MOOSE HUNTING BY JACK-LIGHT.
From a drawing by A. B. Frost.—[See page 452.]

MOOSE HUNTING.

BY HENRY P. WELLS.

EITHER from pictorial representations or from an examination of the prepared specimens abounding in our museums, all are sufficiently familiar with the long legs of this animal, which, together with the short round body, the thick horizontal neck, rendered more disproportioned by its heavy coating of hair, the long wattle which hangs like an old-fashioned purse from underneath the angles of the jaw, the shovel-like antlers, the small sinister eyes, the enormous ears, the apology for a tail, and the prodigiously long and ugly head, finished with a nose resembling a half-inflated foot-ball, make the moose perhaps the most ill-favored of four-footed beasts. Therefore to view it with the eye of the naturalist in an article not technical in its character would be merely a work of supererogation.

While its best friends can but admit and deplore the utter absence of grace in its form and motion, they recognize in and claim for it the beauty of utility in a degree so pre-eminent as to sink all defects into comparative insignificance. Sometimes attaining a height of nearly seven feet at the fore-shoulder, and a weight of fourteen hundred pounds, no one can find fault with the quantity of food it may supply, while an attempt to compare the quality of this with that of any other four-footed creature, except to the disparagement of the latter, will but elicit a smile of mingled pity and contempt from those whose good fortune it has been to encounter and overcome it in its native wilds.

If, then, we view it with the hunter's eye, it must not be forgotten that though all animals, wherever found, bear the general impress stamped upon their species by the hand of Nature, they still retain some individuality of character, as well as adaptability to the surroundings in which they may be placed. Whenever, therefore, the habits or pursuit of any animal are under discussion, it would seem wise to restrict it to some specified locality; for though the main features will doubtless be everywhere alike, still the details may vary.

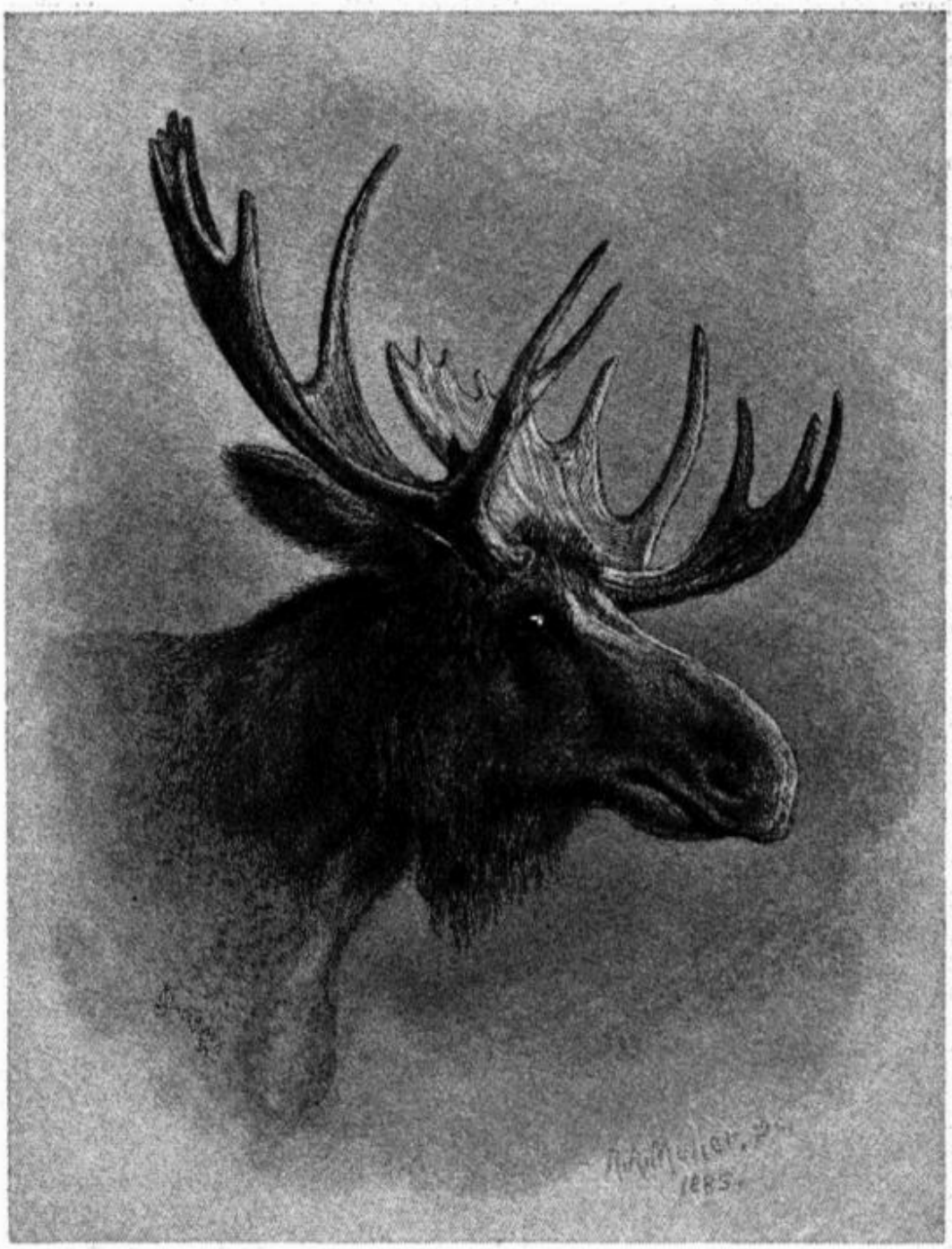
We therefore select the wilderness of which the boundary line dividing Canada from Maine is the backbone, and confine ourselves exclusively to that region.

Not only does the quantity and quality of the food it affords endear the moose to the hunter, but that ungainly head is stuffed full of brains. Those prodigious ears are ever trimmed, like the wind-sails of an ocean steamer, to catch the lightest breath of the fickle wind, and to apprehend and determine the cause of the faintest sound which may be borne upon it. Though its eyesight is by no means of the keenest, its preposterous nose is acute beyond comparison to detect the least taint in the air, and to give warning that it would be prudent to be elsewhere.

