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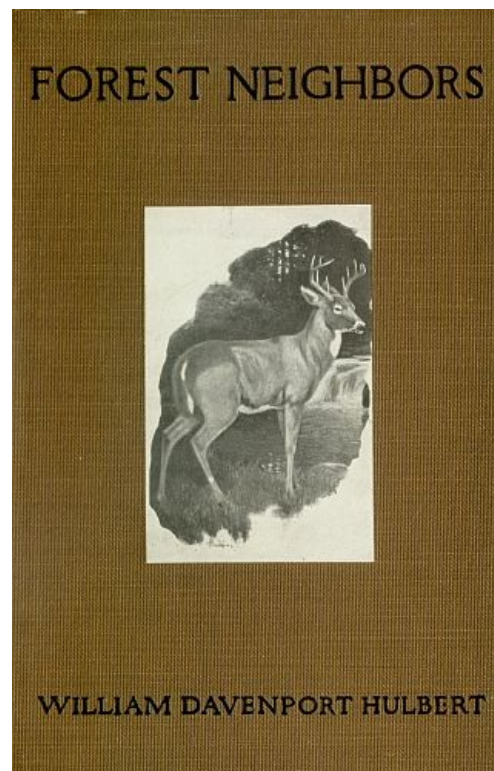
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Release date: January 29, 2009 [eBook #27933]

Language: English

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## FOREST NEIGHBORS

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[i]

*"And the Northern Lights come down,  
To dance with the houseless snow;  
And God, Who clears the grinding berg,  
And steers the grinding floe,  
He hears the cry of the little kit-fox,  
And the lemming, on the snow."*

[ii]

RUDYARD KIPLING.



*The Beaver Lumbering.*

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[iv]

**FOREST NEIGHBORS**  
**LIFE STORIES OF WILD ANIMALS**  
 BY  
**WILLIAM DAVENPORT HULBERT**

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*ILLUSTRATED*

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DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.  
 GARDEN CITY  
 NEW YORK  
 1914

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*To my Sister*  
 KATHARINE GRACE HULBERT

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## INTRODUCTION

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Some *thirty years ago, while out on one of his landlooking trips in the woods of Northern Michigan, my father came upon a little lake which seemed to him the loveliest that he had ever seen, though he had visited many in the course of his explorations. The wild ponds are very apt to be shallow and muddy, with low, marshy shores; but this one was deep and clear, and its high banks were clothed with a splendid growth of beech, maple and birch. Tall elms stood guard along the water's edge, and here and there the hardwood forest was broken by dark hemlock groves, and groups of lordly pine-trees, lifting their great green heads high above their deciduous neighbors. Only in one place, around the extreme eastern end, the ground was flat and wet; and there the tamarack swamp showed golden yellow in October, and light, delicate green in late spring. Wild morning-glories grew on the grassy point that put out from the northern shore, and in the bays the white water-lilies were blossoming. Nearly two miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide, it lay basking and shimmering in the sunshine, a big, broad, beautiful sheet of water set down in the very heart of the woods.*

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*There were no settlers anywhere near, nor even any Indians, yet there was no lack of inhabitants. Bears and wolves and a host of smaller animals were to be found, and along the shores were runways that had been worn deep in the soil by the tread of generation after generation of dainty little cloven hoofs. I suppose that some of those paths have been used by the deer for hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of years.*

*The lands around the entire lake were offered for sale by the United States Government at the ridiculously low price which Uncle Sam has asked for most of his possessions; and with the help of some friends my father bought the whole shore. During the years which followed he was occupied in various ways, and some of the best recollections of my boyhood are of the days and the nights which I spent with him on his fishing-tug, steaming about the Straits of Mackinac and the northern part of Lake Huron. But he could not forget the Glimmerglass, that little wild lake up in the woods. He had fallen in love with it at first sight, and at last he took his family and went there to live.*

*Human neighbors were scarce around the lake, and perhaps that was one reason why we took such a lively interest in the other residents—those who were there ahead of us. "Him and me's chums," my small sister said of the red-squirrel that hung around the log-barn. And some of the animals seemed to take a very lively interest in us. The chipmunks came into the house occasionally, on foraging expeditions; and so, I regret to say, did the skunks. There was a woodchuck who used to come to the back door, looking for scraps, and who learned to sit bolt upright and hold a pancake in his fore paws while he nibbled at it, without being in the least disturbed by the presence and the comments of half a dozen spectators. The porcupines became a never-ending nuisance, for they made almost nightly visits to the woodshed. To kill them was of*

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little use, for the next night—or perhaps before morning—there were others to take their places. Once in a while one of them would climb up onto the roof of the house; and between his teeth and his feet and the rattling of his quills on the shingles, the racket that he made was out of all proportion to his size.

It is sweet to lie at evening in your little trundle-bed,  
And to listen to a porky gnawing shingles overhead;  
Porky, porky, porky, porky;  
Gnawing shingles overhead.

*The wolves had been pretty nearly exterminated since my father's first visit to the lake, and we saw little or nothing of them. The bears seemed to be more numerous, but they were very shy and retiring. We found their tracks more often than we came upon the animals themselves. Some of the cat tribe remained, and occasionally placed themselves in evidence. My brother came in one day from a long tramp on snow-shoes, and told how he had met one of them standing guard over the remains of a deer, and how the lynx had held him up and made him go around. Beavers were getting scarce, though a few were still left on the more secluded streams. Deer, on the contrary, were very plentiful. Many a time they invaded our garden-patch and helped themselves to our fresh vegetables.*

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*One August afternoon a flock of eight young partridges, of that spring's hatching, coolly marched out of the woods and into the clearing, as if they were bent on investigating their new neighbors. Partridges appear to be subject to occasional fits of stupidity, and to temporary (or possibly permanent) loss of common-sense; but it may be that in this case the birds were too young and inexperienced to realize what they were doing. Or perhaps they knew that it was Sunday, and that the rules of the household forbade shooting on that day. If so, their confidence was sadly misplaced. We didn't shoot them, but we did surround them, and by working carefully and cautiously we "shooed" them into an empty log-house. And the next day we had them for dinner.*

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*Around the shores of the Glimmerglass a few loons and wild-ducks usually nested, and in the autumn the large flocks from the Far North often stopped there for short visits, on their way south for the winter. They were more sociable than you would suppose—or at least the loons were—and the same small girl who had made friends with the red-squirrel learned to talk to the big birds.*

*Down in the water the herring and a large species of salmon trout made their homes, and probably enjoyed themselves till they met with the gill-net and the trolling-hook. But herring and salmon trout did not satisfy us; we wanted brook trout, too. And so one day a shipment of babies arrived from the hatchery at Sault Ste. Marie, and thus we first became acquainted with the habits of infant fishes, and learned something of their needs and the methods of their foster-parents.*

*One after another our neighbors introduced themselves, each in his own way. And they were good neighbors, all of them. Even the porcupines and the skunks were interesting—in their peculiar fashion—and I wish there were none worse than they in the city's slums.*

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*I have said good-by to the Glimmerglass, and it may be that I shall never again make my home by its shores. But the life of the woods goes on, and will still go on as long as man will let it. I suppose that, even as I write, the bears are "holeing up" for the winter, and the deer are growing anxious because the snow is covering the best of their food, and they of the cat tribe are getting down to business, and hunting in deadly earnest. The loons and the ducks have pulled out for the Gulf of Mexico, and the squirrels are glad that they have such a goodly store of nuts laid up for the next four months. The beavers have retired to their lodges—that is, if Charley Roop and his fellows have left any of them alive. The partridges—well, the partridges will just have to get along the best way they can. I guess they'll pull through somehow. The porcupines are all right, as you will presently see if you read this book. They don't have to worry. Down in the bed of the trout stream the trout eggs are getting ready—getting ready. And out on the lake itself the frost is at work, and the ice-sheet is forming, and under that cold, white lid the Glimmerglass will wait till another year brings round another spring-time—the spring-time that will surely come to all of us if only we hold on long enough.*

[xix]

Chicago, December, 1901.

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## THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BEAVER

[1]

**A** BROAD, flat tail came down on the water with a whack that sent the echoes flying back and forth across the pond, and its owner ducked his head, arched his back, and dived to the bottom. It was a very curious tail, for besides being so oddly paddle-shaped it was covered with what looked like scales, but were really sections and indentations of hard, horny, blackish-gray skin. Except its owner's relations, there was no one else in all the animal kingdom who had one like it. But the strangest thing about it was the many different ways in which he used it. Just now it was his rudder—and a very good rudder, too.

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In a moment his little brown head reappeared, and he and his brothers and sisters went chasing each other round and round the pond, ducking and diving and splashing, raising such a commotion that they sent the ripples washing all along the grassy shores, and having the jolliest kind of a time. It isn't the usual thing for young beavers to be out in broad daylight, but all this happened in the good old days before the railways came, when northern Michigan was less infested with men than it is now.

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When the youngsters wanted a change they climbed up onto a log, and nudged and hunched each other, poking their noses into one another's fat little sides, and each trying to shove his brother or sister back into the water. By and by they scrambled out on the bank, and then, when their fur had dripped a little, they set to work to comb it. Up they sat on their hind legs and tails—the tail was a stool now, you see—and scratched their heads and shoulders with the long brown claws of their small, black, hairy hands. Then the hind feet came up one at a time, and combed and stroked their sides till the moisture was gone and the fur was soft and smooth and glossy as velvet. After that they had to have another romp. They were not half as graceful on land as they had been in the water. In fact they were not graceful at all, and the way they stood around on their hind legs, and shuffled, and pranced, and wheeled like baby hippopotami, and slapped the ground with their tails, was one of the funniest sights in the heart of the woods. And the funniest and liveliest of them all was the one who owned that tail—the tail which, when I last saw it, was lying on the ground in front of Charlie Roop's shack. He was the one whom I shall call the Beaver—with a big B.

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But even young beavers will sometimes grow tired of play, and at last they all lay down on the grass in the warm, quiet sunshine of the autumn afternoon. The wind had gone to sleep, the pond glittered like steel in its bed of grassy beaver-meadow, the friendly woods stood guard all around, the enemy was far away, and it was a very good time for five furry little babies to take a nap.

The city in which the tail first made its appearance was a very ancient one, and may have been the oldest town on the North American continent. Nobody knows when the first stick was laid in the dam that changed a small natural pond into a large artificial one, and thus opened the way for further municipal improvements; but it was probably centuries ago, and for all we can tell it may have been thousands of years back in the past. Generation after generation of beavers had worked on that dam, building it a little higher and a little higher, a little longer and a little longer, year after year; and raising their lodges as the pond rose around them. Theirs was a maritime city, for most of its streets were of water, like those of Venice; rich cargoes of food-stuffs came floating to its very doors, and they themselves were navigators from their earliest youth, and took to the water as naturally as ducks or Englishmen. They were lumbermen, too, and when the timber was all cut from along the shores of the pond they dug canals across the low, level, marshy ground, back to the higher land where the birch and the poplar still grew, and floated the branches and the smaller logs down the artificial water-ways. And there were land roads, as well as canals, for here and there narrow trails crossed the swamp, showing where generations of busy workers had passed back and forth between the felled tree and the water's edge. Streets, canals, public works, dwellings, commerce, lumbering, rich stores laid up for the winter—what more do you want to constitute a city, even if the houses are few in number, and the population somewhat smaller than that of London or New York?

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***"On the grass in the warm, quiet sunshine of an autumn afternoon."***

There was a time, not very long before the Beaver was born, when for a few years the city was deserted. The trappers had swept through the country, and the citizens' skulls had been hung up on the bushes, while their skins went to the great London fur market. Few were left alive, and those few were driven from their homes and scattered through the woods. The trappers decided that the ground was worked out, and most of them pushed on to the north and west in search of regions not yet depopulated. Then, one by one, the beavers came back to their old haunts. The broken dam was repaired; new lodges were built, and new beavers born in them; and again the ancient town was alive with the play of the babies and the labors of the civil engineers. Not as populous, perhaps, as it had once been, but alive, and busy, and happy. And so it was when our Beaver came into the world.

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The first year of his life was an easy one, especially the winter, when there was little for anyone to do except to eat, to sleep, and now and then to fish for the roots of the yellow water-lily in the soft mud at the bottom of the pond. During that season he probably accomplished more than his parents did, for if he could not toil he could at least grow. Of course they may have been growing, too, but it was less noticeable in them than in him. Not only was he increasing in size and weight, but he was storing up strength and strenuousness for the work that lay before him. It would take much muscle to force those long yellow teeth of his through the hard, tough flesh of the maple or the birch or the poplar. It would take vigor and push and enterprise to roll the heavy billets of wood over the grass-tufts to the edge of the water. And, most of all, it would take strength and nerve and determination to tear himself away from a steel trap and leave a foot behind. So it was well for the youngster that for a time he had nothing to do but grow.

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Spring came at last, and many of the male beavers prepared to leave home for a while. The ladies seemed to prefer not to be bothered by the presence of men-folk during the earliest infancy of the children; so the men, probably nothing loath, took advantage of the opportunity to see something of the world, wandering by night up and down the streams, and hiding by day in burrows under the banks. For a time they enjoyed it, but as the summer dragged by they came straggling home one after another. The new babies who had arrived in their absence had passed the most troublesome age, and it was time to begin work again. The dam and the lodges needed repairs, and there was much food to be gathered and laid up for the coming winter.

Now, on a dark autumn night, behold the young Beaver toiling with might and main. His parents have felled a tree, and it is his business to help them cut up the best portions and carry them home. He gnaws off a small branch, seizes the butt end between his teeth, swings it over his shoulder, and makes for the water, keeping his head twisted around to the right or left so that the end of the branch may trail on the ground behind him. Sometimes he even rises on his hind legs, and walks almost upright, with his broad, strong tail for a prop to keep him from tipping over backward if his load happens to catch on something. Arrived at the canal or at the edge of the pond, he jumps in and swims for town, still carrying the branch over his shoulder, and finally leaves it on the growing pile in front of his father's lodge. Or perhaps the stick is too large and too heavy to be carried in such a way. In that case it must be cut into short billets and rolled, as a cant-hook man rolls a log down a skidway. Only the Beaver has no cant-hook to help him, and no skidway, either. All he can do is to push with all his might, and there are so many, many grass-tufts and little hillocks in the way! And sometimes the billet rolls down into a hollow, and then it is very hard to get it out again. He works like a beaver, and pushes and shoves and toils with tremendous energy, but I am afraid that more than one choice stick never reaches the water.

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These were his first tasks. Later on he learned to fell trees himself. Standing up on his hind legs and tail, with his hands braced against the trunk, he would hold his head sidewise, open his mouth wide, set his teeth against the bark, and bring his jaws together with a savage nip that left a deep gash in the side of the tree. A second nip deepened the gash, and gave it more of a downward slant, and two or three more carried it still farther into the tough wood. Then he would choose a new spot a little farther down, and start a second gash, which was made to slant up toward the first. And when he thought that they were both deep enough he would set his teeth firmly in the wood between them, and pull and jerk and twist at it until he had wrenched out a chip—a chip perhaps two inches long, and from an eighth to a quarter of an inch thick. He would make bigger ones when he grew to be bigger himself, but you mustn't expect too much at first. Chip after chip was torn out in this way, and gradually he would work around the tree until he had completely encircled it. Then the groove was made deeper, and after a while it would have to be broadened so that he could get his head farther into it. He seemed to think it was of immense importance to get the job done as quickly as possible, for he worked away with tremendous energy and eagerness, as if felling that tree was the only thing in the world that was worth doing. Once in a while he would pause for a moment to feel of it with his hands, and to glance up at the top to see whether it was getting ready to fall, and several times he stopped long enough to take a refreshing dip in the pond; but he always hurried back, and pitched in again harder than ever. In fact, he sometimes went at it so impetuously that he slipped and rolled over on his back. Little by little he dug away the tree's flesh until there was nothing left but its heart, and at last it began to crack and rend. The Beaver jumped aside to get out of the way, and hundreds and hundreds of small, tender branches, and delicious little twigs and buds came crashing down where he could cut them off and eat them or carry them away at his leisure.

