

OUTING FOR DECEMBER.  
THE SKATERS.

FROM the wooded shores our skates' sharp ring  
Comes echoing back as we fly  
On—on through the air whose mocking kiss  
Stings as we hurry by.

On a distant bank burns a glowing log,  
Like a jewel set in the night;  
In the glare of the ice the moon's young face  
Before us is mirrored bright.

And oh! to quaff the air's rich wine,  
And to live on a night like this—  
As we skim along o'er the frozen stream—  
Is to taste of perfect bliss.

GRACE YULE.



HUNTING THE MOOSE.

BY S. R. CLARKE.

AMONG the great game of North America the moose easily holds the first place. Grand in his proportions, shy and cunning to a marvelous degree, his pursuit cannot fail to tempt the most ambitious sportsman. He is considerably larger than the wapiti, and his ordinary stride when walking is from four to six inches longer. He is also less gregarious in his habits, and more inclined to frequent inaccessible, untrodden forests. He is rarely found in a country of mixed forest and prairie, so favored by his congener, the American elk. It is noticeable that where moose range, the ruffled grouse is numerous, and territory suitable to wapiti always contains the sharp-tailed grouse. The habitat of the moose generally extends farther north than that of the wapiti. The latter are often found in the proximity of settlements, and the ordinary white-tailed deer seem to prefer a sparsely settled country rather than an unbroken forest, as the former affords greater protection from their dreaded enemy, the wolf. But the moose has no deadlier enemy than man, and is so extremely diffident about cultivating his

acquaintance that experienced hunters never light a fire in a moose yard. In certain conditions of wind and atmosphere the odor of the smoke will alarm moose a mile away.

Though standing six feet high at the shoulders, the neck and body of the moose are short, while his length of limb is so great that some authorities claim he is unable to browse from the ground without spreading his front legs and thus lowering his body. But the head is long, and it is an important factor in the operation; and I am inclined to think that, without assuming any unusual posture, a moose can feed on a level with his feet. At all events, I have seen a two-year-old moose in captivity nibbling naturally from young maple shoots lying on the ground in his pen.

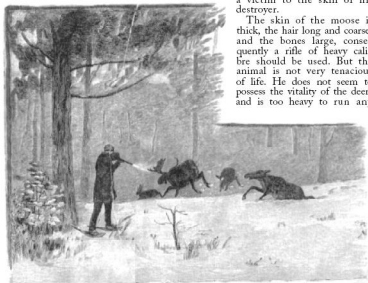
Unlike the elk or deer, a moose will not return to the locality from which he has been driven by the hunter, and when thoroughly alarmed will travel from ten to twenty miles without stopping. The smaller game is always on the alert when feeding, looking carefully around after each cropping of herbage. But the great

*Alces palmatus* does not fear wolves or hounds, and to detect his human enemy seems to depend entirely on his acute sense of smell and hearing. In the summer of 1890, I had the good fortune to have an opportunity of watching two full-grown moose feeding in the Sturgeon River as complacently and oblivious of danger as domestic cattle. No precautions were taken to guard against possible surprise. The animals plunged their great heads under water, and after securing a mouthful of juicy herbage, munched away fearlessly. We left them undisturbed, and they finally returned to the forest without observing our party. I had a 40-82 Winchester in the canoe at the time, and we were only one hundred yards away.

Dilettante hunters can have little success in following this wary animal. Even granting that one is skilled in the use of the rifle, and has a good knowledge of woodcraft and of the animal's habits, the conditions must be otherwise favorable before the moose can be brought down. A stormy day, with a good light, tracking snow, a fairly undulating country, reasonably free from underbrush, are almost indispensable. It is also advisable to have a good guide,

familiar not only with the peculiarities of the game, but also with the topography of the country. I am not dealing now with the method of calling moose in the rutting season, or of the execrable practice of running them down in deep-crusted snow. The latter method cannot, however, be adopted in Manitoba or the Northwest Territories of Canada, as owing in part to the dryness of the atmosphere no crust forms. But Indians and nomadic hunters everywhere kill a great many moose in the summer season in the water, to which the animals resort partly to escape the flies and partly for the purpose of obtaining food. While not feeding the moose is accustomed to lie for hours in the water with only his nostrils, eyes and ears above the surface. During summer he feeds chiefly on the roots of the white pond-lily and other aquatic plants and grasses which are pulled from the bottom. If the water is deep, this necessitates the complete immersion of the head for half a minute or so, during which the hunter steals forward in his canoe, stopping again when the head is raised. But the water appears to temporarily deaden the olfactory and auricular nerves of the animal, and in this position he easily falls a victim to the skill of his destroyer.

The skin of the moose is thick, the hair long and coarse, and the bones large, consequently a rifle of heavy calibre should be used. But the animal is not very tenacious of life. He does not seem to possess the vitality of the deer, and is too heavy to run any



"THERE WAS NO LACK OF MOOSE IN THESE WOODS." (p. 194.)

distance with a broken leg. From a shot that fairly penetrates the body a moose will collapse much quicker than the smaller cervide.

