

# OUTING.

VOL. XI.

JANUARY, 1888.

No. 4.

## BIG GAME HUNTING IN THE WILD WEST.

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### IV.

#### WOLVES.



THE largest and most formidable example of the canine genus found within the limits of our territory is the wolf, of which there are several different species.

The most conspicuous of these for size, strength, courage, and fleetness, is the "Giant Wolf" (*Lupus Gigas*, Townsend), which is found in limited numbers here and there over but few parts of our forest districts.

In common with all canine animals wolves are carnivorous, and in hunting gregarious, and probably the most indiscriminately persistent plunderers in procuring their food that exist within the animal kingdom.

Nocturnal in their proclivities, they seldom perpetrate their maraudings during the day-time, and I have rarely ever heard of their attacking persons unless, as sometimes has occurred, when they were reduced to a state of starvation during severe winters when deep snows had covered their customary means of subsistence.

Many years ago I heard of one seemingly well authenticated instance where a poor man and his wife living near Platteville, Wisconsin, while going on foot one evening to a neighbor's at a time when the snow was deep, were attacked by a large pack of starved wolves, and fought them off for some considerable time as they hurried along toward their destination, until at length the man seeing they were likely to be overcome told his wife he would run ahead to the nearest house for assistance, and away he went leaving the poor woman to fight the battle alone, and when he returned with help nothing was found of his wife but her bones.

About this early period in the settlement of that country, wolves were numerous throughout all the section west of the Lakes, and it was seldom that a person traveling over the prairies did not see many of them every day; but their appearance created no more alarm than a fox or a rabbit would have done.

Those wolves, for the most part, consisted of the gray, white and prairie varieties; the black wolves were very scarce, and I never but once to my knowledge encountered a Giant wolf.

During one winter, I think it was about 1834-5, while I was stationed at Green Bay, Wisconsin, I acquired a fondness for hunting under the tuition of that celebrated sportsman, Captain Martin Scott, to whose company I was for several years attached (his identity will, perhaps, be more readily recognized when I mention the

fact that he was the identical Captain Martin Scott to whom the Coon surrendered), and as our tastes were quite congenial in the sporting line, we enjoyed many a pleasant hunting excursion together.

The Captain kept a large pack of hounds besides several other choice varieties of thoroughbred dogs, and he owned a noted colored boy named "Jack," for whom he paid five dollars a pound, and afterwards set free. He also had several beautiful thoroughbred horses. Indeed his hunting equipment was of the most complete and *recherché* character throughout.

He was a native of Vermont, a poor farmer's son, and without applying for it, received the appointment of ensign in the regular army during the war of 1812, before he had an opportunity of obtaining much education. He did not, therefore, possess any special predilection for literary pursuits or amusements.

His tastes ran more in the direction of out-door pastimes; he knew all about horses, dogs, and all kind of game quadrupeds, but his knowledge of the other every-day affairs of humanity was very limited. In a word, he was a queer old bachelor, who gave but little heed to social or domestic matters.

Indeed, so ignorant was he on these subjects, that about a week after the birth of one of my children, he called me aside, and solemnly in a low tone of voice inquired if the little girl had got her eyes open yet. I said: "Of course; what do you mean by such a question?"

"Why," replied he, "I thought they did not get them opened until nine days after they were born."

During the ensuing winter a trapper came to the fort one morning and informed Scott that he had caught an enormous wolf in one of his traps the preceding night, and had followed him until he came in sight, but he was so large and looked so savage that he was afraid to go near him, and desired the Captain to take his dogs and pursue him. To which the Captain willingly assented.

Whereupon we mounted our horses, and with twenty-five or thirty dogs, several of them very large stag hounds, and all in good fighting condition, started under the guidance of the trapper, who took us to where he had last seen the animal, and from thence we followed his trail for about three miles, when it left the land and turned off upon the ice of Green Bay,

where the trap, scratching the ice, made a distinct trace, which enabled us to follow it without difficulty.