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And so the citizens labored, and their labor brought its rich reward, and everybody was busy and contented, and life was decidedly worth living.

But one black November night our hero's father, the wisest old beaver in all the town, went out to his work and never came home again. A trapper had found the rebuilt city—a scientific trapper who had studied his profession for years, and who knew just how to go to work. He kept away from the lodges as long as he could, so as not to frighten anyone; and before he set a single trap he looked the ground over very carefully, located the different trails that ran back from the water's edge toward the timber, visited the stumps of the felled trees, and paid particular attention to the tooth-marks on the chips. No two beavers leave marks that are exactly alike. The teeth of one are flatter or rounder than those of another, while a third has large or small nicks in the edges of his yellow chisels; and each tooth leaves its own peculiar signature behind it. By noting all these things the trapper concluded that a particular runway in the wet, grassy margin of the pond was the one by which a certain old beaver always left the water in going to his night's labor. That beaver, he decided, would best be the first one taken, for he was probably the head of

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a family, and an elderly person of much wisdom and experience; and if one of his children should be caught first he might become alarmed, and take the lead in a general exodus.

So the trapper set a heavy double-spring trap in the edge of the water at the foot of the runway, and covered it with a thin sheet of moss. And that night, as the old beaver came swimming up to the shore, he put his foot down where he shouldn't, and two steel jaws flew up and clasped him around the thigh. He had felt that grip before. Was not half of his right hand gone, and three toes from his left hind foot? But this was a far more serious matter than either of those adventures. It was not a hand that was caught this time, nor yet a toe, or toes. It was his right hind leg, well up toward his body, and the strongest beaver that ever lived could not have pulled himself free. Now when a beaver is frightened, he of course makes for deep water. There, he thinks, no enemy can follow him; and, what is more, it is the highway to his lodge, and to the burrow that he has hollowed in the bank for a refuge in case his house should be attacked. So this beaver turned and jumped back into the water the way he had come; but, alas! he took his enemy with him. The heavy trap dragged him to the bottom like a stone, and the short chain fastened to a stake kept him from going very far toward home. For a few minutes he struggled with all his might, and the soft black mud rose about him in inky clouds. Then he quieted down and lay very, very still; and the next day the trapper came along and pulled him out by the chain.

Something else happened the same night. Another wise old beaver, the head man of another lodge, was killed by a falling tree. He ought to have known better than to let such a thing happen. I really don't see how he could have been so careless. But the best of us will make mistakes at times, and any pitcher may go once too often to the well. I suppose that he had felled hundreds of trees and bushes, big and little, in the course of his life, and he had never yet met with an accident; but this time he thought he would take one more bite after the tree had really begun to fall. So he thrust his head again into the narrowing notch, and the wooden jaws closed upon him with a nip that was worse than his own. He tried to draw back, but it was too late, his skull crashed in, and his life went out like a candle.

And so, in a few hours, the city lost two of its best citizens—the very two whom it could least afford to lose. If they had been spared they might, perhaps, have known enough to scent the coming danger, and to lead their families and neighbors away from the doomed town, deeper into the heart of the wilderness. As it was, the trapper had things all his own way, and by working carefully and cautiously he added skin after skin to his store of beaver-pelts. I haven't time to tell you of all the different ways in which he set his traps, nor can we stop to talk of the various baits that he used, from castoreum to fresh sticks of birch or willow, or of those other traps, still more artfully arranged, which had no bait at all, but were cunningly hidden where the poor beavers would be almost certain to step into them before they saw them. After all, it was his awful success that mattered, rather than the way in which he achieved it. Our friend's mother was one of the next to go, and the way his brothers and sisters disappeared one after another was a thing to break one's heart.

One night the Beaver himself came swimming down the pond, homeward bound, and as he dived and approached the submarine entrance of the lodge he noticed some stakes driven into the mud—stakes that had never been there before. They seemed to form two rows, one on each side of his course, but as there was room enough for him to pass between them he swam straight ahead without stopping. His hands had no webs between the fingers, and were of little use in swimming, so he had folded them back against his body; but his big feet were working like the wheels of a twin-screw steamer, and he was forging along at a great rate. Suddenly, half-way down the lines of stakes, his breast touched the pan of a steel trap, and the jaws flew up quick as a wink and strong as a vise. Fortunately there was nothing that they could take hold of. They struck him so hard that they lifted him bodily upward, but they caught only a few hairs.

Even a scientific trapper may sometimes make mistakes, and when this one came around to visit his trap, and found it sprung but empty, he thought that the beavers must have learned its secret and sprung it on purpose. There was no use, he decided, in trying to catch such intelligent animals in their own doorway, and he took the trap up and set it in a more out-of-the-way place. And so one source of danger was removed, just because the Beaver was lucky enough to touch the pan with his breast instead of with a foot.

A week later he was really caught by his right hand, and met with one of the most thrilling adventures of his life. Oh, but that was a glorious night! Dark as a pocket, no wind, thick black clouds overhead, and the rain coming down in a steady, steady drizzles—just the kind of a night that the beavers love, when the friendly darkness shuts their little city in from all the rest of the world, and when they feel safe and secure. Then, how the long yellow teeth gouge and tear at the tough wood, how the trees come tumbling down, and how the branches and the little logs come hurrying in to augment the winter food-piles! Often of late the Beaver had noticed an unpleasant odor along the shores, an odor that frightened him and made him very uneasy, but to-night the rain had washed it all away, and the woods smelled as sweet and clean as if God had just made them over new. And on this night, of all others, the Beaver put his hand squarely into a steel trap.

He was in a shallow portion of the pond, and the chain was too short for him to reach water deep enough to drown him; but now a new danger appeared, for there on the low, mossy bank was an otter, glaring at him through the darkness. Beaver-meat makes a very acceptable meal for an otter, and the Beaver knew it. And he knew, also, how utterly helpless he was, either to fly or to resist, with that heavy trap on his arm, and its chain binding him to the stake. His heart sank like lead, and he trembled from his nose to the end of his tail, and whimpered and cried like a

baby. But, strange to say, it was the trapper who saved him, though, of course, it was done quite unintentionally. As the otter advanced to the attack there came a sudden sharp click, and in another second he too was struggling for dear life. Two traps had been set in the shallow water. The Beaver had found one, and the otter the other.

The full story of that night, with all its details of fear and suffering and pain, will never be written; and probably it is as well that it should not be. But I can give you a few of the facts, if you care to hear them. The Beaver soon found that he was out of the otter's reach, and with his fears relieved on that point he set to work to free himself from the trap. Round and round he twisted, till there came a little snap, and the bone of his arm broke short off in the steel jaws. Then for a long, long time he pulled and pulled with all his might, and at last the tough skin was rent apart, and the muscles and sinews were torn out by the roots. His right hand was gone, and he was so weak and faint that it seemed as if all the strength and life of his whole body had gone with it. No matter. He was free, and he swam away to the nearest burrow and lay down to rest. The otter tried to do the same, but he was caught by the thick of his thigh, and his case was a hopeless one. Next day the trapper found him alive, but very meek and quiet, worn out with fear and useless struggles. In the other trap were a beaver's hand and some long shreds of flesh and sinew that must once have reached well up into the shoulder.

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We shall have to hurry over the events of the next winter—the last winter in the city's history. By the time the Beaver's wound was healed—Nature was good to him, and the skin soon grew over the torn stump—the pond was covered with ice. The beavers, only half as numerous as they had been a few weeks before, kept close in their lodges and burrows, and for a time they lived in peace and quiet, and their numbers suffered no further diminution. Then the trapper took to setting his traps through the ice, and before long matters were worse than ever. By spring the few beavers that remained were so thoroughly frightened that the ancient town was again abandoned—this time forever. The lodges fell to ruins, the burrows caved in, the dam gave way, the pond and canals were drained, and that was the end of the city.

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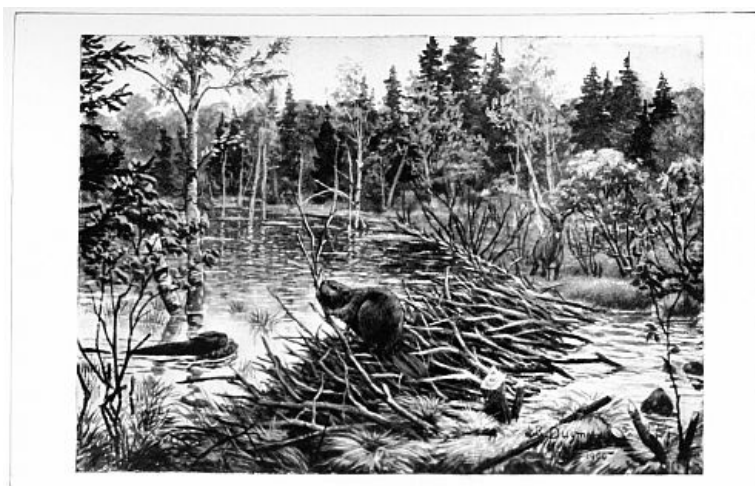
Yet not quite the end, after all. The beavers have vanished from their old habitation, but their work remains in the broad meadows cleared of timber by their teeth, and covered with rich black soil by the inundations from their dam. There is an Indian legend which says that after the Creator separated the land from the water He employed gigantic beavers to smooth it down and prepare it for the abode of men. However that may be, the farmers of generations to come will have reason to rise up and bless those busy little citizens—but I don't suppose they will ever do it.

One city was gone, but there were two that could claim the honor of being our Beaver's home at different periods of his life. The first, as we have already seen, was ancient and historic. The second was brand-new. Let us see how it had its beginning. The Beaver got married about the time he left his old home; and this, by the way, is a very good thing to do when you want to start a new town. Except for his missing hand, his wife was so like him that it would have puzzled you to tell which was which. I think it is very likely that she was his twin sister, but of course that's none of our business. Do you want to know what they looked like? They measured about three feet six inches from tip of nose to tip of tail, and they weighed perhaps thirty pounds apiece. Their bodies were heavy and clumsy, and were covered with thick, soft, grayish under-fur, which in turn was overlaid with longer hairs of a glistening chestnut-brown, making a coat that was thoroughly water-proof as well as very beautiful. Their heads were somewhat like those of gigantic rats, with small, light-brown eyes, little round ears covered with hair, and long orange-colored incisors looking out from between parted lips. One portrait will answer for both of them.

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They wandered about for some time, looking for a suitable location, and examining several spots along the beds of various little rivers, none of which seemed to be just right. But at last they found, in the very heart of the wilderness, a place where a shallow stream ran over a hard stony bottom, and here they set to work. It was a very desirable situation in every respect. At one side stood a large tree, so close that it could probably be used as a buttress for the dam when the latter was sufficiently lengthened to reach it; while above the shallow the ground was low and flat on both sides for some distance back from the banks, so that the pond would have plenty of room to spread out. If they could have spoken they would probably have said that the place was a dam site better than any other they had seen.

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### *Building the Dam.*

Alder bushes laid lengthwise of the current were the first materials used, and for a time the water filtered through them with hardly a pause. Then the beavers began laying mud and stones and moss on this brush foundation, scooping them up with their hands, and holding them under their chins as they waddled or swam to the dam. The Beaver himself was not very good at this sort of work, for his right hand was gone, as we know, and it was not easy for him to carry things; but he did the best he could, and together they accomplished a great deal. The mud and the grass and such-like materials were deposited mainly on the upper face of the dam, where the pressure of the water only sufficed to drive them tighter in among the brush; and thus, little by little, a smooth bank of earth was presented to the current, backed up on the lower side by a tangle of sticks and poles. Its top was very level and straight, and along its whole length the water trickled over in a succession of tiny rills. This was important, for if all the overflow had been in one place the stream might have been so strong and rapid as to eat into the dam, and perhaps carry away the whole structure. [23]

The first year the beavers did not try to raise the stream more than a foot above its original level. There was much other work to be done—a house to be built, and food to be laid in for the winter—and if they spent too much time on the dam they might freeze or starve before spring. A few rods up-stream was a grassy point which the rising waters had transformed into an island, and here they built their lodge, a hollow mound of sticks and mud, with a small, cave-like chamber in the centre, from which two tunnels led out under the pond—"angles," the trappers call them. The walls were masses of earth and wood and stones, so thick and solid that even a man with an axe would have found it difficult to penetrate them. Only at the very apex of the mound there was no mud, nothing but tangled sticks through which a breath of fresh air found its way now and then. In spite of this feeble attempt at ventilation I am obliged to admit that the atmosphere of the lodge was often a good deal like that of the Black Hole of Calcutta, but beavers are so constituted that they do not need much oxygen, and they did not seem to mind it. In all other respects the house was neat and clean. The floor was only two or three inches above the level of the water in the angles, and would naturally have been a bed of mud; but they mixed little twigs with it, and stamped and pounded it down till it was hard and smooth. I think likely the Beaver's tail had something to do with this part of the work, as well as with finishing off the dam, for he was fond of slapping things with it, and it was just the right shape for such use. In fact, I fear that if it had not been for the tail, and for other tails like it, neither of the cities would ever have been as complete as they were. With the ends of projecting sticks cut off to leave the walls even and regular, and with long grass carried in to make the beds, the lodge was finished and ready. [24]

And now you might have seen the beavers coming home to rest after a night's labor at felling timber—swimming across the pond toward the island, with only the tops of their two little heads showing above the water. In front of the lodge each tail-rudder gives a slap and a twist, and they dive for the submarine door of one of the angles. In another second they are swimming along the dark, narrow tunnel, making the water surge around them. Suddenly the roof of the passage rises, and their heads pop up into the air. A yard or two farther, and they enter the chamber of the lodge, with its level floor and its low, arched roof. And there in the darkness they lie down on their grass beds and go to sleep. It is good to have a home of your own where you may take your ease when the night's work is done. [25]

Near the upper end of the pond, where the bank was higher, they dug a long burrow, running back ten or fifteen feet into the ground. This was to be the last resort if, by any possibility, the lodge should ever be invaded. It was a weary task, digging that burrow, for its mouth was deep under the water, and every few minutes they had to stop work and come to the surface for breath. Night after night they scooped and shovelled, rushing the job as fast as they knew how, but making pretty slow progress in spite of all their efforts. It was done at last, however, and they felt easier in their minds when they knew that it was ready for use in case of necessity. From its mouth in the depths of the pond it sloped gradually upward to a dry chamber under the roots of a large birch; and here, where a few tiny holes were not likely to be noticed from the outside, two or three small openings, almost hidden by the moss and dead leaves, let in the air and an occasional ray of light. The big tree made a solid roof overhead, and the chamber was large enough, with a little crowding, to accommodate a whole family of beavers. [26]

There was only one other heavy task, and that was the gathering of the wood, which, with its bark, was to serve as food through the winter. This too was finally finished, and the very last things that the beavers did that fall were to put another coat of mud on the outside of the lodge, and to see that the dam was in the best possible condition. No repairing could be done after the ice made; and if the dam should give way at any time during the winter, the pond would be drained, and the entrances of the lodge and the burrow would be thrown open to any prowling marauders that might happen to pass that way. So it was imperative to have things in good order before cold weather came on.

There came a quiet, windless day, when the sky was gray, and when the big snow-flakes came floating lazily down, some to lose themselves in the black water, and some to robe the woods and the shores in white. At nightfall the clouds broke up, the stars shone forth, and the air grew odder and keener till long crystal spears shot out across the pond, and before morning a sheet of glass had spread from shore to shore. I do not think it was unwelcome. The beavers were shut in for the winter, or could only go abroad with considerable difficulty, but they had each other, and there was a little world of their own down under the ice and snow. The chamber of the lodge was [27]

home, and just outside was their food storehouse—the big pile of wood which it had cost so much labor to gather. One of the entrances was shorter and straighter than the other, and through this they used to bring in sticks from the heap, and lay them on the floor between the beds, where they could devour the bark at their leisure. If they grew restless, and wanted to go farther afield, there was the bottom of the pond to be explored, and the big luscious lily-roots to be dug up for a change of diet. It was a peaceful time, a time of rest from the labors of the past year, and of growing fat and strong for those of the year to come. We have much goods laid up for many months; let us eat, drink, and be merry, and hope that the trappers will not come to-morrow.