Nor are these hints of danger ever unheeded. If the sense of hearing is offended, the animal steals away, even over the most encumbered ground, with a stillness little short of miraculous. Not the rustle of a branch or the cracking of the smallest twig attends its departure. Were it not that the departing track betrays the truth, it might well be thought it had vanished into thin air, and that the hunter had really pursued a fiction of his own imagination.

But if the sense of smell gives warning, particularly if the taint is that of man, all precaution is thrown to the winds. Those long, ungainly legs are then instantly galvanized into an awkward shambling trot, and crashing through the forest with a noise like a railroad train off the track, the startled animal fairly devours space with the speed of its flight. And the exhausted hunter who has followed the track hour after hour, perhaps even day after day, with every sense on the alert, shrinking from no personal effort or discomfort that every possible precaution may be taken, recognizes at once the signs that proclaim defeat to his practised eye; and in such terms as he deems appropriate to the occasion bewails that when hope had almost become fruition he stepped on that fatal twig, or allowed the stock of his rifle to rasp against that bush; or anathematizes the fickle wind which eddied at so inopportune a moment, and in a direction so fatal to his hopes.

In still hunting, of the nature of which the foregoing will give some intimation, it is essential that the hunter sees the game



HEAD OF BULL MOOSE.

before it suspects his presence. The region under consideration consists of one sea of forest-covered mountains, interspersed with valleys, also heavily timbered, which conduct the drainage of the country to the ocean. The annual rainfall is great, and so ponds, lakes, and rivers are numerous. Other openings in the apparently endless forest are, however, rare, and when they occur, usually take the form of alder swamps, where the vegetation is even denser and concealment more perfect than in the forest itself. Therefore, until the November storms

have stripped all deciduous trees of their leaves and cushioned the ground with snow, the progress of the hunter through the woods is necessarily so slow and noisy, and the range of his vision is so limited, that this form of hunting affords little or no hope of success.

Presuming the reader to be one by whom, except when under the pressure of absolute necessity, a cow moose or her calves would be unmolested, let us turn our attention to the bulls—the only legitimate object of the hunter's ambition.

The velvet is rubbed from its horns, and they are hard and well polished, by the 1st of September; and since at no season is it in such perfect physical condition, let us then begin our hunt.

Unattractive as is the personal appearance of a bull moose, his moral nature and disposition are no less disreputable. Solitary and alone, with his big ears set like the spinnaker of a racing cutter, and his supersensitive nose ever on duty, he dozes away the day in some secluded spot high on a mountain-side. But two thoughts find room within his gigantic head—to keep his stomach full and his hide whole; and to these, especially the latter, every resource of his nature is devoted. He is the embodiment of pure and undiluted selfishness. As daylight wanes he rises and stretches himself; and always inquiring with nose and ear of the truant wind whether his precious skin is safe, he wanders slowly and with frequent pauses down the mountain-side, if not embodying it in words, still with the fixed intention of carrying out in practice the precepts of that immoral song,

"We won't go home till morning."

He prefers to adhere to one locality, until his pre-eminent regard for his own personal safety forces him elsewhere. He knows every stream and every patch of water for miles around; and to one of these, either where the long grass growing from the bottom of the stream waves with the current, or where the yellow water-lily dots the surface of some forest pond, he is bound. The hunter is also well informed as to the local topography; and judging about where moose would be most likely to spend the day, and knowing what food-bearing stream or pond is most accessible from that direction, he there seeks his game.

Should the moon be at or near the full, he cruises the stream in his canoe, moving noiselessly in the shadow of the overhanging bushes, and stopping frequently to listen; for from the sense of hearing alone does he expect the first intimation that a successful issue is possible. If it is a pond, and a small one, he brings his canoe beside some part of the bank where the wind will be favorable and where concealment is possible, and there waits hour after hour, "hugging the delusive phantom of hope," the perfect silence unbroken, except by the beating of his own heart when he hears, or fancies he hears, the tread of some heavy animal. Amid the thousand imaginary noises which have assailed his ears so long, was that really the snap of some branch or twig? Yes, for there comes the sound again, this time clear, sharp, and unmistakable. Deliberately, with frequent pauses of greater or less duration, some animal is approaching with long low strides. Will he take to the water or not? Alas, no! He skirts the pond just within the edge of the woods, beyond the outermost leaves of which the moonlight penetrates not one single inch. Nearer and nearer comes the sound, varied by intervals of silence when the animal stops to feed, or, as is more probable, to listen. At last it is within forty feet of the ambush. Each leaf fringing the wood shines like silver in the moonlight, but beyond all is Egyptian darkness. In vain does the hunter, with rifle on the full cock, strain every sense to localize the animal. The tension of his nerves is far too great to determine within twenty feet where the sound really comes from; and unwilling to fire where there is not one chance in a hundred that the shot will be effective, he allows the game to depart as it came, unmolested.

Such is the result of this form of hunting at least nine times out of ten; and as it grows toward dawn the hunter returns to camp, tired and disgusted clear through.

Whether this or indeed any other method of moose hunting is contemplated, camp is made far from the hunting ground. Success is only possible on a night comparatively free from wind. Then no fire is built after noon, nor is a blow struck with the axe. The water is approached at a right angle, and far from where the game is likely to appear; for a fence forty feet high would not more surely bar the way of a moose than the

footsteps of a man tracking the margin of the hunting ground.

It has already been intimated that the moose may seek his food where the yellow water-lily is found. It is not, however, the leaves nor the blossoms which are sought, but the roots. These extend in a perfect net-work through the mud in which they grow, attaining a thickness exceeding a man's arm, and an indefinite length. In color they are a pale greenish or yellowish white, smooth on the exterior, except for a number of eyes like those on a pineapple, somewhat elastic to the touch, and pithy within. There is no disputing about tastes, and consequently we will not criticise the moose for being so fond of this vegetable. But to the human palate it is dry, insipid, and puckery. To obtain this he will wade out into the water, and souse his head beneath the surface until even his ears are submerged. Then, having wrenched a chunk of greater or less length from its bed, he withdraws his head, and dripping water from each of the numerous angles which characterize his ugly physiognomy, he stands the picture of pure animal enjoyment, chewing away at one end of the root, while the other sticks out of his mouth like a cigar. To catch him in the middle of this performance is the constant burden of the hunter's prayers.

Should the night promise to be still, warm, and dark, the hunter scours the reflector of his jack until it shines like silver, and breathes upon and wipes its glass lens until it is speckless. The lamp within should emit a powerful light; but the casing must be so constructed that not the faintest glimmer can escape until its aid is required, and a hinged cover, which caps the glass, is dropped.