After going a short distance we discovered the wolf about a mile in advance making off so fast that it required rapid riding to overtake him, and when we did, the dogs at first paid no attention to him, but ran along by his side apparently thinking it was one of them. Shortly afterwards, however, while we were all, men, horses, dogs and wolf, running helter skelter along over the smooth ice in the utmost confusion, one of the largest dogs happened inadvertently to touch the side of the wolf, when he received a savage snap from the huge jaws of the sturdy beast that made him howl with agony and limp away with his tail between his legs. Soon afterwards, another dog that happened to be near the wolf was struck in the same ferocious manner and ran off uttering the most dismal cries.

These hostile demonstrations on the part of the enraged monster soon apprised the entire pack that there was in their midst a most formidable adversary, and many of the dogs afterwards kept their distance, while some of the most timid insisted upon giving up the contest and joining the stragglers in the rear. But a few of the boldest old hounds kept up their courage and made several plucky attempts to tackle the animal while he was making good running with the incumbrance of the heavy trap upon his leg, but whenever any one of the dogs came within his reach he invariably received a terrible snap which inflicted a wound like the thrust of a butcher knife; and thus the chase continued until nearly all the dogs were either so badly wounded or so much intimidated by the sad spectacle of their braver companions lying bleeding upon the ice that they were all virtually "hors du combat." The "Giant wolf" had achieved a most decisive victory, but what surprised me most, was that during the entire chase, although surrounded by a large concourse of men, horses and dogs, and impeded by the ponderous clog, he never came to bay, or slackened his speed until he was at last shot down by one of the party.

He proved to be a full grown specimen of the "Giant wolf" species of such extraordinary proportions that Captain Scott, who had doubtless seen and killed more large game than any other sportsman of his day, pronounced this to be in size,

HEAD OF GIANT WOLF. (*Lepus Gigas.*)

speed, courage and endurance the most remarkable wolf he had ever beheld.

He certainly was an enormous fellow, much larger than any one I had ever before encountered, and I had seen hundreds if not thousands of gray and white wolves.

As this special variety of wolf is so very rare and so difficult to procure, I have thought it quite probable that its attributes might not have been generally understood by naturalists, and that ultimately when it becomes better known it might, perhaps, be regarded as a new species of the canine genus.

So far as my experience extends I have never, with two exceptions, known of another wolf like the one I have endeavored to describe.

One of these exceptions was witnessed by Col. Geo. A. McCall, of the Army, an

intimate friend of mine and an ardent sportsman, as well as an enthusiastic student of natural history, with whom I have had some very pleasant and successful hunting excursions in Western and Southern Texas.

In a letter of his to a friend in 1851, he described an encounter he participated in with a Giant wolf, which interested me so much and is so pertinent to the subject, that I have ventured to introduce the substance of a portion of the narration here, especially as it is corroborative of my views regarding the peculiarities of that animal.

The Colonel stated that while he was stationed at Fort Gibson many years ago, the wolves were so abundant that the officers of the garrison, having but few amusements, were in the habit of

frequently chasing them with greyhounds. That once in a while (but very seldom) a Giant wolf, which was easily recognized by his shyness and fleetness, as well as by his size, was seen, but as the beast was a nocturnal prowler, and generally on the "qui vive" during the day, it was with the utmost difficulty that horsemen could approach him without being discovered, when they were so far away that they were generally enabled to reach cover before the greyhounds could overtake them, so that the huntsmen were often deprived of their sport by the superior vision and speed of the game.

Upon a certain occasion, however, they were informed by a Cherokee farmer living a few miles from the fort, that a Giant wolf was nightly frequenting the vicinity of his house, but that he had thus far eluded all their efforts to kill or capture him, and he would be much gratified if the officers would come over with their dogs and endeavor to track him to his lair.

Accordingly, a few nights afterward a party of officers, and among them my friend Colonel McCall, mounted their horses, and, with a pack of hounds, started for the farmer's house, reaching there about daylight, in time to give their horses and dogs a short breathing spell before entering on the chase.

It so happened, however, that the dogs struck the trail near the house, and being uncoupled, away they went in full cry and speed, showing that the Giant was close before them.

For some time the wolf kept within the cover, along the banks of a bayou, where he baffled the dogs at first, but finding at length that the cover did not afford sufficient security from his pursuers, and trusting to the lightness of his heels, he made a bold strike into the prairie and took a straight run for the hills, making rapid coursing for about three miles, when he again took cover, but the dogs did not allow him much repose, as they were soon up near him and forced him to take to the open prairie again. In this manner the wolf made several bold dashes from one cover to another, closely followed by the dogs and horsemen, and it was not until half-past eight o'clock, A. M., that he was brought to bay.