The babies came in May, and I suppose that the young father and mother were almost as proud and happy as some of you who are in similar circumstances. The Beaver did not wander very far from home that spring and summer, nor was he away very long at a time. [28]

There were five of the children, and they were very pretty—about as large as rats, and covered with thick, soft, silky, reddish-brown fur, but without any of the longer, coarser, chestnut-colored hairs that formed their parents' outer coats. They were very playful, too, as the father and mother had been in their own youthful days. For a while they had to be nursed, like other babies; but by and by the old beavers began to bring in little twigs for them, about the size of lead-pencils; and if you had been there, and your eyes had been sharp enough to pierce the gloom, you might have seen the youngsters exercising their brand new teeth, and learning to sit up and hold sticks in their baby hands while they ate the bark. And wouldn't you have liked to be present on the night when they first went swimming down the long, dark tunnel; and, rising to the surface, looked around on their world of woods and water—on the quiet pond, with its glassy smoothness broken only by their own ripples; on the tall trees, lifting their fingers toward the sky; and on the stars, marching silently across the heavens, and looking down with still, unwinking eyes on another family of babies that had come to live and love and be happy for a little while on God's earth? [29]

One of the children was killed by an otter before the summer was over, but I am glad to say that the other four grew up and were a credit to their parents.

The babies were not the only addition to the new city during that year, for about mid-summer another pair of beavers came and built a lodge near the upper end of the pond. It was a busy season for everybody—for our old friends as well as for the new-comers. The food-sticks which had been peeled off their bark during the winter furnished a good supply of construction material, and the dam was built up several inches higher, and was lengthened to the buttress-tree on one side, and for a distance of two or three rods on the other, so as to keep the water from flowing around the ends. As the water-level rose it became necessary to build up the floor of the lodge in order to keep it from being flooded; and that, in turn, necessitated raising the roof by the simple process of hollowing it out from within and adding more material on the outside. In the same way the lodge was made both longer and broader, to accommodate the growing family and the still further increase that was to be expected the following spring. More burrows were dug in the shore of the pond—you can't have too many of them—and a much larger stock of food wood was gathered, for there were six mouths, instead of two, to be fed through the coming winter. The father and mother worked very hard, and even the babies helped with the lighter tasks, such as carrying home small branches, and mending little leaks in the dam. The second pair of beavers was also busy with lodge and burrow and storehouse, and so the days slipped by very rapidly. [30]

Only once that year did a man come to town, and then he did not do anything very dreadful. He was not a trapper, he was only an amateur naturalist who wanted to see the beavers at their work, and who thought he was smart enough to catch them at it. His plan was simple enough; he made a breach in the dam one night, and then climbed a tree and waited for them to come and mend it. It was bright moonlight, and he thought he would see the whole thing and learn some wonderful secrets.

The Beaver was at work in the woods not very far away, and presently he came down to the edge of the pond, rolling a heavy birch cutting before him. He noticed at once that the water was falling, and he started straight for the dam to see what was the matter. The amateur naturalist saw him coming, a dark speck moving swiftly down the pond, with a long V-shaped ripple spreading out behind him like the flanks of a flock of wild geese. But the beaver was doing some thinking while he swam. He had never before known the water to fall so suddenly and rapidly; there must be a very bad break in the dam. How could it have happened? It looked suspicious. It looked very suspicious indeed; and just before he reached the dam he stopped to reconnoitre, and at once caught sight of the naturalist up in the tree. His tail rose in the air and came down with the loudest whack that had ever echoed across the pond, a stroke that sent the spray flying in every direction, and that might have been heard three-quarters of a mile away. His wife heard it, and paused in her work of felling a tree; the children heard it, and the neighbors heard it; and they all knew it meant business. The Beaver dived like a loon and swam for dear life, and he did not come to the surface again till he had reached the farther end of the pond and was out of sight behind a grassy point. There he stayed, now and then striking the water with his tail as a signal that the danger was not yet over. It isn't every animal that can use his caudal appendage as a stool, as a rudder, as a third hind leg, as a trowel for smoothing the floor of his house, and as a tocsin for alarming his fellow-citizens. [31]

The naturalist roosted in the tree till his teeth were chattering and he was fairly blue with cold, and then he scrambled down and went back to his camp, where he had a violent chill. The next night it rained, and as he did not want to get wet there was nothing to do but stay in his tent. [32]

When he visited the pond again the dam had been repaired and the water was up to its usual level. He decided that watching beavers wasn't very interesting, hardly worth the trouble it cost; and he guessed he knew enough about them, anyhow. So the next day he packed up his camping outfit and went home.

In the following year the population was increased to eighteen, for six more babies arrived in our Beaver's lodge, and four in his neighbors'. In another twelvemonth the first four were old enough to build lodges and found homes of their own; and so the city grew, and our Beaver and his wife were the original inhabitants, the first settlers, the most looked-up-to of all the citizens. You are not to suppose, however, that the Beaver was mayor of the town. There was no city government. The family was the unit, and each household was a law unto itself. But that did not keep him from being the oldest, the wisest, the most knowing of all the beavers in the community, just as his father had been before him in another town. [33]

I don't believe you care to hear all about the years that followed. They were years of peace and growth, of marriages and homebuilding, of many births and a few deaths, of winter rest and summer labor, and of quiet domestic happiness. There was little excitement, and, best of all, there were no trappers. The time came when the Beaver might well say, as he looked around on the community which he and his wife had founded, that he was a citizen of no mean city.

But this could not last. A great calamity was coming—a calamity beside which the slow destruction of the former town would seem tame and uninteresting.

One bright February day the Beaver and his wife left their lodge to look for lily-roots. They had found a big fat one and were just about to begin their feast, when they heard foot-steps on the ice over their heads, and the voices of several men talking eagerly. They made for the nearest burrow as fast as they could go, and stayed there the rest of the day, and when they returned to their lodge they found—but I'm going too fast. [34]

The men were Indians and half-breeds, and they were in high feather over their discovery. Around this pond there must be enough beaver-skins to keep them in groceries and tobacco and whiskey for a long time to come. But to find a city is one thing, and to get hold of its inhabitants is another and a very different one. One of the Indians was an elderly man who in the old days had trapped beaver in Canada for the Hudson Bay Company, and he assumed the direction of the work. First of all they chopped holes in the ice and drove a line of stakes across the stream just above the pond, so that no one might escape in that direction. Then, by pounding on the ice, and cutting more holes in it here and there, they found the entrances to all the lodges and most of the burrows, and closed them also with stakes driven into the bottom. Fortunately they did not find the burrow where our Beaver and his wife had taken refuge. They were about to break open the roofs of the lodges when the old man proposed that they should play a trick on one of the beaver families—a trick which his father had taught him when he was a boy, and when the beavers were many in the woods around Lake Superior. He described it with enthusiasm, and his companions agreed that it would be great fun. For a time there was much chopping of ice and driving of stakes, and then all was quiet again. [35]

By and by one of our Beaver's children began to feel hungry, and as his father and mother had not come home he decided to go out to the wood-pile and get something to eat. So he took a header from his bed into the water, and swam down the angle. The door had been unbarred again, and he passed out without difficulty, but when he reached the pile he found it surrounded by a fence made of stakes set so close together that he could not pass between them. He swam clear around it, and at last found one gap just wide enough to admit his body. He passed in, and as he did so his back grazed a small twig which had been thrust down through a hole in the ice, and the watching Indians saw it move, and knew that a beaver had entered the trap. He picked out a nice stick of convenient size, and started to return to the lodge. But where was that gap in the fence? This was the place, he was sure. Here were two stakes between which he had certainly passed as he came in, but now another stood squarely between them, and the gate was barred. He swam all round the wood-pile, looking for a way out, and poking his little brown nose between the stakes, but there was no escape, and when he came back to the entrance and found it still closed his last hope died, and he gave up in despair. His heart and lungs and all his circulatory apparatus had been so designed by the Great Architect that he might live for many minutes under water, but they could not keep him alive indefinitely. Overhead was the ice, and all around was that cruel fence. Only a rod away was home, where his brothers and sisters were waiting for him, and where there was air to breathe and life to live—but he could not reach it. You have all read or heard how a drowning man feels, and I suppose it is much the same with a drowning beaver. They say it is an easy death. [36]

By and by a hooked stick came down through a hole in the ice and drew him out, the gate was unbarred, the twig was replaced, and the Indians waited for another hungry little beaver to come for his dinner. That's enough. You know now what the parents found when they came home—or rather what they didn't find. [37]

It would have taken too long to dispose of the whole city in this way, so the Indians finally broke the dam and let the water out of the pond, and then they tore open the lodges and all the burrows they could find, and the inhabitants were put to the—not the sword, but the axe and the club. Of all those who had been so happy and prosperous, the old Beaver and his wife were the only ones who escaped; and their lives were spared only because the Indians failed to find their hiding-place.

That was the end of the second city, but it was not quite the end of the beavers. A few miles up-stream they dug a short burrow in the bank and tried to make a new home. In May another baby came, but only one, and it was dead before it was born. Next day the mother died too, and the Beaver left the burrow and went out into the world alone. I really think his heart was broken, though it continued to beat for several months longer.

Just northeast of the Glimmerglass there lies a long, narrow pond, whose shores are very low and swampy, and whose waters drain into the larger lake through a short stream only a few rods in length. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago the narrow strip of land that separates them may possibly have been a beaver-dam, but to-day it is hard to tell it from one of Nature's own formations. In the course of his lonely wanderings the Beaver reached this pond, and here he established himself to spend his last few weeks. He was aging rapidly. Such a little while ago he had seemed in the very prime of life, and had been one of the handsomest beavers in the woods, with fur of the thickest and softest and silkiest, and a weight of probably sixty pounds. Now he was thin and lean, his hair was falling out, his teeth were losing their sharp edges and becoming blunt and almost useless, and even his flat tail was growing thicker and more rounded, and its whack was not as startling as of old when he brought it down with all his might on the surface of the water.

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Yet even now the old instinct flamed up and burned feebly for a little while. Or shall we say the old love of work, and of using the powers and faculties that God had given him? Why should the thing that is called genius in a man be set down as instinct when we see it on a somewhat smaller scale in an animal? Whatever it was, the ruling passion was still strong. All his life he had been a civil engineer; and now, one dark, rainy autumn night, he left his shallow burrow, swam down the pond to its outlet, and began to build a dam. The next day, pushing up the shallow stream in my dug-out canoe, I saw the alder-cuttings lying in its bed, with the marks of his dull teeth on their butts. God knows why he did it, or what he was thinking about as he cut those bushes and dragged them into the water. I don't; but sometimes I wonder if a wild dream of a new lodge, a new mate, a new home, and a new city was flitting through his poor, befogged old brain.

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It was only a few nights later that he put his foot into Charlie Roop's beaver-trap, jumped for deep water, and was drowned like his father before him. Charlie afterward showed me the pelt, which he had stretched on a hoop made of a little birch sapling. It was not a very good pelt, for, as I said, the Beaver had been losing his hair, but Charlie thought he might get a dollar or two for it. Whether he needed the dollar more than the Beaver needed his skin was a question which it seemed quite useless to discuss.

As we left the shack I noticed the tail lying on the ground just outside the door.

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"Why don't you eat it?" I asked. "Don't you know that a beaver's tail is supposed to be one of the finest delicacies in the woods?"

"Huh!" said Charlie. "I'd rather have salt pork."

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## THE KING OF THE TROUT STREAM

[41]

IT was winter, and the trout stream ran low in its banks, hidden from the sky by a thick shell of ice and snow, and not seeing the sun for a season. But the trout stream was used to that, and it slipped along in the darkness, undismayed and not one whit disheartened; talking to itself in low, murmuring tones, and dreaming of the time when spring would come back and all the rivers would be full.

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Mingled with its waters, and borne onward and downward by the ceaseless flow of its current, went multitudes of the tiniest air-bubbles, most of them too small ever to be seen by a human eye, yet large enough to be the very breath of life to thousands and thousands of creatures. Some of them found their way to the gills of the brook trout, and some to the minnows, and the herrings, and the suckers, and the star-gazers; some fed the little crustacea, and the insect larvæ, and the other tiny water animals that make up the lower classes of society; and some passed undetained down the river and out into Lake Superior. But there were others that worked down into the gravel of the riverbed; and there, in the nooks and crannies between the pebbles, they found a vast number of little balls of yellow-brown jelly, about as large as small peas, which seemed to be in need of their kindly ministrations. And the air-bubbles touched the trout eggs gently and lovingly, and in some mysterious and wonderful way their oxygen passed in through the pores of the shells, and the embryos within were quickened and stirred to a new vigor and a more rapid growth.

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Not all of the eggs were alive. Some had been crushed between the stones; some were buried in sediment, which had choked the pores and kept away the friendly oxygen until they smothered; and some had never really lived at all. But one danger they had been spared, for there were no saw-mills on the stream to send a flood of fungus-breeding sawdust down with the current. And in spite of all the misfortunes and disasters to which trout eggs are liable, a goodly number of them were doing quite as well as could be expected. I suppose one could hardly say that they were being incubated, for, according to the dictionaries, to incubate is to sit upon, and

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certainly there was no one sitting on them. Their mothers had not come near them since the day they were laid. But the gravel hid them from the eyes of egg-eating fishes and musk-rats; the water kept them cold, but not too cold; the fresh oxygen came and encouraged them if ever they grew tired and dull, and so the good work went on.

Through each thin, leathery, semi-transparent shell you could have seen, if you had examined it closely, a pair of bright, beady eyes, and a dark little thread of a backbone that was always curled up like a horseshoe because there wasn't room for it to lie straight. But along the outside of the curve of each spinal column a set of the tiniest and daintiest muscles was getting ready for a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together. And one day, late in the winter, when the woods were just beginning to think about spring, the muscles in one particular egg tugged with all their little might, the backbone straightened with a great effort, the shell was ripped open, and the tail of a brand-new brook trout thrust itself out into the water and wiggled pathetically.

But his head and shoulders were still inside, and for a while it looked as if he would never get them free. His tail was shaped somewhat like a paddle set on edge, for a long, narrow fin ran from the middle of his back clear around the end of it and forward again on the under side of his body, and with this for an oar he struggled and writhed and squirmed, and went bumping blindly about among the pebbles like a kitten with its head in the cream pitcher. And at last, with the most vigorous squirm and wriggle of all, he backed clear of the shell in which he had lain for so many weeks and months, and, weak and weary from his exertions, lay down on a stone to rest.

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He had to lie on his side, for attached to his breast was a large, round, transparent sac which looked very much like the egg out of which he had just come. In fact it really was the egg, or at least a portion of it, for it held a large part of what had been the yolk. If you could have examined him with a microscope you would have seen a most strange and beautiful thing. His little body was so delicate and transparent that one could see the arteries pulsing and throbbing in time with the beating of his heart, and some of those arteries found their way into the food-sac, where they kept branching and dividing, and growing smaller and more numerous. And in the very smallest of the tiny tubes a wonderful process was going on—as wonderful as the way in which the oxygen fed the embryos through the shell. Somehow, by life's marvellous alchemy, the blood was laying hold of the material of the yolk, turning it into more blood, and carrying it away to be used in building up bone and muscle everywhere from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. You might not have detected the actual transformation, but you could have seen the beating of the engine, and the throbbing rush of the little red rivers, all toiling with might and main to make a big, strong trout out of this weak and diminutive baby. And you could have seen the corpuscles hurrying along so thick and fast that at times they blocked up the passages, and the current was checked till the heart could bring enough pressure to bear to burst the dam and send them rushing on again. For the corpuscles of a trout's blood are considerably larger than those of most fishes, and they sometimes get "hung up," like a drive of logs sent down a stream hardly large enough to float it.