For though a deer will almost always tempt fate by standing stock-still, gaping at a light like a backwoodsman in a city. the moose is no such fool. If he has any curiosity, he recognizes the great general principle that there is a time for all things, and that the time to study an unusual phenomenon comes only after he has betaken himself to cover.

In this, as in most other forms of moose hunting, two form the company—one to do the work, while the other takes in the fun—and, as in many other things in this life, ultimate success depends more on the skill of the former than on that of the latter.

After the jack has been lit some twenty minutes, so that the maximum of light possible without smoke is assured, the pair betake themselves to the canoe. Blankets are spread on the bottom of the boat to deaden any motion of the feet. He who is to shoot seats himself in the bow, while his companion first wraps him in blankets, and then arranges the jack. This is best suspended from a frame behind the rifleman; but it should be so connected with his head that the beam of light will follow its every motion when the jack is open. With the glass uncovered, the rifle is thrown to the shoulder, and the connection of the jack with the head-gear is so adjusted that when the most convenient aim is taken, it will be directly in the centre of illumination. Thus both sights of the rifle are perfectly visible, and the difficulty is no longer to shoot with accuracy, but only to obtain a sufficiently distinct view of the object to be hit.

When this is complete, the other takes his place in the stern, folds his blanket over his lap, and grasping his paddle, pushes from the bank. The jack is then closed, and complete darkness and silence follow.

As noiseless as the shadow of a cloud, the canoe steals along, and hour after hour its occupants, relying solely on the sense of hearing, strain every nerve to detect an indication of the near neighborhood of the game they seek.

It is not so hard on the paddler, since the exercise keeps his blood in circulation and his nerves in some sort of condition. But the man in the bow fares differently. Aches and pains declare themselves in all sorts of places, together with the most insane desire to cough, or sneeze, or blow his nose, or do something else equally inopportune. He strains his ears till they almost crack; he thinks he hears all kinds of noises, until his confidence in his ability to distinguish the real from the imaginary is almost destroyed. He suffers, but he suffers in silence, and with patient resignation.

Should a sound be heard near, but not on or in the stream, the canoe pauses, and minute drags after minute; perhaps even an hour is passed without sound or motion, until it is certain that it was a false alarm, or that the animal has betaken itself elsewhere.

At last, when endurance seems no long-

er possible, through the midnight air comes a slow and measured sound—slosh, slosh, slosh; and then all is still again. The heart of the hunter shrivels within him to the size of a lemon, and flies into his throat, where it keeps up such a thumping that it seems impossible the noise should escape the quick ear of the game. With the utmost caution the rifle is brought to the full cock, and the left hand freed, ready to open the jack at the preconcerted signal, which it is the duty of the paddler to give.

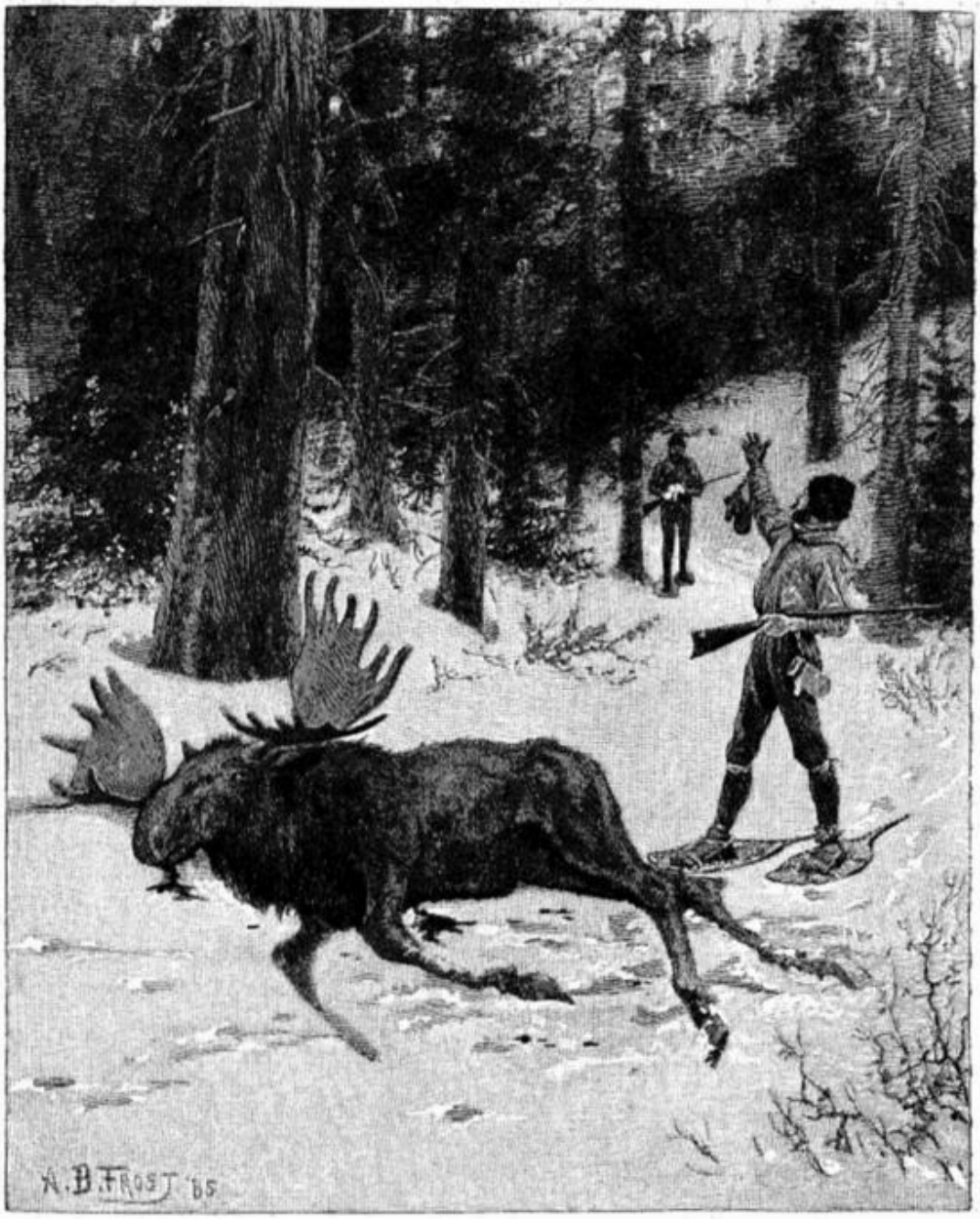
Every ache and pain is at once forgotten in the all-absorbing question, Will he remain in the water, or take to the bank, and burying himself in the woods, escape? For he is still far beyond the range of the jack, and not till it will surely show him up must it be opened. If the motion of the canoe was slow before, it seems doubly so now, and minute after minute, each apparently an hour, drags on, and still the noise, repeated at intervals, seems no nearer. Are his suspicions aroused, and is he retreating? This and a thousand other thoughts alternately chill the hunter's heart with fear or fire it with hope.