The village of Whitemouth, in Manitoba, some 1,300 miles west of Montreal, was selected as the starting point for a moose hunt in last November. The village is situate on a river of the same name, having its source fifty miles south and joining the Winnipeg River sixteen miles north of the village. Here we were at a point about midway between the western shore of the Lake of the Woods and the Brokenhead River and in the centre of a country extending indefinitely north, about one hundred miles south and an equal distance from east to west. The whole region is still clad in rough, rude vestments. Moose and deer are plentiful, ruffled grouse and sharp-tailed grouse abound. Elk and caribou are met with occasionally besides any quantity of ducks in season. Engaging a competent guide, named Louis, we proceeded some twenty-five miles up the river, establishing our permanent camp on a prettily wooded bluff on its banks. With high hopes for the prospects of the hunt which was to begin on the morrow we turned in for the night. Next morning, fully accoutred in hunting paraphernalia, we started in quest of moose. A Canadian lynx unwisely showed himself crossing run the ice of the river about a quarter of a mile away, and on our pressing him hard took refuge under a large rock. A it bullet from my 45-90 Winchester brought him to bay, though it is contrary to rule to shoot at any other game when moose hunting. Striking across a small lake numerous signs of otter were visible.

On taking to cover again we luckily hit the fresh trail of a band of moose, though we were only an hour out from camp. One of the animals had overestimated his powers of leaping and in attempting to ascend a steep knoll eight feet high he had slipped back against a tree, scraping off a considerable quantity of hair. The trail ultimately led across a stream and on the ice, which was covered with snow, we counted the footprints of five animals, but none of them were full grown. We were close to the game and presently I saw moving rapidly through the cover what appeared to be more of shadow than substance,

The swiftly-dissolving silhouette, though in outline like a moose, seemed to the ethereal to be dosed with cold lead. But a moment after I caught sight of the hind quarters of another moose projecting from behind a tree. Quick work was absolutely necessary as the band were scattering. The impediments in the line of the bullet's flight were too great or the aim was bad, for no result followed the shot, except that the movements of the game were materially accelerated. There was no lack of moose in these woods, for striking off in another direction we shortly stumbled on the tracks of two full grown animals and with the guide in the lead, followed the trail. He carried the lunch basket while I bore the heavy rifle ready to Moose fire on a moment's notice. We had covered probably three miles at a rapid Elk rate when Louis suddenly stepped to the left. One of the animals was in full view forty yards away. They had been feeding and walking along leisurely and as we came near a sharp puff of wind in our faces smote the woods and for an instant threw them into such wild commotion that our approach was unobserved. With an eager anxious look in her eyes and the long ears turned sharply in our direction the moose, a cow, hesitated for an instant. Quickly and foolishly she wheeled to run at right angles to our line of progression. The first bullet caught her at the point of the shoulder shattering it so effectually that the leg dangled a mere incumbrance, attached only by skin and sinew, and as she plunged to escape, the disabled member swung round and the point of the hoof actually described a portion of a circle in the

Before the next jump had been made the second bullet penetrated both lungs, and I fired two other shots as she lumbered painfully along. The third and fourth bullets spent their force on intervening trees, but after toiling about fifty yards she went down. Without thought of the second moose the guide proceeded to start a fire and I went to a swamp for water in order to prepare lunch. We then bled the cow, removed the viscera, filled the cavity with snow and started for camp.

We had gone less than a quarter of a mile when we discovered the hoof-marks of the other moose, a large bull. He had remained for some time, as the

heat of his feet had melted the snow to the ground, but before we came up he was making his best paces for parts unknown. The guide thought it was the smell of the smoke from our fire that started him. He certainly did not dally with the matter, but annihilated space in a very business-like manner. The hoof-prints were large and far apart and the snow was struck with vicious force as he ran, causing it to fly in all directions. Where he eventually crossed a small stream his great weight smashed the ice and he sank to the bottom at every stride. No doubt he was a rare old monarch. The same woods harbored others of his kind, for numerous balsam trees were almost wholly uprooted and stripped of bark many feet from their bases where the itching antlers had played before the October frosts had hardened and fitted them for battles with sturdy rivals.

Our hunt had an auspicious beginning, much as we regretted the loss of the bull. That night, near the fitful blaze of the camp-fire, with the old trees standing solemnly by, while the shadows danced upon their swart trunks, and the light played on the lone spaces around, we turned in to enjoy the sweet repose of the moose hunter. The next day we skinned and quartered the moose, which lay about four miles from camp. In going to it we noticed two otters about three hundred yards away, but failed to get within decent shooting range. To fetch an otter frolicking on the ice at over half this distance is rather fine work.