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With a full haversack to be drawn upon in such a convenient manner the Troutlet was not obliged to take food through his mouth or to think about hustling around in search of a living. This was very fortunate, for the stream was full of hungry beasts of prey who would be very likely to gobble him up quick the first time he went abroad; and, besides, his frail little body was still so weak and delicate that he could not bear the light of day. So, instead of swimming away to seek his fortune, he simply dived down deeper into the gravel, and stayed there. For some weeks he led a very quiet life among the pebbles, and the only mishap that befell him during that time was the direct result of his retiring disposition. In his anxiety to get as far away from the world as possible he one day wedged himself into a cranny so narrow that he couldn't get out again. He couldn't even breathe, for his gill-covers were squeezed down against the sides of his head as if he were in a vise. A trout's method of respiration is to open his mouth and fill it with water, and then to close it again and force the water out through his gills, between his cheeks and his shoulders, about where his neck would be if he had one. It's very simple when you once know how, but you can't do it with your gill-covers clamped down. His tail wiggled more pathetically than ever, and did its level best to pull him out, but without success. He was wedged in so tightly that he couldn't move, and he was fast smothering, like a baby that has rolled over on its face upon the pillow. But at the last moment, when his struggles had grown feebler and feebler until they had almost ceased, something stirred up the gravel around him and set him free. He never knew what did it. Perhaps a deer or a bear waded through the stream; or a saw-log may have grounded for a moment in the shallow; or possibly it was only the current, for by this time most of the snow had melted, and the little river was working night and day to carry the water out of the woods. But whatever it was, he was saved.

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He stayed in the gravel nearly a month, but his yolk-sac was gradually shrinking, and after a time it drew itself up into a little cleft in his breast and almost disappeared. There was nothing left of it but a little amber-colored bead, and it could no longer supply food enough for his growing body. There were times when he felt decidedly hungry. And other changes had come while he lay and waited in the gravel. The embryonic fin which had made his tail so like a paddle was gone, the true dorsal and caudal and anal fins had taken their proper shape, and he looked a little less like a tadpole and a little more like a fish. He was stronger than he had been at first, and he was losing his dread of the sunlight; and so at last he left the gravel-bed, to seek his rightful place in the world of moving, murmuring waters.

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He was rather weak and listless at first, and quite given to resting in the shallows and back water, and taking things as easily as possible. But that was to be expected for a time, and he was

much better off than some of the other trout babies. He saw one that had two heads and only one body, and another with two heads and two bodies joined together at the tail. Still others there were who had never been strong enough to straighten their backbones, and who had lain in the egg till the shell wore thin and let them out head first, which is not at all the proper way for a trout to hatch. Even now they still retained the horseshoe curve, and could never swim straight ahead, but only spin round and round like whirligigs. These cripples and weaklings seemed to have got on pretty well as long as their food-sacs lasted, but now that they had to make their own living they were at a serious disadvantage. They all disappeared after a day or two, and our friend never saw them again. They couldn't stand the real struggle of life.

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Many a strong, healthy baby disappeared at the same time, and if there had not been so many of them it is not likely that any would have survived the first few days and weeks. Even as it was, I doubt if more than one fish out of each thousand eggs ever lived to grow up. It is not difficult to guess where they went. Our Trout had hardly emerged from his hiding-place in the gravel when a queer, ugly, big-headed little fish darted at him from under a stone, with his jaws open and an awful cavity yawning behind them. The Troutlet dodged between a couple of pebbles and escaped, but another youngster just beyond him was caught and swallowed alive. That was his first meeting with the star-gazer, who kills more babies than ever Herod did. Then there were minnows, and herrings, and lizards, and frogs, and weasels, and water-snakes, and other butchers of all sorts and sizes, too numerous to mention. And perhaps the worst of all were the older trout, who never seemed to have the least compunction about eating their small relations, and who were so nimble and lively that it was almost impossible to keep out of their way. Our friend spent most of his time in the shallow water near the banks, where larger fishes were not so likely to follow him, but even there he had many narrow escapes and was obliged to keep himself hidden as much as possible under chips and dead leaves, and behind stones.

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Often he found himself in great peril when he least suspected it. Once he lay for some time in the edge of a dark forest of water-weeds, only an inch from a lumpish, stupid-looking creature, half covered with mud, that was clinging to one of the stems. The animal appeared so dull and unintelligent that the young Trout paid little attention to him until another baby came up and approached a trifle closer. Then, quick as a flash, the creature shot out an arm nearly three-quarters of an inch long, bearing on its end two horrible things which were not exactly claws, nor fingers, nor teeth, but which partook of the nature of all three, and which came together on the infant's soft, helpless little body like a pair of tongs or the jaws of a steel trap, and drew him in to where the real jaws were waiting to make mince-meat of him. Our friend fled so precipitately that he did not see the end of the tragedy, but neither did he ever see that baby again. Before the summer had passed, the dull, lumpish-looking creature had become a magnificent insect, with long, gauzy wings, clad in glittering mail, and known to everybody as a dragon-fly, but I doubt if any of his performances in the upper air were ever half as dragon-like as the deeds of darkness that he did when he was an ugly, shapeless larva down under the water.

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Fortunately, not all the larvæ in the stream were thus to be feared. Many were so small that the Troutlet could eat them, instead of letting them eat him; and nowhere were they more plentiful than in this same forest of water-weeds. His first taste of food was a great experience, and gave him some entirely new ideas of life. One day he was lying with his head up-stream, as was his usual habit, when a particularly fat, plump little larva, torn from his home by the remorseless river, came drifting down with the current. He looked very tempting, and our friend sallied out from under a stick and caught him on the fly, just as he had seen the star-gazer catch his own brother. The funny little creature wriggled deliciously on his tongue, and he held him between his jaws for a moment in a kind of ecstasy; but he couldn't quite make up his mind to swallow him, and presently he spat him out again and went back to the shadow of his stick to rest and think about it. It was the first time in his life that he had ever done such a thing, and he felt rather overwhelmed, but an hour or two later he tried it again, and this time the living morsel did not stop in his mouth, but went straight on down.

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It was really something more than a new experience—this first mouthful of food—for it marked a turning-point in his career. Up to this time he had lived entirely on the provisions which his parents had left him, but henceforth he was independent and could take care of himself. He was no longer an embryo; he was a real fish, a genuine *Salvelinus fontinalis*, as carnivorous as the biggest and fiercest of all his relations. The cleft in his breast might close up now, and the last remnant of his yolk-sac vanish forever. He was done with it. He had graduated from the nursery, and had found his place on the battle-field of life.

It must be admitted, however, that he did not look much like a mature trout, even now. He was less than three-quarters of an inch long, and his big head, bulging eyes, and capacious mouth were out of all proportion to his small and feeble body. But time and food were all that was needed to set these matters right; and now that he had learned how, he set to work and did his level best. I should be afraid to guess how many tiny water-creatures, insects and larvæ and crustaceæ, found their way down his throat, but it is pretty safe to say that he often ate more than his own weight in a single day. And so he grew in size and strength and symmetry, and from being a quiet, languid baby, always hiding in dark corners, and attending strictly to his own affairs, he became one of the liveliest and most inquisitive little fishes in all the stream. To a certain extent he developed a fondness for travelling, and in company with other troutlets of his own age and size he often journeyed from place to place in search of new surroundings and new things to eat. In fly-time he found a bountiful food-supply in the mosquitoes and black-flies that swarmed over the stream, and it was fun to see him leap from the water, catch one of them in his

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mouth, and drop back with a triumphant little splash. It wasn't really very considerate in him to prey on those biting, stinging flies, for in after years they would be his best defenders against anglers and fishermen, but consideration doesn't seem to be one of the strong points in a brook trout's character.

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It would take too long to tell of all his youthful doings during the next year, and of all his narrow escapes, and the many tight places that he got into and out of. It was a wonder that he ever pulled through at all, but I suppose it is necessary that a few trout should grow up, for, if they didn't, who would there be to eat the little ones?

Once a kingfisher dived for him, missed him by a hair's-breadth, and flew back, scolding and chattering, to his perch on an old stub that leaned far out over the water. And once he had a horrible vision of an immense loon close behind him, with long neck stretched out, and huge bill just ready to make the fatal grab. He dodged and got away, but it frightened him about as badly as anything can frighten a creature with no more nerves than a fish. And many other such adventures he had—too many to enumerate. However, I don't think they ever troubled him very much except for the moment. He grew more wary, no doubt, but he didn't do much worrying. Somehow or other he always escaped by the skin of his teeth, and the next spring he was swallowing the new crop of young fry with as little concern as his older relations had shown in trying to swallow him. So far he seemed to be one of the few who are foreordained to eat and not be eaten, though it was more than likely that in the end he, too, would die a violent death.

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When he was about a year and a half old he noticed that all the larger trout in the stream were gathering in places where the water was shallow, the bottom pebbly, and the current rapid; and that they acted as if they thought they had very important business on hand. He wanted to do as the others did, and so it happened that he went back again to the gravelly shallow where the air-bubbles had first found him. By this time he was about as large as your finger, or possibly a trifle larger, and he had all the bumptiousness of youth and was somewhat given to pushing himself in where he wasn't wanted.

The male trout were the first to arrive, and they promptly set to work to prepare nests for their mates, who were expected a little later. It was a simple process. All they did was to shove the gravel aside with their noses and fins and tails, and then fan the sediment away until they had made nice, clean little hollows in the bed of the stream; but there was a good deal of excitement and jealousy over it, and every little while they had to stop and have a scrap. The biggest and strongest always wanted the best places, and if they happened to take a fancy for a location occupied by a smaller and weaker fish, they drove him out without ceremony and took possession by right of the conqueror. For the most part their fighting seemed rather tame, for they did little more than butt each other in the ribs with their noses, but once in a while they really got their dander up and bit quite savagely. And when the lady trout came to inspect the nests that had been prepared for them, then times were livelier than ever, and the jealousy and rivalry ran very high, indeed.

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Of course our Trout was too young to bear a very prominent part in these proceedings, but he and some companions of about his own age skirmished around the edges of the nesting grounds, and seemed to take a wicked delight in teasing the old males and running away just in time to escape punishment. And when the nests began to be put to practical use, the yearlings were very much in evidence. Strictly fresh eggs are as good eating down under the water as they are on land, and, partly on this account, and partly because direct sunshine is considered very injurious to them, the mothers always covered them with gravel as quickly as possible. But in spite of the best of care the current was constantly catching some of them and sweeping them away, and our young friend would creep up as near as he dared, and whenever one of the yellow-brown balls came his way he would gobble it down with as little remorse as he had felt for his first larva. Now and then an irate father would turn upon him fiercely and chase him off, but in a few minutes he would be back again, watching for eggs as eagerly as ever. Once, indeed, he had a rather close call, for the biggest old male in all the stream came after him with mouth open as if he would swallow him whole, as he could very easily have done. Our friend was almost caught when the big fellow happened to glance back and saw another trout coming to visit his wife, and promptly abandoned the chase and went home to see about it.

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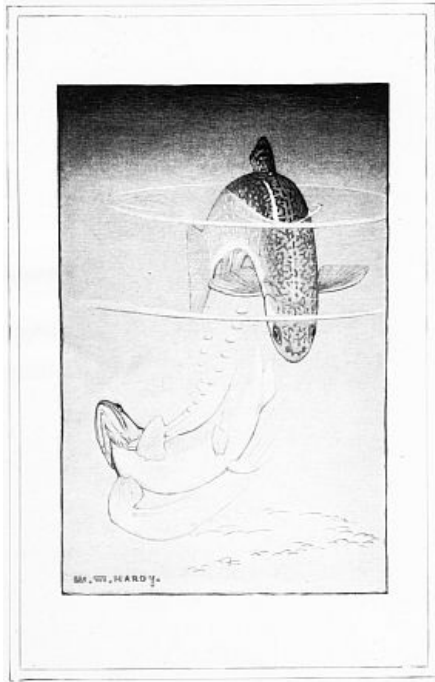
A year later our Trout went again to the gravelly shallow, and this time, being six inches long and about thirty months old, he decided to make a nest of his own. He did so, and had just induced a most beautiful young fish of the other sex to come and examine it, with a view to matrimony, when that same big bully appeared on the scene, promptly turned him out of house and home, and began courting the beautiful young creature himself. It was very exasperating, not to say humiliating, but it was the sort of thing that one must expect when one is only a two-year-old.

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The next year he had better luck. As another summer passed away, and the cooler weather came on, he arrayed himself in his wedding finery, and it almost seemed as if he had stolen some of the colors of the swamp maples, in their gay fall dress, and was using them to deck himself out and make a brave display. In later years he was larger and heavier, but I don't think he was ever much handsomer than he was in that fourth autumn of his life. His back was a dark, dusky, olive-green, with mottlings that were still darker and duskier. His sides were lighter—in some places almost golden yellow; and scattered irregularly over them were the small, bright carmine spots that gave him one of his *aliases*, the "Speckled Trout." Beneath he was usually of a pale cream color, but now that he had put on his best clothes his vest was bright orange, and some of his fins

were variegated with red and white, while others were a fiery yellow. He was covered all over with a suit of armor made of thousands and thousands of tiny scales, so small and fine that the eye could hardly separate them, and from the bony shoulder-girdle just behind his gills a raised line, dark and slightly waving, ran back to his tail, like the sheer-line of a ship. There were other fishes that were more slender and more finely modelled than he, and possibly more graceful, but in him there was something besides beauty—something that told of power and speed and doggedness. He was like a man-o'-war dressed out in all her bunting for some great gala occasion, but still showing her grim, heavy outlines beneath her decorations. His broad mouth opened clear back under his eyes, and was armed with rows of backward-pointing teeth, so sharp and strong that when they once fastened themselves upon a smaller fish they never let him go again. The only way out from between those jaws was down his throat. His eyes were large and bright, and were set well apart; and the bulge of his forehead between them hinted at more brains than are allotted to some of the people of the stream. Altogether, he was a most gallant and knightly little fish, and it would certainly have been a pity if he hadn't found a mate.

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***Nesting Grounds.***

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And now he started the third time for the gravelly shallow, and travelled as he had never travelled before in all his life. Streams are made to swim against—every brook trout knows that—and the faster they run, the greater is the joy of breasting them. The higher the water-fall, the prouder do you feel when you find you can leap it. And our friend was in a mood for swimming, and for swimming with all his might. Never had he felt so strong and vigorous and so full of life and energy, and he made his fins and his tail go like the oars of a racing-shell. Now he was working up the swift current of a long rapid like a bird in the teeth of the wind. Now he was gathering all his strength for the great leap to the top of the water-fall. And now, perhaps, he rested for a little while in a quiet pool, and presently went hurrying on again, diving under logs and fallen trees, swinging round the curves, darting up the still places where the water lay a-dreaming, and wriggling over shallow bars where it was not half deep enough to cover him; until at last he reached the old familiar place where so many generations of brook trout had first seen the light of day and felt the cold touch of the snow-water.

As before, he and the other males arrived at the nesting grounds some days in advance of their mates, and spent the intervening time in scooping hollows in the gravel and quarrelling among themselves. Two or three times he was driven from a choice location by someone who was bigger

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than he, but he always managed in some way to regain it, or else stole another from a smaller fish; and when the ladies finally appeared he had a fine large nest in a pleasant situation a little apart from those of his rivals. But for some reason the first candidates who came to look at it declined to stay. Perhaps they were not quite ready to settle down, or perhaps they were merely disposed to insist on the feminine privilege of changing their minds. But finally there came one who seemed to be quite satisfied, and with whom the Trout himself had every reason to be pleased.