At length, after a seemingly endless delay, comes the signal to open the jack, and the light streams forth. There he stands, midleg-deep in the water, dim, shadowy, and monstrous, his eyes glaring green in the light, with the malevolence of a demon. He will stay but for a second, and only to decide which way to retreat. Raise the rifle slowly, but lose no time. Draw as careful a bead as though shooting at a two-inch bull's-eye, and give it to him right through—not behind—the middle of the fore-shoulder. For a second the smoke obscures the result. Is he down or up? In either case, dose him again if you can; but if you cannot, close the jack at once. Now is no time to ask your companion, Do you think I hit him? If you were silent before, be doubly so now, and listen. Does he burst into and tear through the woods as though he had gone into the kindling-wood business and was laying in a winter's stock, and do you hear him crashing and smashing until the sound dies away on the distant mountain-side? It was a clear miss, or at best a graze. But no; the uproar dies away, and a silence you can almost feel ensues. What sound is that from the neighboring woods? There he is! You can hear him breathe, and wheeze at every inspiration. It is well. The shot was a little too far back, but it was pretty well placed, all the same. Now withdraw with the stillness of death itself, and not until at least half a mile intervenes whisper to your companion, "Well, I guess that's our meat; what do you think?"

For if from any act of yours he discovers what has hurt him, particularly if you attempt to land, he will either attack at once, in which case you will be in desperate peril, or he will travel till he drops, perhaps miles and miles away, and the foxes and other marauders of the forest alone will profit by his death. Whereas, if you leave him to attribute his distress to a stroke of lightning or a fit of indigestion, or to any cause other than the agency of man, you will find him in the morning, if not lying dead where you last heard him, at all events so enfeebled that you may still-hunt him with the certainty of success.

That the hero of the dime novel, whose bullet never deviates from its destination by the thousandth part of a hair's-breadth, always aims *behind* the fore-shoulder, is not forgotten. Still, notwithstanding the pain inseparable from a difference with an authority so far superior to any the writer has ever met, he cannot help thinking this a mistaken practice on the part of that hero. It is no better than a lung shot, seldom instantly, sometimes not even ultimately, fatal. To reach the heart the ball must be driven through the centre of the fore-shoulder, and somewhere about ten inches above the bottom line of the body. To insure a satisfactory result, a solid ball impelled by plenty of powder is necessary. I have known a moose to be killed with a 32-calibre bullet as well as a 38, both from rim-fire cartridges, and a 44 bullet from a Ballard carbine, driven by only twenty-eight grains of powder, to go clean through the animal, cutting the aorta in its passage. But, notwithstanding, a 50-calibre bullet and ninety-five grains of powder are better adapted for this kind of work. Had I but the courage of my convictions, and were I but assured that I should shoot only at the short distances customary in night hunting, I should use a ten-gauge cylinder-bored shot-gun, and a hardened round ball before six drams of the best powder.

A head shot is always a poor shot, for the brain lies far back. If the animal is facing the hunter, the nose is so thrust



"OUR MEAT."

forward as almost to cover the vital point. Then where the neck joins the body is the surest place, a little into the neck doing no harm. A broadside shot right in the root of the ear is sure death, but it is a small mark where the light is uncertain, and not to be recommended. Through the neck, about five or six inches below its upper edge and a little back of the head, will drop a moose as though he was struck by lightning. He will not even give a single kick, but wilt in his tracks like a wet rag. It is more instantaneous in effect than through the middle of the heart itself, and if the hunter is sure he can do it, is the best of all shots. But the preliminaries to moose shooting are not conducive to accurate marksmanship, so perhaps the centre of the fore-shoulder, or the root of the neck, according to the po-

sition of the animal, is the surest shot, all things considered.

Eight or ten inches back of the fore-shoulder is a stomach shot, and but little further back still will penetrate the bowels. The former is almost always and the latter is invariably a mortal wound. But neither will stop the animal or knock him off his legs. An animal so wounded should never be disturbed unless in an open country and in broad daylight. He will then go but a short distance before he lies down, never to rise again. But if once started, he will either attack or travel till overtaken by the very pangs of death itself.

Nor is his attack to be despised. Though he may not look it, he is really as quick as a cat. It must indeed be a cool hand which, despite the rapidity of his movements and the brevity of the interval within which this is practicable, can drop him before it is too late. The hunter must choose at once whether he will rely on the rifle or on his legs: no middle course will serve. If on the latter, he must stick to the friendly protection of the tree trunks. Then he will find that the animal, at this season of the year, will display a most disgusting pertinacity, and to lead him a dance that will tax every muscle to its utmost. Also it is either "make a spoon or spoil a horn"—either he will come off with a whole skin or with one without a whole bone in it. If the moose touches him but once, his time has come.

The 15th of September is past, and the harvest-moon shines like polished silver in the evening sky.

Who would wait upon the uncertain volition of the game, when an invitation can be issued that will charm him to throw every other plan to the winds, and hasten to his fate?

Those who have studied moose talk, at times almost believe it to be a regular language, replete with moods, tenses, genders, cases, and particularly with certain words of mysterious yet omnipotent grammatical power, which shake up and readjust all the component parts of a sentence with the efficiency of a lottery wheel.

As yet no Ollendorff of this form of speech has arisen. Hopeless as seems the task, yet an effort will be made to give what might at least serve for a preface to a treatise on this dialect.