The denouement of the canine tragedy was brought about in this way: The wolf was approaching near the cover after one of his dashes in the open—his speed some-

what relaxed and the dogs and horsemen close up to him in the rear—when he entered a large inclosed field that separated him from the thicket he was coursing for, which he succeeded in crossing, and but a short distance before him was thick cover, with running water, which, if he could have reached, he would have been safe. He was perfectly conscious of this, but did not accurately calculate the amount of strength necessary to clear the obstruction of a very high fence.

Without the least hesitation, however, he boldly dashed at the formidable obstacle, which alone separated him from the desired cover, but as he attempted the lofty vault, his head struck the upper rail, and he turned a backward somersault and dropped heavily upon the ground.

Here a shout of triumph from the hunters broke upon his ear, which aroused all his remaining energies for a last effort to effect his escape, but he was too nearly exhausted to meet the exigency, and fell prostrate upon the ground.

Men, horses and dogs were the next moment closing around him; nevertheless, he crawled into the fence corner and turned again upon his adversaries.

A most desperate conflict now ensued; two of the largest dogs, in rapid succession, were severely cut with his savage incisors and rolled away before him, as he dashed against them with his heavy chest. Others, time after time, returned to the attack, but made but little impression upon the beast, whose rear and flanks were defended by the angle of the fence. With each successive round, dog after dog was more or less wounded by the violent snaps of the Giant's jaws.

Colonel McCall said, "Here upon the right sat a poor, inoffensive looking hound, now writhing in agony and howling piteously, his ears drooping lower than ever, while he cast a furtive glance at his lacerated back and sides, just released from the jaws of the Giant wolf; there on the left lay sprawling another, whose case seemed even more hopeless than the first.

"Several pistols were now drawn to dispatch the beast and save the dogs, but the *mêlée* was such that the chances of killing the dogs were greater than of saving them, and no shots were fired.

"At length, however, the dogs and wolf became so much exhausted, that the latter was knocked on the head with a



"UNTIL HE WAS SHOT DOWN BY ONE OF THE PARTY."

heavy club, and thus fell the 'Giant wolf' after rapid coursing and severe fighting for five and a half successive hours.

A few weeks after this Lieutenant Charles Hoskins, of the Army, a bold rider and an ardent sportsman, who was stationed at Fort Gibson, and one of the chief participants in the scenes just described, had another severe encounter with a Giant wolf, near the same locality.

One pleasant day during the month of June he rode out from the fort to breathe the fresh prairie atmosphere, with several of his greyhounds leisurely following at his heels. He did not anticipate seeing game of any kind, and was not armed with even a penknife, but as he was riding along near some bushes, suddenly from the midst of a dense clump directly at his side, out sprang a Giant wolf. Of course, the Lieutenant was greatly astonished, but, cool and collected, as he always was, he launched his horse and dogs upon the beast instantly, and before they had run fifty yards they had him by the flank and stopped, when a furious fight commenced, and was continued for a good while, with fluctuating prospects of victory and defeat, until both combatants became quite exhausted, and finally the wolf lay upon the ground in the centre, with his tongue hanging from his jaws, and at a few feet the dogs around him, panting and bleeding terribly, while poor Hoskins sat upon his horse a silent spectator of the tragic scene, and without weapons, totally unable to put an end to it.

When at length he thought the dogs had recuperated a little from their recent struggle, he called on them to return to the charge, but old Cleon, a veteran of great strength and courage, was the only one of the pack that responded to the summons. He sprang fiercely at the wolf's throat; the latter, however, who managed to rise upon his fore-feet, by a well-timed snap, seized Cleon by the neck and retained his hold with all his might.

This was more than Hoskins could endure, to see a favorite dog held helpless in a grip that threatened speedily to end his life. He was an experienced hunter and a determined man, who, poor fellow, subsequently fell while gallantly fighting at Monterey.

On this occasion he jumped from his horse and seized the wolf by the hind leg, and, by a vigorous jerk, caused him to release the dog, but only to find, in

an instant, the jaws of the monster clamped upon his own leg.

