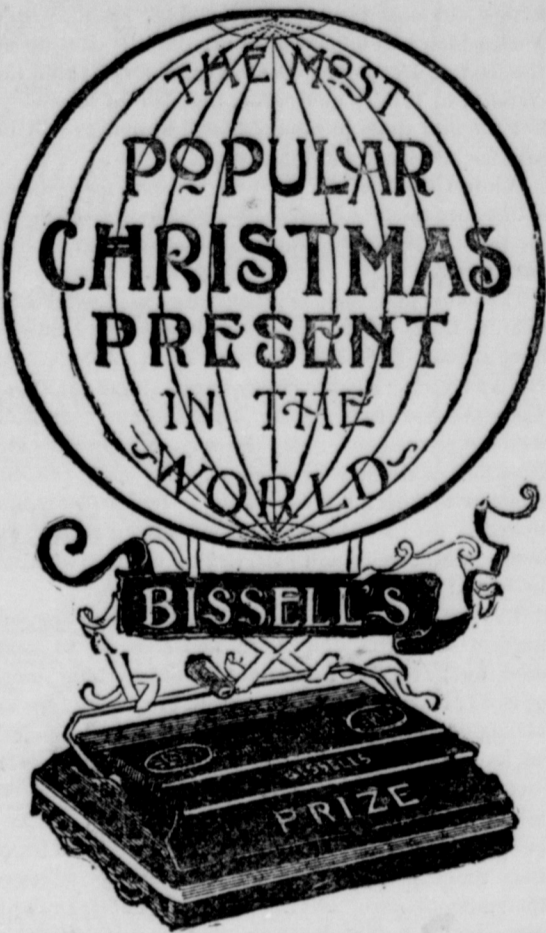


MEETING THE MASTER.

Oh, the meeting with the Master
In his humble house below,
Where His living words are spoken,
And His saving mercies flow!

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A RACE WITH A MOOSE.

The winter of 1882-83 was unusually severe in the region about Moosehead Lake, in the Maine woods.

George Benton and I had some knowledge of woodcraft, and were not unwilling to exchange the dry lectures and the damp east winds of Cambridge for the out-door sports of a winter in the woods.

During October we established a snug camp on one of the smaller streams that flow into Moosehead from the north.

We spent the first month in building a warm log shanty, which we roofed securely with bark, and when, in its one room and upon its rough floor, we had put up our large wood-stove; when we had arranged our provisions on broad shelves, and made some rough bunks, tables and stools, we were quite satisfied with our home.

For the first month or two our larder was well supplied with game. George and I brought in large bags of ruffed and Canada grouse from the beech ridges, or varied the bill of fare with a brace of wood ducks from the river, and at one time George came upon a fine buck, and brought him down with a charge of heavy shot.

In the middle of November the snow fell steadily, for several days, and when the sun shone once more, the snow lay four feet deep on a level in the woods.

A few days before Christmas George and I decided to make a great effort to procure a Christmas dinner. After a sufficient breakfast upon our tiresome fare, we started out on our snow-shoes, George following the river down to a cedar swamp near by, hoping for a shot at a hare, while I climbed into the hills back of the shanty, thinking I might find a stray grouse, or possibly fall in with larger game.

There was a slight crust on the snow, and I walked along easily. After I had gone some distance, a grouse started out from a fallen tree-top, and sailed down into a ravine. I marked the spot carefully, and followed the bird. It had flown into a large, compactly growing clump of spruce trees in the deepest part of the ravine.

Descending to the thicket, I pushed the spruce branches quietly aside, and peered into the midst of the clump, where I expected to find the bird. There was no bird in sight, but I saw something which made my heart beat faster. In a little open space in the midst of the thicket, the snow had been beaten down as hard as any barn-yard.

Evidently I had come upon a place where the deer had been "yarding." I looked about, but no animal was in sight. Possibly, after eating all the moss and herbage to be found here, they had gone elsewhere. I stepped down into the "yard" to make a closer examination. As I did so a shrill snort sounded from behind some low firs at one side of the open space, and in a moment a moose stepped majestically into sight, shaking the snow from his shaggy shoulders.

We were both taken by surprise, and for an instant each stood still, staring at the other. The animal was a large bull moose, old and solitary; evidently he was half-starved, and the great bones showing exactly beneath the skin made him an unsightly object. The old fellow cut short my inspection by another snort, and, lowering his head, prepared to charge upon me.

Raising my shot-gun, I fired a charge of buckshot. The great beast came to his knees, and, as he fell, I fired the remaining barrel, which was loaded with bird shot.