The first requisite is some means to modify the human voice to the correct *timbre*, as the musicians call it. For this purpose a horn of birch bark, in the form of a speaking-trumpet without a mouth-piece, is usually employed. Unless in an emergency, the best procedure is to fashion a cone of wood about twenty-two inches long, and four and a half inches in diameter at the base. The apex is then cut off where the cone is about one inch through. Around this form sound white birch bark, first soaked to perfect flexibility in warm water, is wrapped to the thickness of about one-eighth of an inch, and tied in that position until it sets. It is then removed, and permanently fastened by sewing with a brad-awl and twine, the ends squared off, and set aside until perfectly dry. Not every specimen of birch bark will give the proper ring, and artists in moose calling are as particular in respect to their instrument as a violinist is as to his.

Moose language is a compound of sighs, grunts, groans, howls, and roars, running from one into the other, and so varying in order that, like the gender in German, it baffles generalization, and can only be acquired by pure effort of memory. To grunt when you ought to howl, or to displace the natural order and permit the roar to precede the groan when it should have followed, is fatal.

To call a moose up to within thirty or forty yards, if he can approach so near under cover, is not difficult, and many solecisms of grammar may be committed without affecting that result. But he answers the call with his ungainly head full of suspicion, and then to coax him out into the open, which is an absolute prerequisite to a shot, is next to hopeless.

This is difficult at all times. Here the real artist shows himself, grunting, groaning, howling, and roaring, rasping the birch-bark horn against the neighboring branches like a bull moose polishing his antlers, even giving the bull's challenge as a last resort—all these and many other demonstrations, each in its proper order, and with the proper tinge of pathos (an essential quality of some species of groan), not too loud, yet still loud enough, and no two of the same loudness—and all without the slightest accent which would betray that the sound was foreign to the lips which utter it—all these to be alternated with the proper intervals of silence, make

this an art not to be fully mastered without time, patient study, and considerable natural aptitude.

To describe any sound so as to convey a clear idea of its nature to one who has never heard the like is almost impossible. We will, however, endeavor to describe the call, which may be considered the primer part of moose talk, omitting the rest as altogether hopeless.

The sound is made in the hunter's throat, and when it is begun, and when its character is not modified by the horn, it sounds as though a foreigner were groaning out the word "err." It requires capacious lungs, for the call is long drawn out, passing gradually into a roar and a howl, and dying away again. Though the call is thrice repeated, the inflection must be varied each time, as well as the force. The rest, as far as it is possible in print, will appear incidentally.

The individuality of the response of the bull is quite marked. He may answer in words, emitting a single short, sharp sound, not unlike a dog's bark, but singularly feeble for so large an animal; or he may say nothing. In any event, he will come, as straight as the crow flies, to the spot from whence the call issued. However dark the woods, he never seems to lose his reckoning. If his practised ear detect nothing amiss in the call, he will probably come crashing through the woods without thought of concealment. But if his suspicions are aroused, no sound will indicate his approach until he is within a few feet of the hunter. If he has the folly and ardor of youth, and the call has been all right, he will bounce right out of the woods into the open without a moment's hesitation; but if experienced, he always hesitates to leave cover, cruising up and down within the edge of the forest, circling around the spot from whence the call came, stamping and pawing up the earth, and swinging his huge head from side to side, while he snuffs the air in the futile endeavor to ascertain what has become of the siren whose honeyed voice so recently called him to her side.

It must be borne in mind that as long as the animal remains within the fringe of the woods the keenest eye cannot see him, nor the most acute ear locate him with sufficient accuracy to justify a shot, no matter how much noise he may make. He must be induced to come out into the open, or the result will be abortive.

But it is useless to continue this description further. Every approach has something peculiar to itself. It is the office of the artist who bears the horn to judge of the humor of the animal from his conduct, and to decide whether a sigh, a grunt, a groan, a howl, a roar, or any mixture of these sounds, or any other demonstration, or absolute silence, will best serve to seduce him from the shelter of the forest where he is safe, into the open ground where he is not. Rarely is the issue decided at once, while it may be protracted, the animal advancing, hesitating, and retreating but to advance again, perhaps for an hour or more, hope and fear alternating in the mean time in the hunter's mind as regularly and unceasingly as the oscillations of the pendulum of a clock.

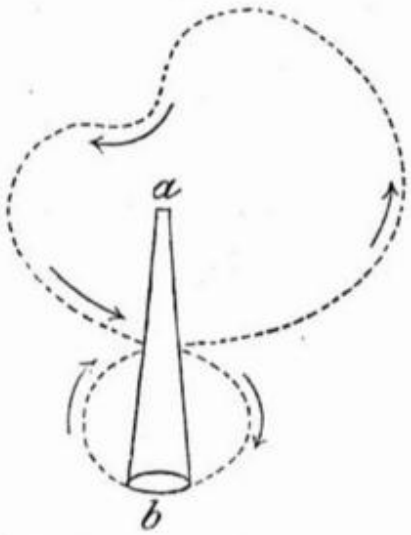
Since the first gray of the morning we have backed our heavy packs through the trackless forests of Canada, until in the twilight we approach one of the comparatively few spots in that wilderness suitable for moose calling. A timber-covered mountain slopes down to a bog covered with moss, open except for a few islands of stunted spruce and tamarack trees. The forest forms one and a pond of some size the other margin of this bog.

All day we have examined the sky at every opportunity, hoping and praying for a still, clear night—for on no other is there a chance of success—and we have it. A cold and hasty supper is eaten; and taking our blankets, the horn, and the rifle, we cross the pond on an extemporized raft (or in any other way possible to avoid tracking its margin), to a clump of trees on the bog near the water, in the immediate vicinity of which there is no other cover. With special care we look to it that our trail to the stand cannot be approached at any point, by anything, without exposing it to view.

Night has fallen, though the full-moon lights up every object in the open so that it seems almost as bright as day. The caller takes his horn, and applying it to his lips, silently breathes through it a few times to dampen its interior, on the same principle that the rustic flutist pours water through his flute to facilitate the production of the tone. He then inflates his lungs to their fullest capacity two or three times; and taking in the last cubic inch of air he can find room for, applies the horn to his lips, its mouth pointing

directly to the ground. A weird, unearthly sound rises on the still night air, not loud at first, but gradually gaining strength and rising in pitch, it at last dies away in a strain so wild, so plaintive, it would almost move a heart of stone. During the call, which may have been protracted some thirty seconds, the mouth of the horn has gradually described a figure something like the number 8 in the air, the highest elevation coinciding with the middle of the crescendo; and the movement is completed with the mouth of the horn again pointing nearly at the ground.