But, fortunately for him, the animal made no effort to shake or lacerate the wound, and therefore, with the wolf's hind leg in his right hand and his own leg within the wolf's jaws, he stood perfectly quiet, while poor Cleon, whose head was covered with blood, lay upon the ground apparently more dead than alive.

In a moment, however, Cleon revived a little and raised his head to his master, who gave him a familiar indication that he would be glad of his assistance, and promptly the noble old fellow responded to the call, and this time made good his hold upon the wolf's throat, which at once released the Lieutenant's leg. The other dogs soon afterward, having recovered their breath, also re-attacked the wolf, and this round so disabled him that the contest was about ended, and a boy happening along at this juncture, Hoskins, as his only resource, unbuckled the reins of his bridle, and, with the boy's assistance, put a slip noose over the wolf's neck, and, pulling on opposite ends, they choked him to death. Then the Lieutenant managed to ride to the fort with all his dogs except poor Cleon, who remained until he was sent for with a wagon, which carried him and his adversary's body to the fort, where he was received with rejoicing, and he and his master were laid up for some time before they recovered from the effects of their wounds.

As wolves of large size and great ferocity exist in great numbers in the forests of Germany and the sequestered wilds of Northern Russia, as well as in Scandinavia, it has occurred to me that the species found in those localities may assimilate closely with the Giant variety.

Their ravages in the destruction of cattle have been so disastrous to the natives in some sections, as to call for the action of the authorities in their destruction. In Sweden, for example, a *skall* or general hunt for wolves, bears, etc., is often ordered by the state, and every house having cattle had to furnish a man as contingent for the hunt.

Mr. Lloyd, in his entertaining book on "Northern Field Sports," states that these skulls sometimes embrace tracts of fifty miles in circumference, and there are often as many as 1,500 men present. A notice of the meet is given from the pulpit; and the entire district having assembled its

contingents, the area to be hunted is surrounded by men placed about fifty yards apart. This immense line simultaneously and gradually concentrates toward a even point, making as much noise as possible, which frightens and drives before it all the game within the inclosed area. Sometimes it takes two or three days before all the hunters reach the prescribed focus, during which all must bivouac at night upon their posts. As the cordon decreases the circle the animals are driven from their lairs, and become exposed to the shots of the gunners, and it often happens that bears or wolves finding themselves inclosed attempt to break away, but are generally secured. The main object of these battues is the destruction of the bears and wolves, but other animals are also frequently killed in large numbers.

Blaire, in his work on "Rural Sports," says: "The battue, or wholesale slaughter of game, is very fashionable in Germany. When the King of Naples (the greatest sportsman in Europe) was in Germany, about the year 1792, it was said in the German papers that in the different times he had been shooting in Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, he had killed 5 bears, 1,820 wild boars, 1,968 stags, 13 wolves, 354 foxes, 15,000 pheasants, 1,121 rabbits, 1,625 she-goats, 1,625 roebucks, and 12,435 partridges.

A *wolf hunt* annually takes place on the frozen surface of the Volga, one of which is described as follows:

On the occasion of one of these entertainments given by M. Yaroslov several wolves caught for the purpose were seen lying together in a stable, to be turned out as they were wanted. On the day fixed for the sport the largest of the wolves was produced; his mouth being confined by a cord and a running noose, they put him in a box upon wheels, containing one large and two smaller chambers; the former occupied by the wolf, and one of the latter held a fox and the other two hares. The box was then drawn by a horse down to the river, which was covered with spectators. The hares were first let out, and were pursued by four great Siberian greyhounds.

The wolf being unmuzzled two stout fellows took him, one by the ears and the other by the flanks, and set him down upon the ice, when, having looked around for a moment, he set off as fast as he could run. The snow, however, was deep and the dogs though greatly inconvenienced

by it soon came up with the wolf, while two chasseurs on horseback rode around and headed him, at the same time barbarously flogging him with their Cossack whips. He now turned on the dogs, bit one of them severely, and made the others keep their distance, contenting themselves with baying around him.