Taking another direction on the third day, after a long tramp and some delay in examining the dam, dwelling-place and food supply of a small colony of beaver, we arrived at length at the feeding grounds, or, in hunter's parlance, "yard," of a number of moose. We followed their wanderings for some time, but there seemed no immediate prospect of coming up with them. As we proceeded, a sound unusual in the forest attracted the attention of the guide. I had frequently listened to the whizzing sound made by a band of frightened wapiti, as they rushed away, but now I did not feel satisfied there was any game afoot in the immediate vicinity. Louis thought he heard something, and his acute ear did not deceive him. We were within two

hundred yards of the game, and the sound was the rattling of hoofs, the smashing of limbs or obstructions, and the general commotion made by the animals in their flight. The guide thought that if the band met with other moose they would stop; we therefore kept to the trail. The animals trotted in single file. Occasionally the path of one diverged from the others, but as they all joined again I inferred that the hindmost animal, noticing a turn by the leader, had tried a short cut to keep up. But our experience verified the folly of traveling on so fresh a trail, with the game alarmed. It kept stretching out, but we were unable to find the particular end of it with which the moose were connected. Two days later, after tramping the woods in all directions, we disturbed a solitary old bull, but unfortunately without getting a shot. Though in no mood to undertake the Titanic task of running him down, we decided to stay with him for three days. Thoughts of his palmated antlers stimulated our desire for an interview with him. It was useless to follow directly on the trail, as his long, swinging trot, would probably carry him over at least ten miles of woodland before he stopped for a breathing space. We therefore circled away to leeward and again hit the trail five or six miles from where we left it. On examining the impressions in the snow we found that our much-coveted quarry was still going, and going strong. We circled once more and approached the trail from the lee side at a point which we judged to be at least ten miles from where the work of making tracks had begun. The animal had slowed down to a walk and it might be was dangerously near. But night was coming on and it was too late to attempt a shot. We retired some distance where we could safely light a fire, cook supper and pass the night.

Next morning work was resumed, and we discovered that the moose had stopped to feed. The utmost caution now became necessary. We could not follow him in his windings, for the attention required to keep the trail might be fatal to our chances. Taking a direct line, with every sense on the alert and scrutinizing everything in view, we passed through the yard without obtaining a sight of the moose. A consultation was then held. If he had not slipped

away unobserved, he was probably still in the yard on the windward side of our path, and in all probability was lying down. We reversed our steps, taking a parallel line about a hundred yards further to windward. Proceeding slowly and with the utmost circumspection, we at length saw him rise hastily from some scrub less than a hundred yards away. There was no doubt he had heard or scented us, and, as he paused for an instant to determine the character of the danger threatening, he gave opportunity for a steady shot. Evidently it went home, for, notwithstanding the distance, I discerned that indescribable shrinking always noticeable when a bullet strikes. I fired again, and when the smoke cleared, the infuriated moose was traveling rapidly in our direction. His mane stood up, formidable, dark and menacing. The eyes appeared to glare with a savage fire, heightened by the peculiar sinister drooping of his enormous ears. The monster's design, evidently, was to charge us, and, if his strength had not failed before coming dangerously near, the result might have been uncertain. But he soon staggered and fell with a crash, smashing some rotten limbs lying in his path, and sending the fragments high into the air. A vision of the cyclopean dimensions and superlative fury of the old forest king burned into my memory, and it was partly a feeling of admiration, and partly awe of the bull, that temporarily rooted me to the spot, notwithstanding the shouts of the guide to "shoot! shoot!" I may say that, without personal experience, no one can realize the massive proportions or imposing appearance of a full-grown bull moose. Before we bled, skinned and decapi-

tated our victim night had come. We made a temporary camp, supped, slept, and the next morning commenced to transport the trophies of the chase.

Taken altogether, the hunt was most successful. The branch of the river trending towards the Lake of the Woods is the best, as the country around is diversified with a pleasing interchange of hill and vale. There are fewer opportunities for sighting game on a dead level, besides the range of vision is limited. The woods of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories are almost entirely second growth; there is no brule or heavy fallen timber or other vexatious obstructions, and they are in this respect to be preferred to the primeval forests of Eastern Canada.

When it is remembered that the moose is not a gregarious animal, the fact that we started seven the first day of the hunt is something phenomenal in the history of the pursuit of this game. In regard to the other band met with on the third day, sufficient observations were not taken at starting to determine the number, but there must have been from five to seven animals, and during the hunt we probably surprised over twenty moose. After the third day most of the animals had been alarmed and driven to other sections of the country. Even those remaining in possession of the old feeding grounds seemed to be sensitive of danger and difficult to approach. But a man who loves the enchanting woods and their varied forms of life and scenery is never deterred by hardship, disappointment or even danger, and ever since the mighty Hercules slew the wild boar of Erymanthus there have been enthusiastic votaries of the chase.