She was not a native of the stream, but of one of the hatcheries of the Michigan Fish Commission; and while he was lying in the gravel she was one of a vast company inhabiting a number of black wooden troughs that stood in a large, pleasant room filled with the sound of running water. Here there were no yearlings nor musk-rats nor saw-bill ducks looking for fresh eggs, nor any dragons nor star-gazers lying in wait for the young fry. Instead there were nice, kind men, who kept the hatching troughs clean and the water at the right temperature, and who gently stirred up the troutlets with a long goose-feather whenever too many of them crowded together in one corner, trying to get away from the hateful light. Under this sort of treatment most of the thirty million babies in the hatchery lived and thrived. Only a few thousands of them were brook trout, but among those thousands one of the smartest and most precocious was the one in whom we are just now most interested. She was always first into the dark corners, as long as dark corners seemed desirable; and later, when they began to come up into the light and partake of the pulverized beef-liver which their attendants offered them, there was no better swimmer or more voracious feeder than she. All this was especially fortunate because there was a very hard and trying experience before her—one in which she would have need of all her strength and vitality, and in which her chances of life would be very small, indeed. It came with planting time, when she and a host of her companions were whisked through a rubber tube and deposited in a big can made of galvanized iron, in which they were borne away to the trout stream. The journey was a long one, they were pretty badly cramped for room, and before they reached their destination the supply of oxygen in the water became exhausted. The baby trout began to think they had blown out the gas, and they all crowded to the surface, where, if anywhere, the minute bubbles that keep one alive are to be found. They gulped down great mouthfuls of water and forced it out through their gills as fast as ever they could, but, somehow, all the life seemed to be gone out of it, and it did them no good whatever. Pretty soon a few turned over on their backs and died, and every last one of them would have suffocated if the man who had charge of the party hadn't noticed what was going on and come to the rescue. Picking

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up a dipperful of water and troutlets, and holding it high in the air, he poured it back into the can with much dashing and splashing. Hundreds and hundreds of tiny bubbles were caught in the rush and carried down to the bottom, and so the oxygen came back again to the tired gills, and the danger was over.

The emigrants reached the trout stream at last, and one would have supposed that their troubles were ended. In reality the chapter of trials and tribulations had only just begun, for the same fishes and frogs and lizards that had so persecuted our friend and his brothers and sisters were on hand to welcome the new arrivals, and very few escaped. And so, in spite of its quiet beginnings in the peaceful surroundings of the hatchery, this young lady trout's life proved quite as exciting and adventurous as our friend's, and it is possible that the good care which she received during her early infancy really served to make things all the harder for her when she came to be thrown entirely on her own resources. The mere change in the temperature of the water when she was turned out of the can was quite a shock to her nervous system; and, whereas most trout are somewhat acquainted with the dangers and hardships of the stream, almost from the time they rip their shells open, she did not even know that there was such a place until she was set down in it and told to shift for herself.

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However, by dint of strength, speed, agility, and good judgment in selecting hiding-places—and also, in all probability, by a run of remarkably good luck—she made her way unharmed through all the perils of babyhood and early youth, and now she was one of the most beautiful little three-year-old pirates that ever swooped down upon a helpless victim.

As she and our friend swam side by side, her nose and the end of her tail were exactly even with his. Her colors were the same that he had worn before he put on his wedding garments, and if you had seen them together in the early summer I don't believe you could ever have told them apart. They were a well-matched pair, more evenly mated, probably, than is usual in fish marriages.

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But they were not to be allowed to set up housekeeping together without fighting for the privilege. Hardly had she finished inspecting the nest, and made up her mind that it would answer, and that he was, on the whole, quite eligible as a husband, when a third trout appeared and attempted to do as the big bully had done the year before. This time, however, our young friend's blood was up, and, though the enemy was considerably larger than he, he was ready to strike for his altars and his fires. He made a quick rush, like a torpedo-boat attacking a man-of-war, and hit the intruder amidships, ramming him with all his might. Then the enemy made as sudden a turn, and gave our Trout a poke in the ribs, and for a few minutes they dodged back and forth, and round and round, and over and under each other, each getting in a punch whenever he had a chance. So far it seemed only a trial of strength and speed and dexterity, and if our Trout was not quite as large and powerful as the other, yet he proved himself the quicker and the more agile and lively. But before it was over he did more than that, for, suddenly ranging up on the enemy's starboard quarter, he opened his mouth, and the sharp teeth of his lower jaw tore a row of bright scales from his adversary's side, and left a long, deep gash behind. That settled it. The big fellow lit out as fast as he could go, and our Trout was left in undisputed possession.

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The nesting season cannot last forever, and by and by, when the days were very short and the nights were very long, when the stars were bright, and when each sunrise found the hoar-frost lying thick and heavy on the dead and fallen leaves, the last trout went in search of better feeding grounds, and again the gravelly shallow seemed deserted. But it was only seeming. There were no eggs in sight—the frogs, the rats, the ducks, and the yearlings had taken care of that, and I am very much afraid that our friend may have eaten a few himself, on the sly, when his wife wasn't looking—but hidden away among the pebbles there were thousands, and the old, old miracle was being re-enacted, and multitudes of little live creatures were getting ready for the time when something should tell them to tear their shells open and come out into the world.

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One of the Trout's most remarkable adventures, and the one which probably taught him more than any other, came during the hot weather of the following summer. The stream had grown rather too warm for comfort, and lately he had got into the habit of frequenting certain deep, quiet pools where icy springs bubbled out of the banks and imparted a very grateful coolness to the slow current. It was delightful to spend a long July afternoon in the wash below one of these fountains, having a lazy, pleasant time, and enjoying the touch of the cold water as it went sliding along his body from nose to tail. One sunshiny day, as he lay in his favorite spring-hole, thinking about nothing in particular, and just working his fins enough to keep from drifting down stream, a fly lit on the surface just over his head—a bright, gayly colored fly of a species which was entirely new to him, but which looked as if it must be very finely flavored. As it happened, there had been several days of very warm, sultry weather, and even the fish had grown sullen and lazy, but this afternoon the wind had whipped around to the north, straight off Lake Superior, and all the animals in the Great Tahquamenon Swamp felt as if they had been made over new. How the brook trout could have known of it so quickly, down under the water, is a mystery; but our friend seemed to wake up all of a sudden, and to realize that he hadn't been eating as much as usual, and that he was hungry. He made a dash at the fly and seized it, but he had no sooner got it between his lips than he spat it out again. There was something wrong with it. Instead of being soft and juicy and luscious, as all flies ought to be, it was stiff, and dry, and hard, and it had a long, crooked stinger that was different from anything belonging to any other fly that he had ever tasted. It disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and the Trout sank back to the bottom of the pool.

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But presently three more flies came down together, and lit in a row, one behind another. They were different from the first, and he decided to try again. He chose the foremost of the three, and found it quite as ill-tasting as the other had been; but this time he didn't spit it out, for the stinger was a little too quick for him, and before he could let go it was fast in his lip. For the next few minutes he tore around the pool as if he was crazy, frightening some of the smaller fishes almost out of their wits, and sending them rushing up-stream in a panic. He himself had more than once been badly scared by seeing other trout do just what he was doing, but he had never realized what it all meant. Now he understood.

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The first thing he did was to go shooting along the surface for several feet, throwing his head from side to side as he went, and doing his best to shake that horrible fly out of his mouth. But it wouldn't shake, so he tried jumping out of the water and striking at the line with his tail. That wasn't any better, and next he rushed off up the stream as hard as he could go. But the line kept pulling him round to the left with gentle but irresistible force, and before he knew it he was back in the pool again. Wherever he went, and whatever he did, it was always pulling, pulling, pulling—not hard enough to tear the hook away, but just enough to keep him from getting an inch of slack. If there had been any chance to jerk he would probably have got loose in short order. He rushed around the pool so hard that he soon grew weary, and presently he sank to the bottom, hoping to lie still for a few minutes, and rest, and perhaps think of some new way of escape. But even there that steady tugging never ceased. It seemed as if it would pull his jaw out of his head if he didn't yield, and before long he let himself be drawn up again to the surface. Once he was so close to the shore that the angler made a thrust at him with the landing-net, and just grazed his side. It frightened him worse than ever, and he raced away again so fast that the reel sang, and the line swished through the water like a knife.

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The other two flies were trailing behind, and the short line that held them was constantly catching on his fins and twisting itself around his tail in a way that annoyed him greatly. He almost thought he could get away if they were not there to hinder him. And yet, as it finally turned out, it was one of those flies that saved his life. He was coming slowly back from that last unsuccessful rush for liberty, fighting for every inch, and only yielding to a strength a thousand times greater than his own, when the trailer caught on a sunken log and held fast. Instantly the strain on his mouth relaxed. The angler was no longer pulling on him, but on the log. He could jerk now, and he immediately began to twitch his head this way and that, backward and forward, right and left, tearing the hole in his lip a little larger at every yank, until the hook came away and he was free.

It was a painful experience, and he carried the scar as long as he lived, but the lesson he learned was worth all its cost. I won't say that he never touched bait again, but he was much more cautious, and no other artificial fly ever stung him as badly as that one.

The years went by, and the Trout increased in size and strength and wisdom, as a trout should. One after another his rivals went away to the happy hunting-grounds, most of them losing their lives because they could not resist the temptation to taste a made-up fly, or to swallow a luscious angle-worm festooned on a dainty little steel hook; and the number of fish who dared dispute his right to do whatever he pleased grew beautifully less. And at last there was only one trout left in all the stream who was larger and stronger than he. That was the same big fellow who had come so near swallowing him on the occasion of his first visit to the nesting-grounds; and the way the fierce, solemn old brute finally departed this life deserves a paragraph all to itself.

It happened one morning in early spring, just after the ice had gone out. Our friend was still a trifle sleepy and lazy after the long, dull winter, though he had an eye open, as always, for anything particularly good to eat. I doubt if he would have jumped at any kind of a fly, for it was not the right time of year for flies, and he did not believe in eating them out of season; but almost anything else was welcome. He was faring very well that morning, as it chanced, for the stream was running high, and many a delicious grub and earthworm had been swept into it by the melting snow. And presently, what should come drifting down with the current but a poor little field-mouse, struggling desperately in a vain effort to swim back to the shore. Once before our friend had swallowed a mouse whole, just as you would take an oyster from the half-shell, and he knew that they were very nice, indeed. He made a rush for the unlucky little animal, and in another second he would have had him; but just then the big bully came swaggering up with an air which seemed to say: "That's my meat. You get out of this!"

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*"He tried jumping out of the water."*

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Our friend obeyed, the big fellow gave a leap and seized the mouse, and then—his time had come. He fought bravely, but he was fairly hooked, and in a few minutes he lay out on the bank, gasping for breath, flopping wildly about, and fouling his beautiful sides with sand and dirt. If he had understood English he might have overheard an argument which immediately took place between the angler and a girl, and which began something like this:

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"There!" in a triumphant tone; "who says mice aren't good bait? This is the biggest trout that's been caught in this stream for years."

"Oh, George, don't kill him! He's so pretty! Put him back in the water."

"Put him back in the water? Well, I should say not! What do you take me for?"

Evidently the girl took him for one who could be easily influenced by the right person, for she kept up the argument, and in the end she won her case. The trout was tossed back into the stream, where he gave himself a shake or two, to get rid of the sand, and then swam away, apparently as well as ever. But girls don't always know what is good for trout. It would really have been kinder if the angler had hit him over the head with the butt of his fishing-rod, and then carried him home and put him in the frying-pan. In his struggles a part of the mucus had been rubbed from his body, and that always means trouble for a fish. A few days later our friend met him again, and noticed that a curious growth had appeared on his back and sides—a growth which bore a faint resemblance to the bloom on a peach, and which had taken the exact shape of the prints of the angler's fingers. The fungus had got him. He was dying, slowly but surely, and within a week he turned over on his back and drifted away down the stream. A black bear found him whirling round and round in a little eddy under the bank, and that was the end of him.

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And so our friend became the King of the Trout Stream.

You are not to suppose, however, that he paid very much attention to his subjects, or that he was particularly fond of having them about him and giving them orders. On the contrary, he had become very hermit-like in his habits. In his youth he had been fond of society, and he and his companions had often roamed the stream in little schools and bands, but of late years his tastes seemed to have undergone a change, and he kept to himself and lurked in the shady, sunless places till his skin grew darker and darker, and he more and more resembled the shadows in which he lived. His great delight was to watch from the depths of some cave-like hollow under an overhanging bank until a star-gazer, or a herring, or a minnow, or some other baby-eater came in sight, and then to rush out and swallow him head first. He took ample revenge on all those pesky little fishes for all that they had done and tried to do to him and his brethren in the early days. The truth is that every brook trout is an Ishmaelite. The hand of every creature is against him, from that of the dragon-fly larva to that of the man with the latest invention in the way of patent fishing-tackle. It is no wonder if he turns the tables on his enemies whenever he has a chance, or even if he sometimes goes so far, in his general ruthlessness, as to eat his own offspring.

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Yet, in spite of our friend's moroseness and solitary habits, there were certain times and seasons when he did come more or less in contact with his inferiors. In late spring and early summer he liked to sport for a while in the swift rapids—perhaps to stretch his muscles after the dull, quiet life of the winter-time, or possibly to free himself from certain little insects which sometimes fastened themselves to his body, and which, for lack of hands, it was rather difficult to get rid of. Here he often met some of his subjects, and later, when the hot weather came on, they all went to the spring-holes which formed their summer resorts. And at such times he never hesitated to take advantage of his superior size and strength. He always picked out the coolest and most comfortable places in the pools, and helped himself to the choicest morsels of food; and the others took what was left, without question. And when the summer was gone, and the water grew cold and invigorating, and once more he put on his wedding-garment and hurried away to the gravelly shallows, how different was his conduct from what it had been when he was a yearling! Then he was only a hanger-on; now he selected his nest and his mate to suit himself; and nobody ever dared to interfere. Whether he ever again chose that beautiful little fish from the hatchery, whom he had been so fond of when he was a three-year-old, is a question which I would rather not try to answer. Among all the vicissitudes, dangers, and rivalries of life in a trout stream, a permanent marriage seems to be almost an impossibility; and I fear that the affections of a fish are not remarkable for depth or constancy.

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The Trout had altered in many ways besides his relations to his fellows. The curving lines of his body were not quite as graceful as they had once been, and sometimes he wore a rather lean and dilapidated look, especially in the six months from November to May. His tail was not as handsomely forked as when he was young, but was nearly square across the end, and was beginning to be a little frayed at the corners. His lower jaw had grown out beyond the upper, and its extremity was turned up in a wicked-looking hook which was almost a disfigurement, but which he often found very useful in hustling a younger trout out of the way. Even his complexion had grown darker, as we have already seen. Altogether he was less prepossessing than of old, but of a much more formidable appearance, and the very look of him was enough to scare a minnow out of a year's growth.

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But, notwithstanding all changes, the two great interests of his every-day life continued to be just what they had always been—namely, to get enough to eat, and to keep out of the way of his enemies; for enemies he still had, and would have as long as he lived. The fly-fishermen, with their feather-weight rods and their scientific tackle, came every spring and summer; and only the wisdom born of experience kept him from falling into their hands. Several times he met with an otter, and had to run for his life. Once, a black bear, fishing for suckers, came near catching a brook trout. And perhaps the very closest of all his close calls came one day when some river-drivers exploded a stick of dynamite in the water to break up a log-jam. The trout was some distance up the stream at the time, but the concussion stunned him so that he floated at the surface, wrong side up, for several minutes before his senses gradually came back. That is a fish's way of fainting.

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His luck stayed by him, however, and none of these things ever did him any serious harm. His reign proved a long one, and as the years went by he came to exercise a more and more autocratic sway over the smaller fry. For in spite of his age he was still growing. A trout has an advantage over a land animal in this, that he is not obliged to use any of his food as fuel for keeping himself warm. He can't keep warm anyhow—not as long as he lives in the water—and so he doesn't try, but devotes everything he eats to enlarging his body and repairing wear and tear. If nothing happens to put a stop to the process, he seems to be able to keep it up almost indefinitely. But the size of the stream in which he lives appears to limit him to a certain extent. Probably the largest trout stream in the world is the Nepigon, and they say that seventeen-pounders were caught there in the early days. Our friend's native river was a rather small one. In the course of time, however, he attained a weight of very nearly three pounds, and I doubt if he would ever have been much larger. Perhaps it was fitting that his reign should end there.

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But it seems a great pity that it could not have ended in a more imposing manner. The last act of the drama was so inglorious that I am almost ashamed to tell it. He was the King of the Trout Stream; over and over he had run Fate's gauntlet, and escaped with his body unharmed and his wits sharper than ever; he knew the wiles of the fly-fishermen better than any other trout in the river; and yet, alas! he fell a victim to a little Indian boy with a piece of edging for a rod, coarse string for a line, and salt pork for bait.