One of the huntsmen then dismounted and commenced flogging him, at which he turned round and made a snap at his hand, and again set off running and by his superior strength he would soon have tired the dogs had not the chasseurs checked him. When the speed of the horses and the blows of the whips had tired him out the noose was again slipped over his jaws, and he was lifted into the cart and carried home for another day's torment.

It is probable that the ravages of wolves in Northern Europe may have excited such particular antipathy among the inhabitants as to blunt their sympathies for the brute creation. Indeed we can hardly imagine it otherwise, after the public papers in 1825 issued the following official record of the devastations committed by wolves within the Government of Livonia in 1823, which were as follows: 1,841 horses, 1,243 foals, 1,807 homed cattle, 733 calves, 15,182 sheep, 726 lambs, 2,545 goats, 4,190 hogs, 705 dogs and 673 geese.

The wolves were formerly so numerous around some of our frontier military posts that it was difficult to keep sheep or poultry in the vicinity, and their depredations were perpetrated with such fearlessness that they did not hesitate to enter into the inclosures and out-buildings of the garrisons to secure their prey.

At a new post that I established on the Canadian River, near the border of an extensive prairie, there were so many wolves that I could at any time during the day by looking off upon the prairie see one or more of the animals. Shortly after arriving at this place I had procured for my wife a few domestic turkeys, and as we were then over a hundred miles from any other white habitation she prized these birds very highly, and had them carefully attended to. But one night she awoke and believing there was some disturbance among her turkeys she opened the door of the cabin which led to an open porch, and then she beheld a large wolf dragging off one of her nets, while the bird was flapping its wings and making all sorts of noisy signals of distress, when my wife

seized a stick and running at the wolf made him drop the turkey and run away. Just at that moment the sentinel came up and informed her that she had been attacking a large black wolf. Of course she was greatly surprised, but observed that "she had saved her turkey, anyway."

Whenever we were inclined to have a chase while we remained at this post we would order up our horses, without looking to see if there were any wolves about, and starting out with our dogs we rarely went half a mile without seeing one or more of the rascals, and pointing our greyhounds' heads towards them, away they would fly at the top of their speed, and after a short run would invariably bring the terrified beast to bay, and hold it then until we came up with the other dogs, among which was a medium sized pointer that was one of the most sagacious and brave animals I ever owned. He would come boldly up within a few feet of the wolf and deliberately seat himself, just out of the reach of the wolf's jaws, with his eyes intently fixed upon his antagonist, while the other dogs, having before this become acquainted with the efficacy of wolfish incisors, were so wary and shy, that they could seldom be prevailed upon to take the offensive at close quarters with a large wolf.

But Jack was no craven, and was only waiting for a good opportunity to make his assault when the eyes of the wolf were not directed at him, and no scolding or coaxing would induce him to move until he was perfectly ready for action. But his own eyes never for an instant looked away from the wolf. Indeed, I have sometimes, after having my patience almost exhausted by his delay, tried to hie him on by encouraging incentives, or by scolding, but it was all of no avail, he was solely absorbed in watching the adversary, and paid no attention whatever to me, although he was at other times a most obedient and affectionate animal.

When he was satisfied the proper moment had arrived, however, he, like a lightning flash, would leap upon the wolf's back, and fasten his jaws into his neck as firmly as if held in a vise, and I never knew him to let go his hold until the wolf was past resistance.

This healthful and exciting sport afforded a very pleasant change from the monotonous border garrison life, and we enjoyed it exceedingly, destroying quite a number of those rapacious robbers during the winter.

Most of the American species of the wolf genus, partake of habits similar to those of their European congeners; although not as large as the latter, they are believed to be, according to their size, equally as rapacious, and make their attacks in the same manner; that is, instead of making their teeth meet in the flesh of their adversaries and maintaining their hold like bull dogs, as is the case with most of the carnivora, the wolf strikes or snaps furiously and repeatedly with his savage incisors, which inflict deep gashes that but few dogs can withstand. Although they are naturally great cowards, yet, as before observed, they are the most arrant robbers in the animal universe.

I have known them to crawl up to a camp at night and steal pieces of harnesses, and once they took out a bridle from under the head of a man in my camp, and ate nearly all of the reins, without the man's discovering his loss until the next morning. Yet as bold as this would appear to make him, he will seldom touch any strange object of a suspicious character.