The following illustration will perhaps give a clearer idea of this than any mere verbal description: *a* indicating the mouth of the caller, and *b* the mouth of the horn pointing to the ground; the arrows show the direction of the motion.



THE MOVEMENT OF THE HORN IN THE MOOSE CALL.

The head of the caller conforms to the movement by bending the neck, and the result is a peculiar quavering inflection, difficult to obtain otherwise, and essential to success.

A pause of two or three seconds, and again the cry rings out. It is pitched this time a little higher in the scale, and the greatest volume of sound is nearer the beginning; the pitch again rising with the intensity of the tone, quavering, and dying away again as before. Into this call all the pathos and longing must be thrown of which the caller is master—at all events it must exceed the first effort in this respect, as it should in loudness.

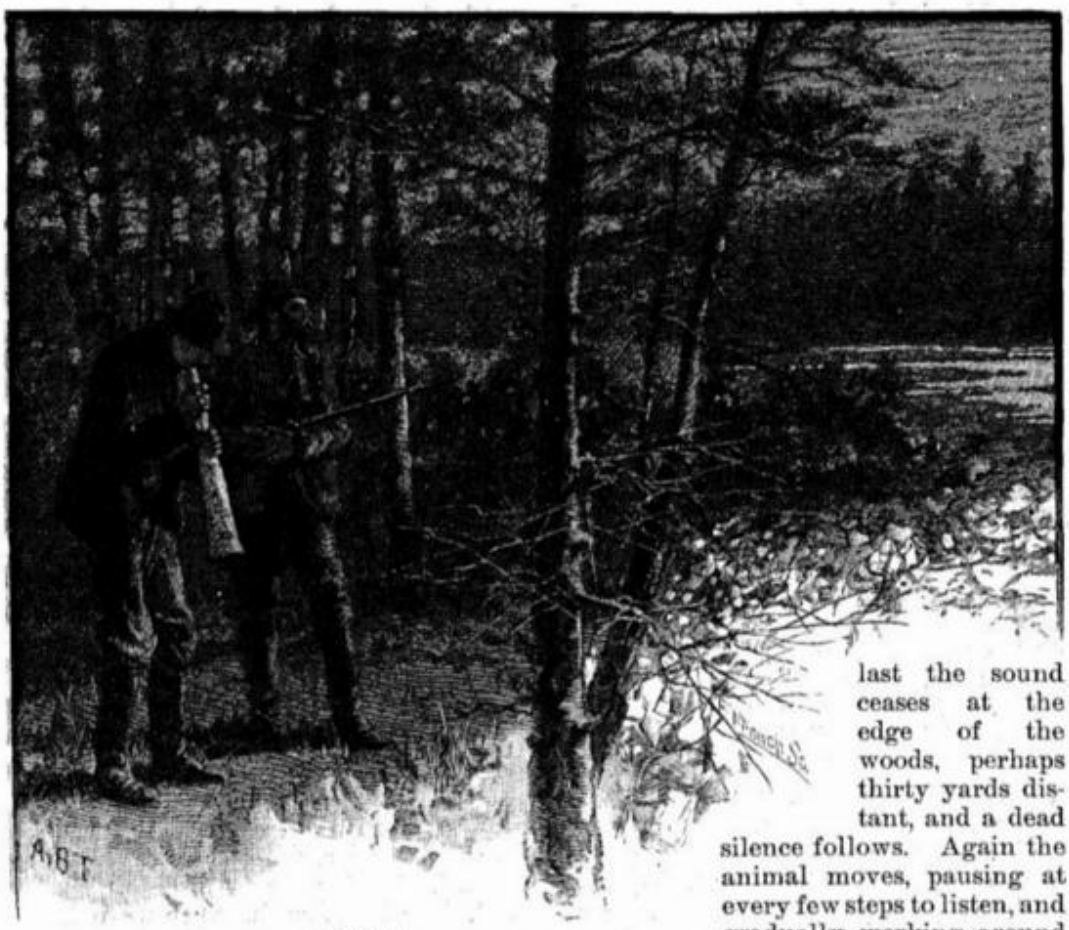
Another pause, briefer than before, and again it breaks the oppressive stillness of the night. It starts with every accent of impatience, and as loud as is consistent with an increase of force at the finish. The intensity of the tone is varied, as is the motion of the horn, until, with its mouth pointed directly at the mountain, the call ends in a wild roar delivered with all the power of the caller's lungs, terminating in silence as abruptly as possible when at the very loudest.

Anxiety, impatience, and terror struggle for the mastery in this call. Then, for three-quarters of an hour by the watch, and three-quarters of a month judged without that useful monitor, not a sound must be made.

No greater mistake is possible than to call too frequently. Few, if any, can imitate it throughout with absolute faultlessness; and if so protracted an effort be submitted to the more than acute criticism of a moose at close quarters, he may regard it as a warning to be gone rather than an invitation to come. Therefore full three-quarters of an hour is usually allowed as sufficient to enable any animal that is approaching on the first invitation to make his presence known.

Both caller and hunter must attend strictly to their ears and nothing else. No smoking, no conversation, no moving about—nothing but listening with the utmost intensity. On a good night, and with a good horn and man to use it, the call may be distinguished by the quick ear of a moose at a distance of perhaps two miles or more. His reply, if he make any, is far too feeble to be heard one-quarter of that distance. That the caller should hear the approach of the animal at the earliest moment, that he may judge of the temper he is in, and to what form of coaxing he will be most amenable, is of the utmost importance.

Often—yes, generally—even when the night is suitable, nothing will be heard. The call is then repeated a second time, followed by a second wait. If this fails, a third trial may be made, but it is advisable, if there is any other suitable place within reach, to change the locality. If none such is known, and the third call is fruitless, the hunter may conclude that either no bull moose is within hearing distance, or if there is, that he already



THE CALL.

has a companion, and consequently is "deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely."

But let us assume a case of better fortune.