I'm sure it wouldn't have happened if he had stayed at home; but one spring he took it into his head to go on an exploring expedition out into Lake Superior. I understand that his cousins in the streams of eastern Canada sometimes visit salt water in somewhat the same manner, and that they thereupon lose the bright trimmings of their coats and become a plain silver-gray. Superior did not affect our friend in that way, but something worse happened to him—he lost his common-sense. Perhaps his interest in his new surroundings was so great that he forgot the lessons of wisdom and experience which it had cost him so much to learn.

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In the course of his wanderings he came to where a school of perch were loafing in the shadow of a wharf; and just as he pushed his way in among them, that little white piece of fat pork sank slowly down through the green water. It was something new to the trout; he didn't quite know what to make of it. But the perch seemed to think it was good, and they would be sure to eat it if he didn't; and so, although the string was in plain sight and ought to have been a sufficient warning, he exercised his royal prerogative, shouldered those yellow-barred plebeians out of the way, and took the tid-bit for himself. It is too humiliating; let us draw a veil over that closing scene.

The King of the Trout Stream had gone the way of his fathers, and another reigned in his stead.

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## THE STRENUOUS LIFE OF A CANADA LYNX

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THE Canada lynx came down the runway that follows the high bank along the northern shore of the Glimmerglass, his keen, silvery eyes watching the woods for foe or prey, and his big feet padding softly on the dead leaves. He was old, was the Canada lynx, and he had grown very tall and gaunt, but this afternoon his years sat lightly on him. And in a moment more they had vanished entirely, and he was as young as ever he was in his life, for, as he stepped cautiously around a little spruce, he came upon another lynx, nearly as tall as he, and quite as handsome in her early winter coat. They both stopped short and stared. And no wonder. Each of them was decidedly worth looking at, especially if the one who did the looking happened to be another lynx of the opposite sex.

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He was some twenty-odd inches in height and about three and a half feet in length, and had a most villainous cast of countenance, a very wicked-looking set of teeth, and claws that were two inches long and so heavy and strong and sharp that you could sometimes hear them crunch into the bark when he climbed a tree. His long hind legs, heavy buttocks, thick fore-limbs, and big, clumsy-looking paws told of a magnificent set of muscles pulling and sliding and hauling under his cloak. She was nearly as large as he, and very much like him in general appearance. Both of them wore long, thick fur, of a lustrous steel-gray color, with paler shades underneath, and darker trimmings along their back-bones and up and down their legs. Their paws were big and broad and furry, their tails were stubby and short, and they wore heavy, grizzled whiskers on the sides of their jaws and mustachios under their noses, while from the tips of their ears rose tassels of stiff, dark hairs that had an uncommonly jaunty effect. Altogether they looked very fierce and imposing and war-like—perhaps rather more so than was justified by their actual prowess. So it was not surprising that they took to each other. Perhaps he wasn't really quite as heroic as he appeared, but that's not uncommon among other lovers besides those belonging to the lynx tribe, and what difference did it make, anyhow, as long as she didn't know it?

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That winter was a hard one. The cold was intense, the snow was very deep, and the storms came often. Spruce hens and partridges were scarce, even rabbits were hard to find, and sometimes it seemed to the two lynxes as if they were the only animals left in the woods. Except the deer. There were always plenty of deer down in the cedar swamp, and their tracks were as

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plain as a lumberman's logging road. But although the lynxes sometimes killed and ate young fawns in the summertime, they seldom tasted venison in the winter. It was well for them that they had each other, for when one failed in the hunt the other sometimes succeeded, yet I cannot help thinking that the old male, especially, might perhaps have been of more use to his mate if he had not confined his hunting so entirely to the smaller animals. More than once he sat on a branch of a tree and watched a buck or doe go by, and his claws twitched and his eyes blazed, and he fairly trembled with eagerness and excitement as he saw the big gray creature pass, all unconscious, beneath his perch. Splendidly armed as he was, it would seem as though he must have succeeded if only he had jumped and risked a tussle. But he never tried it. I suppose he was afraid. And yet—such were the contradictions of his nature—one dark night he trotted half a mile after a shanty-boy who was going home with a haunch of venison over his shoulder, and was just gathering himself for a spring, intending to leap on him from behind, when another man appeared. Two against one was not fair, he thought, and he gave it up and beat a retreat without either of them seeing him. They found his footprints the next morning in their snow-shoe tracks, and wondered how far behind them he had been. I don't know whether it was a vein of real courage that nerved him up to doing such a foolhardy thing as to follow a man with the intention of attacking him, or whether it was simply a case of recklessness. The probability is, however, that he was hungrier than usual, and that the smell of the warm blood made him forget everything else. Anyhow, he had a pretty close call, for the shanty-boy had a revolver in his pocket.

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Aside from any question of heroism, I am afraid that he was not really as wise and discriminating as he looked. I have an idea that when Nature manufactured him she thought he did not need as much wisdom or as many wits as some of the other people of the woods, inasmuch as he was larger and stronger and better armed than most of them. Except possibly the bear, who was altogether too easy-going to molest him, there was not one of the animals that could thrash him, and they all knew it and let him alone. You can often manage very well without brains if only you have the necessary teeth and muscle and claws; and the old lynx had them, without a doubt. But I fear that Nature, in adapting a wild animal to his environment, now and then forgets to allow for the human element in the problem. Brains are a good thing to have, after all. Even to a lynx the time is pretty sure to come, sooner or later, when he needs them in his business. Your fellow-citizens of the woods may treat you with all due respect, but the trapper won't, and he'll get you if you don't watch out.

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One day he found some more snow-shoe tracks, just like those that the shanty-boy had left, and instead of running away, as he ought to have done, and as most of the animals would have had sense enough to do, he followed them up to see where they led. He wasn't particularly hungry that day, and there was absolutely no excuse for what he did. It certainly wasn't bravery that inspired him, for he had not the least idea of attacking anyone. It was simply a case of foolish curiosity. He followed the trail a long way, not walking directly in it, but keeping just a little to one side, wallowing heavily as he went, for a foot and a half of light, fluffy snow had fallen the day before, and the walking was very bad. Presently he caught sight of a little piece of scarlet cloth fastened to a stick that stood upright in a drift. It ought to have been another warning to him, but it only roused his curiosity to a still higher pitch, as the trapper knew it would. He sat down in the snow and considered. The thing didn't really look as if it were good to eat, and yet it might be. The only way to find out would be to go up to it and taste it. But, eatable or not, such a bright bit of color was certainly very attractive to the eye. You would think so yourself if you hadn't seen anything scarlet since last summer's wild-flowers faded. Finally, he got up and walked slowly toward it, and the first thing he knew a steel trap had him by the right foreleg.

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The way of the foolish is sometimes as hard as that of the transgressor. For a few minutes he was the very maddest cat in all the Great Tahquamenon Swamp, and he yelled and howled and caterwauled at the top of his voice, and jumped and tore around as if he was crazy. But, of course, that sort of thing did him no good, and after a while he quieted down and took things a little more calmly. Instead of being made fast to a tree, the trap was bound by a short chain to a heavy wooden clog, and he found that by pulling with all his might he could drag it at a snail's pace through the snow. So off he went on three legs, hauling the trap and clog by the fourth, with the blood oozing out around the steel jaws and leaving a line of bright crimson stains behind him. The strain on his foot hurt him cruelly, but a great fear was in his heart, and he knew that he must go away or die. So he pushed on, hour after hour, stopping now and then to rest for a few minutes in a thicket of cedar or hemlock, but soon gathering his strength for another effort. How he growled and snarled with rage and pain, and how his great eyes flamed as he looked ahead to see what was before him, or back along his trail to know if the trapper was coming!

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It was a terrible journey that he made that night, and the hours dragged by slow as his pace and heavy as his clog. He was heading toward the hollow tree by the Glimmerglass that he and his mate called home, but he had not made more than half the distance, and his strength was nearly gone. Half-way between midnight and dawn he reached the edge of a steep and narrow gully that lay straight across his path. The moon had risen some time before, and the white slopes gleamed and shone in the frosty light, all the whiter by contrast with the few bushes and trees that were scattered up and down the little valley. The lynx stood on the brink and studied the proposition before him. It would be hard, hard work to climb the farther side, dragging that heavy clog, but at least it ought to be easy going down. He scrambled over the edge, hauling the clog after him till it began to roll of its own accord. The chain slackened, and he leaped forward. It was good to be able to jump again. But he jumped too far, or tried to, and the chain tightened with a jerk that brought him down head-first in the snow. Before he could recover himself the clog shot past him, and the chain jerked again and sent him heels over head. And then cat, trap,

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and clog all went rolling over and over down the slope, and landed in a heap at the bottom. All the breath and the spirit were knocked out of him, and for a long time he could do nothing but lie still in the snow, trembling with weakness and pain, and moaning miserably. It must have been half an hour before he could pull himself together again, and then, just as he was about to begin the climb up the far side of the gully, he suddenly discovered that he was no longer alone. Off to the left, among some thick bushes, he saw the lurking form of a timber-wolf. He looked to the right, and there was another. Behind him was a third, and he thought he saw several others still farther away, slinking from bush to bush, and gradually drawing nearer. Ordinarily they would hardly have dreamed of tackling him, and, if they had mustered up sufficient courage to attempt to overpower him by mere force of numbers, he would simply have climbed a tree and laughed at them. But now it was different.

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The lynx cowered down in the snow and seemed to shrink to half his normal size; and then, as all the horror and the hopelessness of it came over him, he lifted up his voice in such a cry of abject fear, such a wail of utter agony and despair, as even the Great Tahquamenon Swamp had very seldom heard. I suppose that he had killed and eaten hundreds of smaller animals in his time, but I doubt if any of his victims ever suffered as he did. Most of them were taken unawares, and were killed and eaten almost before they knew what was coming; but he had to lie still and see his enemies slowly closing in upon him, knowing all the time that he could not fight to any advantage, and that to fly was utterly impossible. But when the last moment arrived he must have braced up and given a good account of himself. At least that was what the trapper decided when he came a few hours later to look for his trap. The lynx was gone—not even a broken bone of him was left—but there in the trodden and blood-stained snow was the record of an awful struggle. There must have been something heroic about him, after all.

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For the rest of the winter his widow had to hunt alone. This was not such a great hardship in itself, for they had frequently gone out separately on their marauding expeditions—more often, perhaps, than they had gone together. But now there was never anyone to curl up beside her in the hollow tree and help her keep warm, or to share his kill with her when her own was unsuccessful. And when the spring should come and bring her a family of kittens, she would have to take on her own shoulders the whole burden of parental responsibility. Or, rather, the burden was already there, for if she did not find enough meat to keep herself in good health the babies would be weak and wizened and unpromising, with small chance of growing up to be a credit to her or a satisfaction to themselves. So she hunted night and day, and, on the whole, with very good results. To tell the truth, I think she was rather more skilful in the chase than her mate had been, and this seems to be a not uncommon state of things in cat families. Perhaps feminine fineness of instinct and lightness of tread are better adapted to the still-hunt than the greater clumsiness and awkwardness of masculinity. Or, is there something deeper than that? Has something whispered to these savage mothers that on their success depends more than their own lives, and that it is their sacred duty to kill, kill, kill? However that may be, she proved herself a mighty huntress before the Lord. Her eye was keen, and her foot was sure, and she made terrible havoc among the rabbits and partridges.

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And yet there were times when even she was hungry and tired and disheartened. Once, on a clear, keen, cold winter night when all the great white world seemed frozen to death, she serenaded a land-looker who had made his bed in a deserted lumber-camp and was trying to sleep. She had eaten almost nothing for several days, and she knew that her strength was ebbing. That very evening she had fallen short in a flying leap at a rabbit, and had seen him dive head-first into his burrow, safe by the merest fraction of an inch. She had fairly screeched with rage and disappointment, and as the hours went by and she found no other game, she grew so blue and discouraged that she really couldn't contain herself any longer. Perhaps it did her good to have a cry. For two hours the land-looker lay in his bunk and listened to a wailing that made his heart fairly sink within him. Now it was a piercing scream, now it was a sob, and now it died away in a low moan, only to rise again, wilder and more agonized than ever. He knew without a doubt that it was only some kind of a cat—knew it just as well as he knew that his compass needle pointed north. Yet there had been times in his land-looking experience when he had been ready to swear that the needle was pointing south-southeast; and to-night, in spite of his certain knowledge that the voice he heard was that of a lynx or a wild-cat or cougar, he couldn't help being almost dead sure that it came from a woman in distress, there was in it such a note of human anguish and despair. Twice he got half-way out of bed to go to her assistance, and then lay down again and called himself a fool. At last he could stand it no longer, and taking a burning brand from the broken stove that stood in the centre of the room, he went to the door and looked out. The great arc-light of the moon had checkered the snow-crust with inky shadows, and patches of dazzling white. The cold air struck him like needles, and he said to himself that it was no wonder that either a cat or a woman should cry if she had to stay out in the snow on such a night. The moaning and wailing ceased as he opened the door, but now two round spots of flame shone out of a black shadow and stared at him unwinkingly. The lynx's pupils were wide open, and the golden-yellow tapeta in the backs of her eyeballs were glowing like incandescent lamps. It was no woman. No human eyes could ever shine like that. The land-looker threw the brand with all his might; an ugly snarl came from the shadow, and he saw a big gray animal go tearing away across the hard, smooth crust in a curious kind of gallop, taking three or four yards at a bound, coming down on all four feet at once, and spring forward again as if she was made of rubber. He shut the door and went back to bed.

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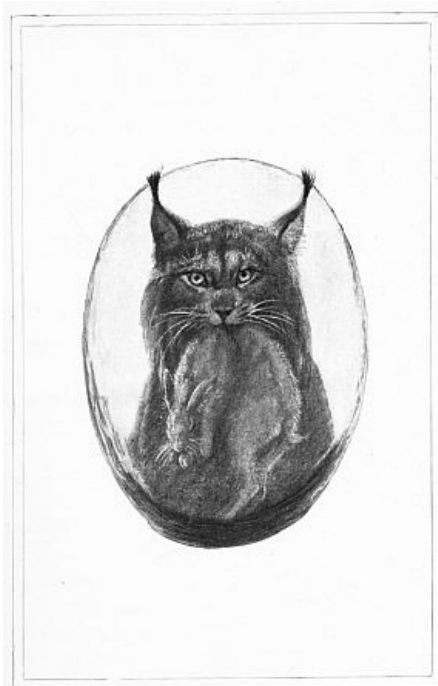
That was the end of the concert, and, as it turned out, it was also the end of the lynx's troubles, at least for the time being. Half an hour later, as she was loping along in the moonlight, she

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thought she heard a faint sound from beneath her feet. She stood still to listen, and the next minute she was sure. During the last heavy snow-storm three partridges had dived into a drift for shelter from the wind and the cold, and such a thick, hard crust had formed over their heads that they had not been able to get out again. She resurrected them in short order and reinterred them after a fashion of her own, and then she went home to her hollow tree and slept the sleep of those who have done what Nature tells them to, and whose consciences are clear and whose stomachs full.