For example, while I was hunting with some Winnebago Indians one very cold season during the winter of 1838-9, we killed several deer which we were unable to carry, and after dressing them, we left upon the carcass of each some article of our attire, such as a handkerchief, glove, or other thing about our persons, and did not hang them up, as it was very cold and we were in a hurry to get to camp. I was, therefore, fearful lest the wolves (that were very numerous in that section) would devour all the deer before we could return for them, but the Indians told me there was no danger, as they would never touch the meat so long as the articles were remaining upon it. Notwithstanding the snow was deep, and the wolves must have been hungry at that time, we found the meat all safe where we left it on going there on the following day.

The range of the American wolves extends from Southern Texas and Mexico, through all the western Territories into British Columbia, and as far north as any explorers have reached.

The accounts of Franklin and others show that their presence was often observed amid the frozen polar regions.

Their tracks, with those of a few elk, in the deep snows of the elevated ranges of the Rocky Mountains, were almost the only evidences of animal existence that I



observed in those sierras during my winter trip of 1857-8.

The prairie or barking wolves are very numerous throughout the west and north of our territory, and their predatory and destructive traits render them very annoying to settlers and travelers.

They prowl at night around camps, and feed upon small quadrupeds, poultry, or on anything that will afford nutriment, and like the gray wolves sometimes hunt in packs of ten or more, and pursue their

game by reliefs, so that when one relief becomes exhausted, another is ready to take their places, and thus alternating they soon run down and capture their prey. And as strange as it may appear it is said that when the game is brought to bay, all the reliefs are sure to be in at the death.

These facts I have had vouched for by reliable guides and old mountaineers, in whose statements I place confidence, although I have never witnessed them myself.

(Series to be continued.)

## A WOMAN OUT OF HER PROPER SPHERE.

BY CAPTAIN ROLAND F. COFFIN,

Author of "The History of American Yachting," "Old Sailor Yarns" etc., etc.

It used to be a favorite habit of mine to drop into a public house near the South Ferry, of an afternoon, where I was nearly always certain of finding an ancient mariner whose acquaintance I had made, and who was always ready for a lass of grog or to spin a yarn, of which he seemed to have an unlimited stock. "There's some things," he said to me one day as we sat together, "as there's various opinions about some folks holdin' to one thing, and some to another. Now, here's the question as to wimmin. I s'pose no two folks can be agreed onto them, some holdin' that they're nuisances, and others equally willin' for to swear as they're blessin's, both bein', in my opinion, right, the difficulty bein' in the different natures of the wimmin. As a general rule, they're nuisances on board of a ship, whether it's as passengers or appurtenances, by which latter I mean either in the form of stewardesses or as wives to the skipper. It is in this here latter p'int that the difference of opinion mostly comes in, some holdin' that a skipper with his wife along of him will be apt to git in better society when into a foreign port, and that he will keep steadier generally and be more apt for to attend to his duties closer. Also that at sea he will, if given to hystin', draw it milder if the old woman are along than otherwise. Others ag'in holds that bein' as he has his wife along, he will feel

privileged for to turn in each night at two bells, and damn anybody as calls him afore mornin', and won't be apt for to carry on to her as hard as if he ware alone; while in the event of a accident the skipper will feel bound to take care of the old woman fust and the ship next.

"Bein' as I've had great experience of a seafarin' life, you'd think as I'd be able for to settle this question right off, so as to be satisfactory to all parties consarned; but I must allow as it's subject to doubts dependin' on the character of the wimmin, and yet, of the skipper, too. I've been shipmates with skippers' wives as was a blessin' to all on board—whose very presence was a delight and a comfort to all hands; and then ag'in I've seen 'em as was dreadful troublesome and as never ought for to have been allowed for to have put their feet on a ship's decks. For instance, there were Old Mother Wilson, as we used for to call her. I was shipmates with her in the ship *Kangaroo*, in the ear 1840, I think it were, bound from New York to Havre, and she were dreadful wearin' to the spirits of everybody aboard of that ship. Them times we used for to go right to sea from the dock. If so be as the wind were fair, we'd sail right down without takin' steam, but if so be as it were ahead, we'd tow down, although tow boats wasn't nigh as plenty as they got to be afterwards, and it were considered