The first thing that strikes the novice is how cold it is growing. It insinuates itself into every crevice in his clothes, finding defects of the existence of which he never dreamed before. It seems to chill the very marrow of his bones. He has thought he has heard all kinds of things since the call. He looks at his watch, sure that the appointed time has fully elapsed, and finds that its hands indicate only fifteen minutes. What was that? A sound half between a grunt and a bark, yet so brief in duration that its exact character is difficult to determine. The caller whispers, "He's coming." The blood which seemed like ice in the hunter's veins but a moment before, now burns like fire. Now a crash is heard in the woods, followed by the breaking of twigs. At last the sound ceases at the edge of the woods, perhaps thirty yards distant, and a dead silence follows. Again the animal moves, pausing at every few steps to listen, and gradually working around the edge of the forest nearer and nearer to the ambush. The excitement is now at fever heat; but when it seems the next step must bring him into the moonlight, he turns on his tracks and retraces his path, halting at frequent intervals as before, and stamping and thrashing his antlers about among the bushes. He is now further off than when he first came in; it may be he is leaving altogether!

Now is the time for the caller to show his skill. It is kill or cure now, for a mistake in either moose idiom, grammar, or pronunciation will be fatal. Whispering to the hunter to remain as still as death till he is ready to shoot, and not to fire till he can see the animal plainly, and is sure it will come no nearer, the caller steals out from the trees, and judging how the moose is travelling, and carefully keeping them between him and it, he hastens out about a hundred yards to a convenient shelter. Then raising his horn to his lips, he gives the bull's challenge. A crash answers the call, and all prudence

routed by jealousy, the moose rushes for his supposed rival. The caller has taken his new station so that a straight line from there to where he supposes the moose to be will run over the open ground, and near the concealed hunter. As the animal passes, without a thought other than to rout and drive away the supposed intruder, the rifle is discharged, and staggering forward, he falls, shot through the heart.

By the end of November the bulls forsake the cows, and move for high land. As the snows of winter deepen, their wanderings become more and more restricted, and they locate on the north or northwest faces of the highest mountains the country affords. This is "yarding."

A moose yard is not, as is generally supposed, a place where the snow is trodden down as level and hard as a threshing-floor, but simply numbers of tracks wandering hither and thither, often where but a single animal has passed. The bulls yard apart from the cows, sometimes alone, but usually in company. Here they exhibit some little sociability, feeding and lying down within hearing distance of one another, and moving about just as the same number of persons would be likely to do when gathering berries. When one locality is fed out, they gradually wander off to fresh ground.

Crust hunting is based on this characteristic.

Were the selfishness of man influenced a little more by regard for the future rather than for the immediate present, this form of hunting might have something to commend it. The cows and young yard by themselves, and their inferior strength and endurance render them a far less dangerous and much more easy capture than the bulls. Consequently the slaughter falls chiefly on those that should never be disturbed at all. Again, as might be expected from such as kill the female or young of any game animal, except where food is actually necessary, frequently no moderation whatever is shown, the number killed depending solely on the ability of the hunter, uninfluenced by his necessities, or any other consideration except the few dollars he may be able to get for a hide. Therefore this form of hunting is usually and properly prohibited by law; and to it, more than to any other one cause, is due the disappearance of this animal from localities where it once abounded.

The hunter has located the yard for a month or more; and when in March a cold clear night promises no thaw on the following day, the time for crust hunting has come.

The snow has then settled by its own weight until it is about five feet deep and quite hard. An actual crust is quite unnecessary; indeed, in these woods it is of rare occurrence, since the snow is in great measure protected from the direct rays of the sun by the density of the evergreen forest. About an inch of superficial light snow is also desirable, since it cushions the snow-shoes, and thus favors speed and endurance.

Before daybreak the hunter clothes himself in two heavy flannel shirts, and thick drawers and trousers, but no coat. He covers his feet with four pairs of the heaviest of yarn stockings, one over the other, and places outside of all a pair of moose or caribou shanks, with the hair outside. "Moose shanks" are made by peeling the skin from the hind-legs of the animal, from about six inches above the gambrel joint to a distance below equal to the length of the hunter's foot. The smaller end is then sewn up to form the toe; and thus a moose-hide stocking is formed, of which the gambrel joint is the heel. No boots or shoes are worn while snow-shoeing.

At the first gray of dawn he binds on his snow-shoes and slings his pack, in which has been placed a frying-pan, a tea pail, a tin cup, knife, fork, and spoon, flour, pork, tea, salt, and pepper. His inseparable companion, an axe, is fastened on the outside. He may either take a single blanket, or trust to luck to get a fresh moose-hide to sleep on. His pipe, tobacco, and matches are not forgotten, nor a good-sized single-bladed jack-knife, which is the only hunting knife he ever carries. Sheath-knives are considered a mere encumbrance, and the carrying of one at any season in these woods, particularly if large, is considered the badge of a greenhorn.

Reaching the yard, he first circles it completely, to find the freshest tracks, and thus locate the animals. This is not as easy as it sounds, since the snow falls back into and almost fills the track as soon as made, so that they all, of whatever age, look pretty much alike. Here, in case of doubt, the touch aids the vision, the old snow being hard, and the fresh

soft, the degree of induration indicating when the surface was broken. By the time he has completed the circuit he has also made up his mind in what part of the yard they are, and goes directly for them, still working on the freshest trail.

Long before he is in sight or hearing the moose have discovered his presence, and are off. The hunter continues on till he finds where they have ceased wandering about, and have moved away in a straight line. At the first alarm each animal looks out for its own interests, so that, though all take the same general direction, they move in skirmishing order, adhering to their old tracks, and crossing from one trail to another. But soon they strike the snow-shoe track. It bears the unmistakable taint of man, and if they were alarmed before, they are frantic now. Then they "break yard," as it is called, and falling in one behind the other, start down the mountain in close column, never to face rising ground again as long as they are pressed.

They move on a square trot, raising each leg clear of the snow at every stride, those in the rear stepping in the track of their leader, so that it looks pretty much the same whether there are half a dozen animals or but one.

The hunter is after them at his best speed, that he may overtake them at the earliest possible moment, and thus prevent them from stopping to rest. He receives his first encouragement when he sees where one or more of them have snatched a mouthful of snow in their course. They are beginning to be heated and distressed. Next it is noticed that the holes made by their legs in the snow are more broken, and it is clear they are not raising them with the same vigor as at the outset. Then he sees where the leader has slackened his pace, and another from the rear has crowded by him, thus showing for the moment two trails instead of one. Then the steps shorten, the snow is more scraped at every stride, the marks of eating the snow become more frequent, and the track begins to bear some resemblance to a trench. Before, they followed a straight line through thick and thin; now, they deviate toward the thicker growths, either hoping to find less snow and better travelling there, or for concealment. Next the hunter notices flakes of froth lying on the snow, and the trail begins to look as though made by a plough. At last specks of blood appear in the froth, and the hunter knows the race is about run, and that soon he will see his game for the first time. He comes in sight at last. Before, he has followed close beside the trail; now, he edges off to the right.