That was her nearest approach to starvation. She never was quite so hungry again, and in the early spring she had a great piece of luck. Not very far from her hollow tree she met a buck that had been mortally wounded by a hunter. He had had strength enough to run away, and to throw his pursuer off his track, but there was very little fight left in him. In such a case as this she was quite ready to attack, and it did not take her long to finish him. Probably it was a merciful release, for he had suffered greatly in the last few days. Fortunately no wolves or other large animals found him, and he gave her meat till after the kittens had come and she had begun to grow well and strong again. [99]

The kittens were a great success—two of the finest she had ever had, and she had had many. But at first, of course, they were rather insignificant-looking—just two little balls of reddish-brown fur that turned over once in a while and mewed for their dinner. Some of the scientific men say that a new-born baby has no mind, but only a blank something that appears to be capable of receiving and retaining impressions, and that may in certain cases have tendencies. There is reason for thinking that the baby lynxes had tendencies. But imagine, if you can, what their first impressions were like. And remember that they were blind, and that if their ears heard sounds they certainly did not comprehend them. Sometimes they were cold and hungry and lonesome, and that was an impression of the wrong sort. They did not know what the trouble was, but something was the matter, that was certain, and they cried about it, like other babies. Then would come a great, warm, comforting presence, and all would be right again; and that was a very pleasant impression, indeed. I don't suppose they knew exactly what had been done to them. Probably they were not definitely aware that their empty stomachs had been filled, or that their shrinking, shivering little bodies were snuggled down in somebody's thick fur coat, or that somebody's warm red tongue was licking and stroking and caressing them. Much less could they have known how that big, strong, comforting somebody came to be there, or how many harmless and guiltless little lives had been snuffed out to give her life and to enable her to give it to them. But they knew that all was well with them, and that everything was just as it should be—and they took another nap. [100]



***"The hole was suddenly darkened, and a round, hairy face looked in."***

By and by they began to look about for impressions, and were no longer content with lying still and taking only what came to them. They seemed to acquire a mental appetite for impressions that was almost as ravenous as their stomachs' appetite for milk, and their weak little legs were forced to lift their squat little bodies and carry them on exploring expeditions around the inside of the hollow tree, where they bumped their heads against the walls, and stumbled and fell down over the inequalities of the floor. They got a good many impressions during these excursions, and some of them were mental and some were physical. And sometimes they explored their mother, and went scrambling and sprawling all over her, probably getting about as well acquainted with her as it is possible to be with a person whom one has never seen. For their eyes were still closed, and they must have known her only as a big, kind, loving, furry thing, that fed them, and warmed them, and licked them, and made them feel good, and yet was almost as vague and indefinite as something in a dream. But the hour came at last when for the first time they saw the light of day shining in through the hole in the side of their tree. And while they were looking at it—and probably blinking at it—a footstep sounded outside, the hole was suddenly darkened, and a round, hairy face looked in—a face with big, unwinking eyes, pointed, tufted ears, and a thick whisker brushed back from under its chin. Do you suppose they recognized their mother? I don't believe they did. But when she jumped in beside them, then they knew her, and the [101]

impression they gained that day was one of the most wonderful of all.

In looks, these kittens of the woods were not so very different from those of the backyard, except that they were bigger and perhaps a little clumsier, and that their paws were very large, and their tails very short and stubby. They grew stronger as the days went on, and their legs did not wobble quite so much when they went travelling around the inside of the tree. And they learned to use their ears as well as their eyes. They knew what their mother's step meant at the entrance, and they liked to hear her purr. [102]

Other sounds there were which they did not understand so well, and to most of which they gave little heed—the scream of the rabbit when the big gray cat leaps on him from behind a bush;

the scolding of the red squirrel, disturbed and angry at the sight, and fearful that he may be the next victim; the bark of the fox; the rasping of the porcupine's teeth; and oftenest of all the pleasant rustling and whispering of the trees, for by this time the sun and the south wind had come back and done their work, and the voice of the leaves was heard in the land. All these noises of the woods, and many others besides, came to them from outside the walls of the tree, from a vast, mysterious region of which as yet they knew nothing except that their mother often went there. She was beginning to think that they were big enough and old enough to learn something more about it, and so one day she led them out of the hole, and they saw the sunshine, and the blue of the sky, and the green of the trees, and the whiteness of the sailing clouds, and the beauty of the Glimmerglass. But I don't think they appreciated the wonder and the glory of it all, or paid as much attention to it as they ought. They were too much interested in making their legs work properly, for their knees were still rather weak, and were apt to give out all of a sudden, and to let a fellow sit down when he didn't want to. And the dry leaves and little sticks kept sliding around under one's feet so that one never knew what was going to happen next. It was very different from the hollow tree, and they were glad when their mother picked them up one at a time by the back of the neck, carried them home, gave them their supper, and told them to lie still and take a nap while she went after another rabbit.

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But they had really done very well, considering that it was their first day out. One of them in particular was very smart and precocious, and she had taken much pleasure in watching the independent way in which he went staggering about, looking for impressions. And the other was not far behind him. Her long hours of still-hunting had brought their rich reward, and her babies were all that she could ask.

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She was in the habit of occasionally bringing something home for them to play with—a wood-mouse, perhaps, or a squirrel, or a partridge, or even a larger animal; and they played with it with a vengeance, shaking and worrying it, and spitting and growling and snarling over it in the most approved fashion. And you should have seen them the first time they saw their mother catch a rabbit. They did not try to help her, for she had told them not to, but they watched her as if it was a matter of life and death—as, indeed, it was, but not to them. The rabbit was nibbling some tender young sprouts. The old lynx crept up behind him very quietly and stealthily, and the kittens' eyes stuck out farther and farther as they saw her gradually work up within leaping distance. They nearly jumped out of their skins with excitement when at last she gave a bound and landed with both forepaws on the middle of his back. And when the rabbit screamed out in his fright and pain, they could not contain themselves any longer, but rushed in and helped finish him. They seemed to understand the game as perfectly as if they had been practising it for years. I suppose that was where their tendencies came in.

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A few days later they had another experience—or at least one of them did. Their mother happened to see two little wood-mice run under a small, half-decayed log, and she put her forefeet against it and rolled it half-way over; and then, while she held it there, the larger Kitten—the one who had made the better record the day they first left the den—thrust his paw under and grabbed one of them. The other mouse got away, but I don't think the Kitten cared very much. He had made his first kill, and that was glory enough for one day.

From wood-mice the kittens progressed to chipmunks, and from them to larger game. With use and exercise their soft baby muscles grew hard and strong, and it was not long before they were able to follow the old lynx almost anywhere, to the tops of the tallest trees, over the roughest ground, and through the densest thickets. And they learned other things besides how to walk and climb and hunt. Their mother was a good teacher and a rather rigid disciplinarian, and very early in life they were taught that they must obey promptly and without question, and that on certain occasions it was absolutely necessary to keep perfectly still and not make the slightest sound. For instance, there was the time when the whole family lay sprawled out on a limb of a tree, fifteen or twenty feet up from the ground, and watched the land-looker go by with his half-axe over his shoulder, his compass in his hand, and a note-book sticking out of his pocket. They were so motionless, and the grayish color of their fur matched so well with the bark of the tree, that he never saw them, although for a moment they were right over his head, and could have leaped to his shoulders as easily as not.

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In short, the kittens were learning to take care of themselves, and it was well that they were, for one day their mother was taken from them in a strange, sad way, and there was nothing they could do but cry, and try to follow her, and at last see her pass out of sight, still looking back and calling to them pitifully. It was the river that carried her off, and it was a floating saw-log that she rode upon, an unwilling passenger. The trouble began with a steel trap, just as it did in their father's case. Traps are not nearly as much to be feared in summer or early fall as in winter, for the simple reason that one's fur is not as valuable in warm weather as in cold. The lynx's, for instance, was considerably shorter and thinner than it had been in the preceding December, when she and her mate first met, and it had taken on a reddish tinge, as if the steel had begun to rust a trifle. But the killing machines are to be found occasionally at all seasons of the year, and somebody had set this one down by the edge of the water—not the Glimmerglass, but a branch of the Tahquamenon River—and had chained it to a log that had been hung up in last spring's drive. When she first felt its grip on her leg she yelled and tore around just as her mate had done, while the kittens looked on in wonder and amazement. They had seen their mother in many moods, but never in one like this. But by and by she grew weary, and a little later it began to rain. She was soon soaking wet, and as the hours dragged on every ounce of courage and gumption seemed to ooze out of her. If the trapper had come then he would have found her very meek and limp.

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Possibly she would have been ready to fight him for her children's sakes, but nothing else could have nerved her to it. But she was not put to any such test; the trapper did not come.

It rained very hard, and it rained very long. In fact it had been raining most of the time for two or three days before the lynx found the trap, and in a few more hours the Great Tahquamenon Swamp was as full of water as a soaked sponge, and the river was rising rapidly. The lynx was soon lying in a puddle, and to get out of it she climbed upon the log and stretched herself out on the wet, brown bark. Still the river rose, and by and by the log began to stir in its bed, as if it were thinking of renewing its voyage. At last, when she had been there nearly twenty-four hours, and was faint with hunger, as well as cold and wet, it quietly swung out into the current and drifted away down the stream. She was an excellent swimmer, and she promptly jumped overboard and tried to reach the shore, but of course the chain put a stop to that. Weakened by fasting, and borne down by the weight of the trap, she came very near drowning before she could scramble up again over the end of the log and seat herself amidships.

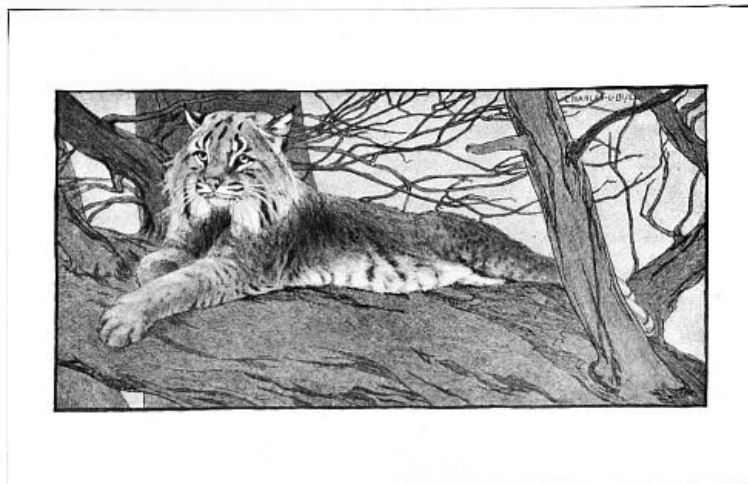
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The kittens were foraging among the bushes, but she called to them in a tone which told them plainly enough that some new trouble had befallen her, and they hurried down to the water's edge, and stood there, mewling piteously. She implored them to follow her, and after much persuasion the bigger and bolder of the two plunged bravely in. But he didn't get very far. It was very cold and very wet, and he wasn't used to swimming. Besides, the water got into his nose and made him sneeze, which distracted his attention so that for a moment he forgot all about his mother, and just turned around and hustled back to the shore as fast as he could go. After that he, contented himself with following along the bank and keeping as near her as he could. Once the log drifted in so close that she thought she could jump ashore, and the Kitten watched eagerly as she gathered herself for the spring. But the chain was too short, and she fell into the water. Her forepaw just grazed the grass-tuft where the Kitten was standing, and for an instant she felt the blades slipping between her toes; but the next moment she was swimming for the log again, and the Kitten was mewling his sympathy at the top of his voice.

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They journeyed on for nearly an hour longer, she on her prison-ship, and he on land; and then, before either of them knew just what had happened, the little tributary had emptied itself into the main stream of the Tahquamenon, and they suddenly realized that they were much farther apart than they had been at any time before. This new river was several times as broad as the one on which the voyage had begun, and the wind was steadily carrying her away from the shore, while the current bore her resistlessly on in its long, slow voyage to Lake Superior. She was still calling to him, but her voice was growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and so, at last, she passed out of his sight and hearing forever.

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*"He was a very presentable young lynx."*

And then, for the first time, he missed his brother. The other kitten had always been a trifle the slower of the two, and in some way he had dropped behind. Our friend was alone in the world.

But the same river that had carried his mother away brought him a little comfort in his desolation, for down by the water's edge, cast up on the sand by a circling eddy, he found a dead sucker. He ate it with relish, and felt better in spite of himself. It made a very large meal for a lynx of his size, and by the time he had finished it he began to be drowsy, so he picked out the driest spot he could find, under the thick branches of a large hemlock, and curled himself up on the brown needles and went to sleep.

The next day he had to hustle for a living, and the next it was the same, and the next, and the next. As the weeks and the months went by there was every indication that life would be little else than one long hustle—or perhaps a short one—and in spite of all he could do there were times when he was very near the end of the chapter. But his mother's lessons stood him in good stead, and he was exceedingly well armed for the chase. It would have been hard to find in all the woods any teeth better adapted than his to the work of pulling a fellow-creature to pieces. In front, on both the upper and lower jaws, were the chisel-shaped incisors. Flanking them were the canines, very long and slender, and very sharply pointed, thrusting themselves into the meat like the tines of a carving-fork, and tearing it away in great shreds. And back of the canines were other teeth that were still larger, but shorter and broader, and shaped more like notched knife-

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blades. Those of the lower jaw worked inside those of the upper, like shears, and they were very handy for cutting the large chunks into pieces small enough to go down his throat. By the time he got through with a partridge there was not much left of it but a puddle of brown feathers. His claws, too, were very long and white, and very wickedly curved; and before starting out on a hunt he would often get up on his hind legs and sharpen those of his forefeet on a tree-trunk, just as your house-cat sharpens hers on the leg of the kitchen-table. When he wasn't using them he kept them hidden between his toes, so that they would not be constantly catching and breaking on roots and things; but all he had to do when he wanted them was to pull certain muscles, and out they came, ready to scratch and tear to his heart's content. They were not by any means full grown as yet, but they bade fair to equal his father's some day. He was warmly and comfortably clothed, of course, and along his sides and flanks the hair hung especially thick and long, to protect his body when he was obliged to wade through light, fluffy snow. When there was a crust he didn't need it, for his paws were so big and broad and hairy that at such times they bore him up almost as well as if they had been two pairs of snow-shoes.

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But, well armed, well clad, and well shod though he was, it was fortunate for the Kitten that his first winter was a mild one—mild, that is, for the Glimmerglass country. Otherwise things might have gone very hard with him, and they were none too easy as it was. There were days when he was even hungrier than his mother had been the night she serenaded the land-looker, and it was on one of these occasions that he found a porcupine in a tree and tried to make a meal of him. That was a memorable experience. The porcky was sitting in a crotch, doing nothing in particular, and when the Kitten approached he simply put his nose down and his quills up. The Kitten spat at him contemptuously, but without any apparent effect. Then he put out a big forepaw and tapped him lightly on the forehead. The porcupine flipped his tail, and the Kitten jumped back, and spat and hissed harder than ever. He didn't quite know what to make of this singular-looking creature, but he was young and rash, besides being awfully, awfully hungry, and in another minute he pitched in.

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The next thing they knew, the porcupine had dropped to the ground, where he lit in a snow-bank, and presently picked himself up and waddled off to another tree, while the Kitten—well, the Kitten just sat in the crotch and cried as hard as ever he could cry. There were quills in his nose, and quills in his side, and quills in both his forepaws; and every motion was agony. He himself never knew exactly how he got rid of them all, so of course I can't tell you. A few of those that were caught only by their very tips may possibly have dropped out, but it is probable that most of them broke off and left their points to work deeper and deeper into the flesh until the skin finally closed over them and they disappeared. I have no doubt that pieces of those quills are still wandering about in various parts of his anatomy, like the quart of lead that "Little Bobs" carries around with him, according to Mr. Kipling. It was weeks before he ceased to feel the pain of them.

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For several days after this mishap it was impossible for him to hunt, and he would certainly have starved to death if it had not been for a cougar who providentially came to the Glimmerglass on a short visit. The Kitten found his tracks in the snow the very next day, and cautiously followed them up, limping as he went, to see what the big fellow had been doing. For a mile or more the large, round, shapeless footprints—very much like his own, but on a bigger scale—were spaced so regularly that it was evident the cougar had been simply walking along at a very leisurely gait, with nothing to disturb his frame of mind. But after a while the record showed a remarkable change. The footprints were only a few inches apart, and his cougarship had carried himself so low that his body had dragged in the snow and left a deep furrow behind. The Kitten knew what that meant. He had been there himself, though not after the same kind of prey. And then the trail stopped entirely, and for a space the snow lay fresh and virgin and untrodden. But twenty feet away was the spot where the cougar had come down on all-fours, only to leap forward again like a ricocheting cannon-ball; and twenty-five feet farther lay the greater part of the carcass of a deer.

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The Kitten stuffed himself as full as he could hold, and then climbed a tree and watched. About midnight the cougar appeared, and after he had eaten his fill and gone away again the Kitten slipped down and ate some more. He was making up for lost time. For four successive nights the cougar came and feasted on venison, but after that the Kitten never saw him or heard of him again. There was still a goodly quantity of meat left, and it seems somewhat curious that he did not return for it, but he was a stranger in those parts, and it is probable that he went back to his old haunts, up toward Whitefish Point, perhaps, or the Grand Sable. Anyhow, it was very nice for the Kitten, for that deer kept him in provisions until he was able to take up hunting once more.

