

"I was going to beg your pardon, Anna," I said, talking very fast, while a miserable choking sensation clogged my throat, "but that won't do now. I am going to ask you one question, and that will settle the matter."

She looked up at me rebelliously, and put her hands over her ears.

"Anna?"

No answer, but the angry flush on her cheeks gave place to an all-suffusing blush. I took a small wrist in either hand. She writhed them in my grasp, but I held as tightly as I dared for fear of hurting her, which proved to be tight enough to answer my purpose.

"Anna, are you—do you—Anna, look at me."

The fortunes of the universe seemed to depend on that question, and yet I stumbled over the asking of it.

"Anna, you know that it has been all my miserable jealousy that has made me act the way I have to-day. I have been jealous—insanely jealous—of everybody and everything that has taken your attention from me for an instant, and there has been so much to-day to take it away for millions of instants. Anna, darling, tell me you love me."

I had drawn her hands over until they rested on my shoulders, and a blushing, downcast face was brought very close to mine. She raised her eyes reluctantly. The fire had died out, and in its stead was a tender twinkle.

"You are holding in the line, sir; let me go. Oh, Fred! You bad, bad——" but the rest of it was smothered somewhere in my coat.



MOOSE IN THE MAINE WOODS.

BY C. BAILEY.

A HUNT in the Maine woods; limit of time, two weeks; sole object, a moose.

By the end of October the leaves have fallen, the undergrowth has become comparatively clear, and the moose have left the lakes and streams and sought shelter in the more thickly wooded hills and ranges. The rutting season is over, and all fight has left the bull, who busies himself in selecting a "yard," some well-protected hillside, where the tender tops of the moose-wood and maple will furnish him food during the heavy snows.

The sportsman in quest of moose in Maine arrives at the little station nearest the hunting region, puts up at the country hotel, listens to stories of the many heads carried out of the woods, is

assured by his guide of the plentifulness of game, and *if* a snow will only fall, and *if* luck is only with him, and *if* other things combine, everything will turn out satisfactorily.

Thus, regaled with yarns, he imagines in the warmth of the hotel smoking-room that killing a moose is such an easy matter that it is a wonder more sportsmen do not try it. In fact, he is most anxious to get started test some man may have gone in the woods ahead of him and, perhaps, gotten the very moose that would have fallen to his own rifle.

So, by the rising of the morrow's sun, the Nimrod finds himself rigged in soft knee-breeches, sweater, numerous heavy woolen socks, and oil-tanned moccasins, and seated in a heavily-laden buck-board pulled by four scrawny horses over a rough, muddy road, such as only Maine horses can stand. Ten, fifteen or twenty miles through a dense forest of spruce, pine and hemlock brings him to a little cluster of log cabins. He is at his camp, situated usually in a hallow

near some swift-running brook, and entirely shut in by the tall trees and thick undergrowth in the neighborhood.

Thus passes the first day.

The second day gives the guide an opportunity to test the endurance of the sportsman, who is taken over hills and through swamps with only the possibility of happening suddenly on the object of his hunt. His chances are poor, for the dry leaves crack under his feet, and the breaking of every twig sends a noise through the silent woods as of the tramping of an ox.

The third and fourth days are perhaps as fruitless. Not a sign of moose. The snort of a deer or two as they bound through the young hemlock, or perhaps the glimpse of a white flag, may give the hunter a momentary thrill of excitement; but, if he must have a moose it behooves him not to shoot at other game. For, once started, the moose will leave that particular locality and not stop short of many miles running. So back to camp as darkness comes on, tired and weary, perhaps discouraged, certainly hungry.

The next morning,—what joy! The ground is covered with snow, soft and velvety, four or five inches. Just the right depth, not too much for fast traveling, yet just enough to cushion the leaves and deaden one's footsteps.

The hunter, with whatever rifle he fancies, and the guide with his pack make an early start. Three or four miles over one range, with here and there a view of a distant lake, or a glimpse of a long stretch of crimson and blue hills, down into a swamp, across treacherous brooks, when lo! a moose-track. Immediately the hunter's spirits mount high, his strength is doubled, and every sense is on the alert.

The guide examines the track critically and fears that it is of a cow. However, it might be a young bull. At any rate, it will probably lead to a yard or to other moose, so for the next three or four hours the trail is followed through bogs, over fallen tree-tops, and under overhanging boughs, which the guide scrutinizes closely. No bark is knocked off. There is very little hope of its being a bull. The "going" grows tiresome, and when the tracks lead from the top of some high hill to the foot and it is then found that the quarry has turned and gone up again, perhaps not

a hundred yards from the old trail, the time is observed and lunch decided upon.

Being refreshed, they resume the trail, and after crossing more hills and working their way through more swamps, find the distance between the tracks to grow shorter and here and there a freshly nipped twig. The moose has slowed down and is beginning to feed. Another quarter of a mile of slow and careful trailing; then, on reaching the edge of a more open growth, it is seen, quietly browsing amongst the saplings some two hundred yards away. The rifle is cocked, and both hunter and guide crane their necks to try to discover whether it is a cow or a bull. In vain they look for horns; peer as they will the horns are not there. There is nothing to be done. The law forbids the killing of cow moose, so they can only withdraw and try not to disturb her.