The game pause for a moment to study their pursuer, their coats flecked with foam, and their tongues hanging almost a foot out of their mouths, from the fearful exertion they have made. Then, spurred by a new impulse of fear, they are off again as though perfectly fresh. At once the hunter throws his pack upon the snow, and discarding everything which can impede his movements in the slightest degree, except his rifle, pushes them with all the vigor that hope can inspire. But the almost exhausted animals cannot hold their spurt more than a quarter of a mile at the outside. Soon the hunter closes with them, again edging off to the right.

As he swings toward the right, they edge off to the left, always trying to keep him behind. He watches the course made with care, and should it so change as to render it possible that they may gain their old trail, he drops behind and ranges up on the other side, and thus drives them in the opposite direction. For the pursuer is now almost as tired as the pursued, and should the latter once enter the beaten track, encouraged by the comparatively easy travelling they will find, they will seem so to gain fresh vigor that he cannot hold them in sight for an instant. They will then go right back to and through the yard, and off to a new locality, and the hunter may as well give it up for a bad job. This, however, is not likely to occur, unless he loses his reckoning of the direction which the chase has taken.

At this stage the effort of the hunter is to get a broadside shot, and after some trials he succeeds in reaching the desired position.

But he must not approach too near—not closer than twenty-five or thirty yards—or he will see the hair along the spine of one of the animals begin to erect itself and curl forward, its ears to lie straight back, and its eyes grow green and glassy. Then, quicker than a flash, it swings on its hind-legs like a pivot, and is at him.

Woe betide the hunter if he trusts to speed to escape. Even in that heavy snow the moose, now goaded to absolute mad-

ness, is for the time more than his match. Nothing is to be apprehended from his antlers. But those terrible forefeet can strike with the quickness of a prize-fighter and with the force of a sledge-hammer. Should he once strike the hunter down, or should the latter trip and fall, his friends, when they find him, will have judgment in timing this—not a second too soon, not a hair's-breadth too late—or he will never hunt moose more.

The assault having failed, it is not resumed, but this animal continues to retreat in the direction he is headed, without rejoining the others. But he is now fighting mad, and unless he is the best of

HEAD OF COW MOOSE.

trouble to tell which was formerly the head and which the heels of the mangled mass that will remain.

If he has foolishly provoked the attack, he stands his ground, facing the animal, till he is almost on him, and then springs to one side, and runs at his best pace at a right angle to the direction of the onset. And it well behooves him to use good the lot, it is well to let him go, and make after the others, which have kept right on, remaining, however, at a respectful distance hereafter.

But let us assume the hunter has had his shot, and downed his animal. If he is not a butcher he is satisfied, and allows the rest to go without further molestation.

Without a moment's pause, the perspiration dripping from every pore, notwithstanding the bitter cold, he hastens back to his pack and axe, for a fire is now a matter almost of life and death. Returning, he builds a regular conflagration near his prize, and cuts a large quantity of wood that it may be maintained while he is skinning it. This accomplished, he cuts a forked tree, the butt two or three inches in diameter, and the prongs about four feet long, and trims the butt to an angle on one side. He then binds a third prong in the middle with a thong of the animal's hide, thus forming a three-tined fork with deflecting prongs. He now packs the snow hard, spreads the moose-hide upon it, lays the fork on the hide, the butt toward the neck, folds the hide over it, places his meat on it, flattening the bottom perfectly smooth, and allows the whole to freeze. Thus he has made a sled on which to draw his meat home, the sloping butt of the fork forming the forward end. By the time his sled is made and packed, the fire has melted a hole clear to the ground. The day is now nearly gone, and he is far from home, he hardly knows where. He must camp on the spot, and be quick about it too, lest darkness come before his preparations are complete. So he picks a lot of evergreen boughs for his bed, cuts his night's firewood in sticks about six feet long, so he can have a long thin fire, digs with his snow-shoes another hole beside that melted through the snow, moves his fire over on to the newly cleared space, and spreads his boughs on the heated ground, eats his supper, not forgetting a liberal portion of moose tenderloin, and lying down lengthwise of the fire in the bottom of his well, as it were, sleeps the sleep of exhaustion, except when the cold admonishes him that fresh fuel is required.

In the morning he breakfasts, puzzles out where he is, and starts for home, towing the hard-earned reward of his skill and toil behind him.

NARKA.

A STORY OF RUSSIAN LIFE.

BY KATHLEEN O'MEARA.

CHAPTER IV.

THEY were now assembled in the drawing-room, Sibyl busy at her tapestry, Narka sitting, with her long white hands in her lap, waiting to pour out the tea, Marguerite turning over the leaves of a book of old engravings with an air of excited interest, M. de Beaucrillon deep in his newspapers, and Basil measuring the long length of the room, slowly pacing up and down, his hands in his pockets and a cigarette in his mouth, his handsome face clouded by an air of abstraction, almost of sadness, as his thoughts were far away from the company grouped round the lamp. Presently, passing near the table, he looked up, and his eyes rested on his cousin. It was a picture on which any man's eyes must have rested complacently. Marguerite's face had little claim to admiration beside Sibyl's blond loveliness and Narka's rich beauty of line and coloring, and yet there was a charm about its irregular features that made it no contemptible rival to either. It was the very personification of youthful brightness and health; the small spirited nose was more piquant than if it had been classical, and the whole face sparkled with happiness and curiosity. This evening all her prettiness and brightness were further enhanced by an irresistible little demi-toilet of a white gauzy material, rose-colored ribbons in bows and loops sprouting out of the white foam as naturally as the rose-colored flower sprouted out of the curls and coils of her glossy brown hair. Marguerite was intent on the engravings. Suddenly, with an exclamation of dismay, "Sibyl," she cried, "I have made a dreadful mistake!"

They all looked up, interested and attentive. Basil stopped in his walk to hear.

"That head-dress that I sketched and sent to Paris for will be out of keeping. I now remember it was in a portrait of Velasquez that I saw it; so fancy how it will clash with that Florentine thirteenth-century costume! What shall I do?"

"What were we all thinking about?"