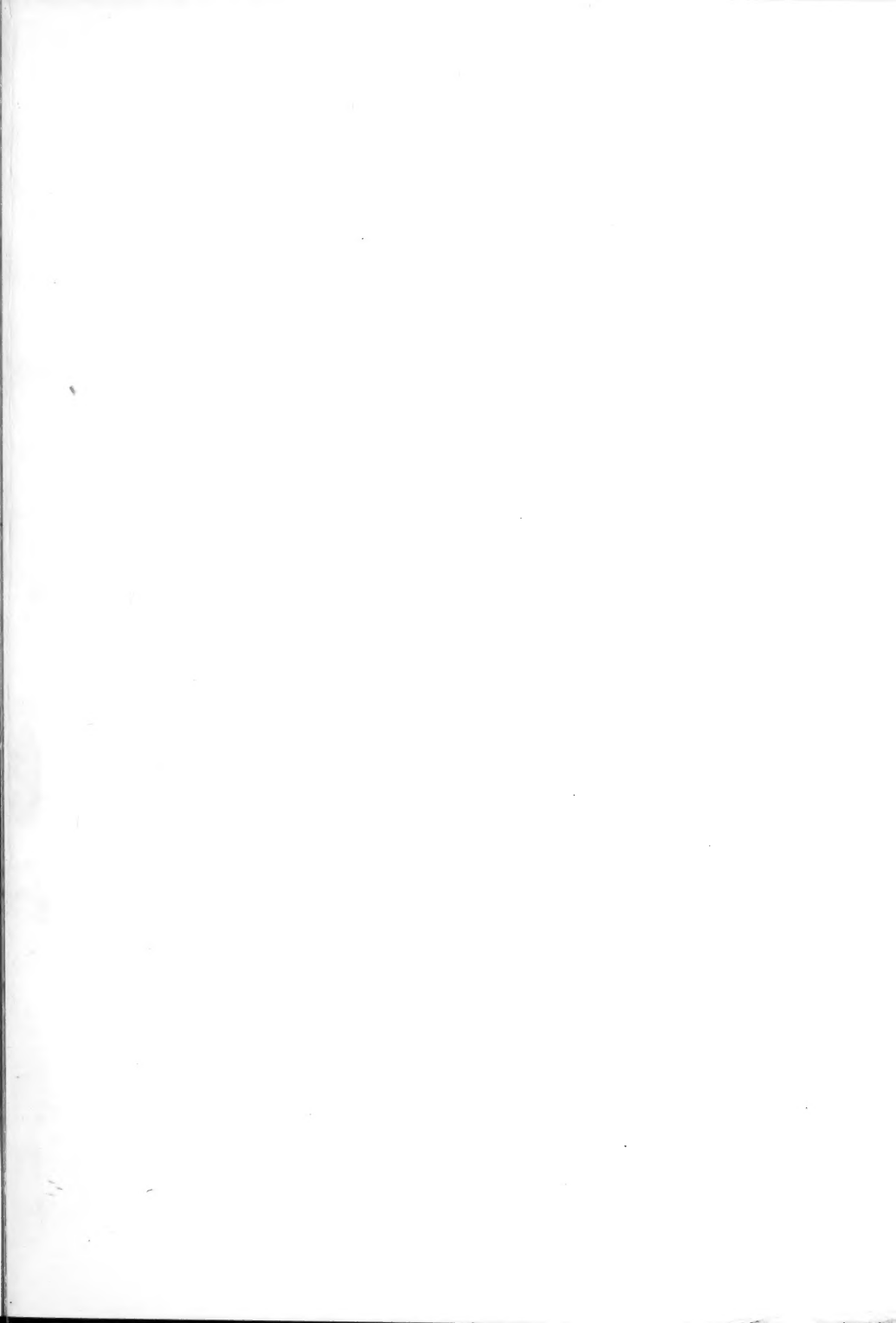
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