At first I thought I had killed him, but as the smoke cleared away I saw the moose rise to his feet, and rush forward with all the fury of a mad bull. Fortunately, like a bull, he could not turn quickly. Leaping to one side, I escaped his rush, and, before he could recover himself, had jumped out of the yard upon the snow crust.

In my scramble I dropped the gun, and it lay below me on the hard snow. I had no time to stop to get it, for as soon as the moose could turn he sprang into the deep snow. There was no notion of flight expressed in those little eyes that gleamed at me so wickedly; half-starved, wounded and desperate, the animal meant mischief.

Now that we were out of the "yard," my snowshoes gave me a great advantage; I ran lightly on the crust, while the moose plunged deeply in with every leap.

We kept on for several minutes, when, looking over my shoulder, I saw with dismay that the animal, in spite of my advantage, was gaining on me. He had settled down into an easy lope, which was taking him through the snow at terrible pace.

He would have overtaken me presently, but just before he was upon me I jumped behind a large spruce, and, dodging around it, ran off again at right angles.

In this way I gained about ten yards. If I had not been encumbered with snow-shoes, which were tightly bound upon my feet, I might have sprung into some small tree and escaped in that way. Again and again my pursuer gained on me, and I got out of the way just in time by dodging behind some tree.

The animal's wound was evidently having its effect, and he was not jumping with so much vigor; but this advantage was counterbalanced by the fact that I, too, was becoming winded. The unceasing and unusual effort was telling on me, and my breath was nearly gone.

The great brute's long upper lip was stretched out as if to seize me. What would I not have given for my shot-gun, or for a weapon of any kind! Unarmed as I was, I could have but little hope at close quarters against the broad horns and sharp hoofs of the moose. I was now running along a high ridge which, on one side, fell off in an almost perpendicular descent.

The moose was not a dozen yards behind me; there were no more trees within reach, and things were looking very alarming. While I was thinking that matters were approaching a crisis, a little red squirrel darted over the snow in front of me. Running to the edge of the ridge, the squirrel ran out on a spruce that hung over the precipice, and sitting up on his haunches, began to chatter and scold. The tree on which the squirrel took refuge, and which I had not noticed before, stretched in a nearly horizontal direction from the top of the ridge.

It flashed upon me that here was a means of escape. Without pausing to weigh the matter, but running out on the trunk, I flung myself as far as possible among the branches. The moose was close at my heels, and was able to stop just in time to save himself from falling headlong into the ravine. Standing on the edge, he pawed the snow and belloved with rage.

I lay panting among the spruce branches until I had somewhat recovered my breath, and then looked about me. The tree in which I lay was, in its thickest part, about a foot in diameter. The wind had partially uprooted it, and as it fell into the ravine the top had lodged in the branches of another tree, thus supporting it in a horizontal position. The squirrel had retired in a panic to the most distant part of the tree, and I could hear him chattering excitedly.

I now felt comparatively safe. Taking off my snow-shoes, I hung them on a branch and proceeded to make myself as comfortable as possible. In spite of the mid-day sun it was bitterly cold, and I began to wonder how long it would be before the siege was raised.

The moose continued to paw the snow about the roots of the tree. To see me sitting there, not ten feet away, yet out of his reach, was becoming too great a tax upon his excited temper; and, going back a few yards, he made ready for a run and jump.

Seeing his intention I tried, but in vain, to scramble out of reach. On he came, antlers lowered and eyes flashing; but as he reached the tree his hoofs slipped from the rounded surface and his leap lost half its force. Yet as he plunged through the branches at my side, he came so near that one antler caught the sleeve of my leather hunting jacket and, ripping it off, made an ugly wound on my arm.

Down the animal crashed, full forty feet, to the bottom of the ravine. Pushing the branches aside I looked down. The great beast lay quite still.

snowshoes, and, by a circuitous route, to reach the bottom of the ravine. The moose lay on his side, motionless; the fall had broken his neck.

I went back to the shanty, and found that George and the guide had returned. They bandaged my wounded arm, and together we walked to the scene of my adventure. We found that the moose measured eight feet from nose to tail, but he was so thin that the guide estimated his weight at not more than nine hundred pounds. His horns were quite loose and would soon have fallen off.

Placing him on a hand-sled, which we had brought for the purpose, we drew him to the shanty.

As we left the ravine, the red squirrel scolded at us from the top of a neighboring tree. Robert Bruce had no greater cause to thank his famous spider than I this little rodent; and to this day I cherish a kindly feeling towards all red squirrels.—YOUTH'S COMPANION.

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