It is getting late, and six or seven miles separate the wearied trampers from their camp. By carefully selecting a route over certain well-known hills, and by constant reference to the compass, the welcome lights of the huts appear just as darkness has settled down.

The fifth day has gone, and with it what encouragement the beginning of it brought forth. By the time all hands are in their bunks the unwelcome patter of drops of rain is heard on the roof, and soon there is a steady downpour.

Sapristi! What miserable luck! Tomorrow the snow will freeze, and with a thin crust it is absolutely useless to try to hunt anything. And so it is. A few hours tramping is enough to convince even a tyro that stalking is out of the question. So the day is spent in the vicinity of the camp after partridges. A bag of half a dozen is not an unusual one. The absence of their heads is pointed to with pride as a proof of good marksmanship.

Thus the sixth day and also the seventh and eighth pass. Six days more—only five hunting days, for one day must be spent getting out of the woods. Impatience seizes upon the sportsman as he counts the days and figures on his probabilities. In his dreams he kills the biggest moose ever carried out of the woods, spread of horns six feet, twenty points on one horn and nineteen on the other. Then again, the questions his friends will ask: "What!

killed nothing?" "Two weeks in the woods" serve to make the day long and his waking hours restless and uncomfortable.

So, with a rabbit foot in his vest pocket, or carrying some other article that his superstition tells him will prove efficacious, he again sets forth, more determined than ever, and quite prepared to stand whatever exertion he may be called upon to undergo. There is still a crust on the snow, but the "going" is not quite so noisy. Hour after hour is spent in trudging through the snow, the thermometer down to ten below zero, moccasins leaky, and feet tired and sore. A lunch of sandwiches and coffee, and on again, stepping to one side to examine a bear-track, or again to look at an unusually big deer-track, until at last the guide's quick eye discovers moose-sign.

A peeled sapling, broken twigs, and finally the tracks of two moose, one large and one small track, evidently a bull and a cow. Again we are on the alert, and the trail is taken up with the eagerness of a hound in full cry. A mile of fast, quick work, when, on stopping a second to listen, there is heard, growing fainter each instant, the heavy, crashing sound made by the monarch of the forest as he bounds down the valley. Too late. He is off. We were too anxious. And then the blanked crust. There is no we following immediately, and, as it is nearly sunset, it is decided to camp on his trail. So some forked sticks are set up, poles laid on them, these covered with long strips of birch-bark, boughs cut and laid for a bed, a blanket spread, and everything made as comfortable as possible for the night.

Daylight breaks on the morning of the tenth day and ends a restless night spent in rolling over and turning about in the endeavor to keep warm. As the sun sheds its first glow over the hill-tops the pursuers are off. Mile after mile is covered with no indication of a slackening of speed on the part of the moose. Noon, one, two, and three o'clock pass, and not a turn in the trail. The moose are leaving the country and must be given up.

Disheartened and wearied, hunter and guide set a course for camp and wend their way through tangled undergrowth, over slippery logs, across brooks and

streams into which they not infrequently slip, until they are at last before a cheery fire in camp, recounting the trials of the preceding days.

The next day dawns bright and clear, with a soft melting of snow. A few miles from camp, when again moose-sign is discovered. Bark freshly peeled from young trees, bushes bent over, and fresh tracks which the guide decides were made during the early morning. There are three in the herd, big tracks, and from the bark scraped off the trees, there is evidently a bull amongst them. The trails cross and wander about aimlessly. The beasts are possibly in the near neighborhood. Now great caution must be observed. A finger is wetted and held up to find the exact direction of the wind. Taking note of the general appearance of the surrounding hills and valleys, the guide leads the sportsman circuitously to leeward of a certain narrow little valley, where they again discover the trail, which, fortunately, leads up the valley and against the wind.

Creeping, half crawling, they cautiously select a place for each step. The signs grow fresher every minute, and the hunters grow more alert and careful. Just as they reach the top of a little rise, a black object is seen to move amongst the growth some hundred yards distant. Crouch low and be ready! A moment later the object turns, and presents a broadside showing a fine pair of horns. Now quick, but take a careful aim, Bang! once, twice. Shoot again as he runs—three, four—yea, more times if necessary. The old bull stops and weakens, then, staggering, falls heavily to the ground, dead.

A moment to realize that he has actually killed his moose, and then the triumphant hunter produces a flask that he and his guide may drink to their success, and to each other's health—and to everybody else's good health. They then fill their pipes and sit down to enjoy a little of that calm contentment that follows the complete and successful accomplishment of one's most cherished desires.

The next day is spent in "blazing" and "swamping out" a way by which the moose may be hauled out. And on the thirteenth, after much labor and difficult driving, he is hauled into camp on a sled.