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He had one rather exciting experience during this period. One day, just as he was finishing a very enjoyable meal of venison tenderloin, he heard the tramp of snow-shoes on the crust, and in a moment more that same land-looker came pacing down a section line and halted squarely in front of him. Now there are trappers who say that a Canada lynx is a fool and a coward, that he will run from a small dog, and that he makes his living entirely by preying on animals that are weaker and more poorly armed than he. I admit, of course, that the majority of lynxes do not go ramming around the woods with chips on their shoulders, looking for hunters armed with bowie-knives and repeating rifles. You wouldn't, either—not as long as there were rabbits to be had for the stalking. But on this occasion the Kitten's conduct certainly savored of recklessness, if not of real bravery. Being entirely unacquainted with the land-looking profession, he naturally supposed that the man had come for his deer. And he didn't propose to let him have it. He considered that that venison belonged to him, and he took his stand on the carcass, laid his ears back, showed his

white teeth, made his eyes blaze, and spit and growled and snarled defiantly. The land-looker didn't quite know what to do. His section line lay straight across the deer's body, and he did not want to leave it for fear of confusing his reckoning, but the Kitten, though only half grown, looked uncommonly business-like. He had no gun, nor even a revolver, for he was hunting for pine, not fresh meat. He had left his half-axe in camp, and when he felt in his pocket for his jack-knife it was not there. Then he looked about for a club. He had been told that lynxes always had very thin skulls, and that a light blow on the back of the head was enough to kill the biggest and fiercest of them, let alone a kitten. But he couldn't even find a stick that would answer his purpose.

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"Well," he said, when they had stared at each other a minute or two longer without coming to any understanding, "I suppose if you won't turn out for me, I'll have to turn out for you"; and he made a careful circuit at a respectful distance, picked up his line again, and went on his way.

The winter dragged on very slowly, with many ups and downs, but it was gone at last. Summer was easier, if only because he was not obliged to use up any of his vitality in keeping warm. Sometimes, indeed, he was really too warm for comfort, so he presently changed his coat and put on a thinner one. People like to talk about the coolness of the deep woods, but the truth is that there isn't any place much hotter and stuffier than a dense growth of timber, where the wind never comes, and where the air is heavy and still. And then there are the windfalls and the old burnings, where the sun beats fiercely down among the fallen trees till the blackened soil is hot as a city pavement, and where dead trunks and half-burned logs lie thrown together in the wildest confusion—places which are almost impassable for men, and which even the land-lookers avoid whenever they can, but which a cat will thread as readily as the locomotive follows the rails. These were the localities which the Kitten was most fond of frequenting, and here his youth slipped rapidly away. He was fast becoming an adult lynx.

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The summer passed, and half the autumn; the first snow came and went, and again the Kitten put on his winter coat of gray, with the white underneath, and the dark trimmings up and down his legs and along his back. What with his mustachios, and his whiskers, and the tassels on his ears, he was a very presentable young lynx. It would be many years before he could hope to be as large and powerful as his father, but, nevertheless, he was making remarkably good progress. And the time was at hand when he would need both his good looks and his muscle.

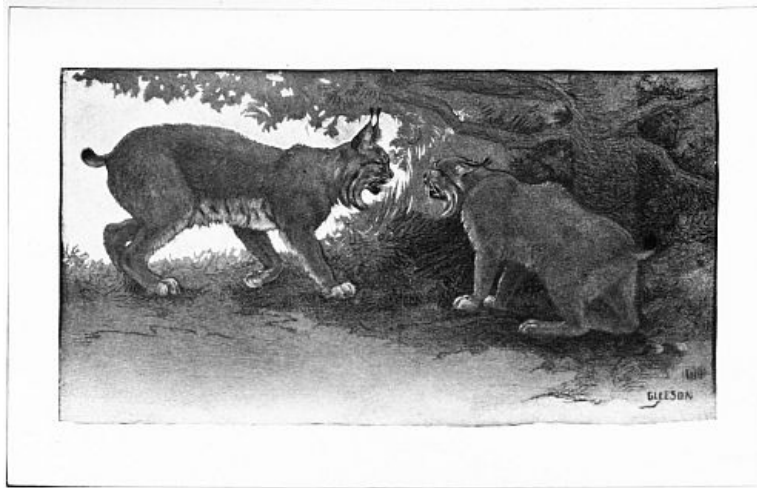
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Since his mother had left him he had seen only two or three lynxes, and those were all much older and larger than he, and not well suited to be his companions. But history repeats itself. One Indian-summer afternoon he was tramping along the northern bank of the Glimmerglass, just as his father had done two years before, and as he rounded a bend in the path he came face to face with someone who was enough like him to have been his twin sister. And they did as his parents had done, stood still for a minute or two and looked at each other as if they had just found out what they were made for. After all, life is something more than hustling for a living, even in the woods.

But just then something else happened, and another ruling passion came into play—the old instinct of the chase, which neither of them could very long forget. A faint "Quack, quack, quack," came up from the lake, and they crept to the edge of the bank, side by side, and looked down. Above them the trees stood dreamily motionless in the mellow sunshine. Below was a steep slope of ten or fifteen feet; beyond it a tiny strip of sandy beach, and then the quiet water. A squadron of ducks, on their way from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf, had taken stop-over checks for the Glimmerglass; and now they came loitering along through the dead bulrushes, murmuring gently, in soft, mild voices, of delicious minnows and snails, and pausing a moment now and then to put their heads under and dabble in the mud for some particularly choice morsel. The lynxes crouched and waited, while their stubby tails twitched nervously, their long, narrow pupils grew still narrower, and their paws fumbled about among the dry pine-needles, feeling for the very best footing for the flying leap. The ducks came on, still prattling pleasantly over their own private affairs. Closer and closer they swam, without a thought of death waiting for them at the top of the bank, and suddenly four splendid sets of muscles jerked like bowstrings, four long hind-legs straightened with a mighty thrust and shove, and two big gray creatures shot out from the brink and came sailing down through the air with their heads up, their tails on end, their eyes blazing, and their forepaws stretched out to grab the nearest unhappy duck. The flock broke up with frightened cries and a wonderful whirring of wings, and in a moment more they were far away and going like the very wind.

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*"They both stood still and looked at each other."*

But two of its members stayed behind, and presently the lynxes waded out on the beach and sat down to eat their supper together. They talked as much over that meal as the ducks had over theirs, but the lynx language is very different from that of the water-fowl. Instead of soft, gentle murmurings there were low growls and snarls as the long, white claws and teeth tore the warm red flesh from the bones. It could hardly have been a pleasant conversation to anyone but themselves, but I suppose they enjoyed it as much as the choicest repartee. In truth they had good reason to be satisfied and contented with themselves and each other, and with what they had just done, for not every flying leap is so successful, and not every duck is as plump and juicy as the two that they were discussing. So they talked on in angry, threatening tones, that sounded like quarrelling, but that really meant only a fierce, savage kind of pleasure; and when the meal was ended, and the very last shred of duck-flesh had disappeared, they washed their faces, and purred, and lay still a while to visit and get acquainted.

There were many other meetings during the weeks that followed—some under as pleasant circumstances as the first, and some not. Perhaps the best were those of the clear, sharp days of early winter, when the sky was blue, and the sunshine was bright, and a thin carpet of fine, dry snow covered the floor of the forest. It was cold, of course; but they were young and strong and healthy, and their fur was thick and warm, like the garments of a Canadian girl. The keen air set the live blood leaping and dancing, and they frisked and frolicked, and romped and played, and rolled each other over and over in the snow, and were as wildly and deliciously happy as it is ever given to two animals to be. [122]

It was too good to last long without some kind of an interruption, and one glorious winter evening, when the full moon was flooding the woods with the white light that brings a touch of madness, a third young lynx came upon the scene. And then there was trouble. The Kitten's new friend sat back in the bushes and looked on, while he and his rival squatted face to face in the snow and sassed each other to the utmost limits of the lynx vocabulary, their voices rising and falling in a hideous duet, and their eyes gleaming and glowing with a pale, yellow-green fire. Presently there was a rush, and the fur began to fly. The snow flew, too; and the woods rang and rang again with yelling and caterwauling, and spitting and swearing, and all manner of abuse. The rabbits heard it, and trembled; and the partridges, down in the cedar swamp, glanced furtively over their shoulders and were glad it was no nearer. They bit and scratched and clawed like two little devils, and the onlooker in the bushes must have felt a thrill of pride over the strenuous way in which they strove for her favors. First one was on top, and then the other. Now our Kitten had his rival by the ears, and now by the tail. One minute heads, legs, and bodies were all mixed up in such a snarl that it seemed as if they could never be untangled, and the next they backed off just long enough to catch their breath, and then flew at each other's throats more savagely than ever. It was really more difficult than you would suppose for either of them to get a good hold of the other, partly because their fur was so thick, and partly because Nature had purposely made their skins very loose, with an eye to just such performances as this. But they managed to do a good deal of damage, nevertheless; and in the end the pretender was thoroughly whipped, and fled away in disgrace down the long, snowy aisles of the forest, howling as he went, while the Kitten turned slowly and painfully to the one who was at the bottom of all this unpleasantness. His ears were slit; one eye was shut, and the lid of the other hung very low; he limped badly with his right hind-leg, and many were the wounds and scratches along his breast and sides. But he didn't care. He had won his spurs. [123]

The story of the Kitten is told, for he was a kitten no longer. [124]

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## POINTERS FROM A PORCUPINE QUILL

HE wasn't handsome—the original owner of this quill—and I can't say that he was very smart. He was only a slow-witted, homely old porky who once lived by the Glimmerglass. But in spite of [125] [127]

his slow wits and his homeliness a great many things happened to him in the course of his life.

He was born in a hollow hemlock log, on a wild April morning, when the north wind was whipping the lake with snow, and when winter seemed to have come back for a season. The Glimmerglass was neither glimmering nor glassy that morning, but he and his mother were snug and warm in their wooden nest, and they cared little for the storm that was raging outside.

It has been said by some that porcupines lay eggs, the hard, smooth shells of which are furnished by a kind and thoughtful Providence for the protection of the mothers from their prickly offspring until the latter have fairly begun their independent existence. Other people say that two babies invariably arrive at once, and that one of them is always dead before it is born. But when my Porcupine discovered America he had neither a shell on his back nor a dead twin brother by his side. Neither was he prickly. He was covered all over with soft, furry, dark-brown hair. If you had searched carefully along the middle of his back you might possibly have found the points of the first quills, just peeping through the skin; but as yet the thick fur hid them from sight and touch unless you knew just where and how to look for them.

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He was a very large baby, larger even than a new-born bear cub, and no doubt his mother felt a justifiable pride in his size and his general peartness. She was certainly very careful of him and very anxious for his safety, for she kept him out of sight, and no one ever saw him during those first days and weeks of his babyhood. She did not propose to have any lynxes or wild-cats or other ill-disposed neighbors fondling him until his quills were grown. After that they might give him as many love-pats as they pleased.

He grew rapidly, as all porcupine babies do. Long hairs, tipped with yellowish-white, came out through the dense fur, and by and by the quills began to show. His teeth were lengthening, too, as his mother very well knew, and between the sharp things in his mouth and those on his back and sides he was fast becoming a very formidable nursling. Before he was two months old she was forced to wean him, but by that time he was quite able to travel down to the beach and feast on the tender lily-pads and arrow-head leaves that grew in the shallow water, within easy reach from fallen and half-submerged tree-trunks.

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One June day, as he and his mother were fishing for lily-pads, each of them out on the end of a big log, a boy came down the steep bank that rose almost from the water's edge. He wasn't a very attractive boy. His clothes were dirty and torn—and so was his face. His hat was gone, and his hair had not seen a comb for weeks. The mosquitoes and black-flies and no-see-'ems had bitten him until his skin was covered with blotches and his eyelids were so swollen that he could hardly see. And worst of all, he looked as if he were dying of starvation. There was almost nothing left of him but skin and bones, and his clothing hung upon him as it would on a framework of sticks. If the Porcupine could have philosophized about it he would probably have said that this was the wrong time of year for starving; and from his point of view he would have been right. June, in the woods, is the season of plenty for everybody but man. Man thinks he must have wheat-flour, and that doesn't grow on pines or maple-trees, nor yet in the tamarack swamp. But was there any wild, fierce glare in the boy's eyes, such a light of hunger as the story-books tell us is to be seen in the eyes of the wolf and the lynx when they have not eaten for days and days, and when the snow lies deep in the forest, and famine comes stalking through the trees? I don't think so. He was too weak and miserable to do any glaring, and his stomach was aching so hard from eating green gooseberries that he could scarcely think of anything else.

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But his face brightened a very little when he saw the old she-porcupine, and he picked up a heavy stick and waded out beside her log. She clacked her teeth together angrily as he approached; but he paid no attention, so she drew herself into a ball, with her head down and her nose covered by her forepaws. Reaching across her back and down on each side was a belt or girdle of quills, the largest and heaviest on her whole body, which could be erected at will, and now they stood as straight as young spruce-trees. Their tips were dark-brown, but the rest of their length was nearly white, and when you looked at her from behind she seemed to have a pointed white ruffle, edged with black, tied around the middle of her body. But the boy wasn't thinking about ruffles, and he didn't care what she did with her quills. He gave her such a thrust with his stick that she had to grab at the log with both hands to keep from being shoved into the water. That left her nose unprotected, and he brought the stick down across it once, twice, three times. Then he picked her up by one foot, very gingerly, and carried her off; and our Porky never saw his mother again.

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Perhaps we had best follow her up and see what finally became of her. Half a mile from the scene of the murder the boy came upon a woman and a little girl. I sha'n't try to describe them, except to say that they were even worse off than he. Perhaps you read in the papers, some years ago, about the woman and the two children who were lost for several weeks in the woods of northern Michigan.

"I've got a porky," said the boy.

He dropped his burden on the ground, and they all stood around and looked at it. They were hungry—oh, so hungry!—but for some reason they did not seem very eager to begin. An old porcupine with her clothes on is not the most attractive of feasts, and they had no knife with which to skin her, no salt to season the meat, no fire to cook it, and no matches with which to start one. Rubbing two sticks together is a very good way of starting a fire when you are in a book, but it doesn't work very well in the Great Tahquamenon Swamp. And yet, somehow or other—I don't know how, and I don't want to—they ate that

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**"High up in the top of a tall hemlock."**

porcupine. And it did them good. When the searchers found them, a week or two later, the woman and the boy were dead, but the little girl was still alive, and for all I know she is living to this day.

Let us return to the Glimmerglass. The young Porcupine ought to have mourned deeply for his mother, but I grieve to say that he did nothing of the kind. I doubt if he was even very lonesome. His brain was smaller, smoother, and less corrugated than yours is supposed to be; its wrinkles were few and not very deep; and it may be that the bump of filial affection was quite polished, or even that there wasn't any such bump at all. Anyhow, he got along very well without her, dispensing with her much more easily than the woman and the boy and girl could have. He watched stolidly while the boy killed her and carried her off, and a little later he was eating lily-pads again.

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As far as his future prospects were concerned, he had little reason for worrying. He knew pretty well how to take care of himself, for that is a kind of knowledge which comes early to young porcupines. Really, there wasn't much to learn. His quills would protect him from most of his enemies, if not from all of them; and, what was still better, he need never suffer from a scarcity of food. Of all the animals in the woods the porcupine is probably the safest from starvation, for he can eat anything from the soft green leaves of the water-plants to the bark and the small twigs of

the tallest hemlock. Summer and winter, his storehouse is always full. The young lions may lack, and suffer hunger, and seek their meat from God; but the young porky has only to climb a tree and set his teeth at work. All the woods are his huckleberry.

And, by the way, our Porcupine's teeth were a great institution, especially the front ones, and were well worthy of a somewhat detailed description. They were long and sharp and yellow, and there were two in the upper jaw and two in the lower, with a wide gap on each side between them and the molars. They kept right on growing as long as he lived, and there is no telling how far they would have gone if there had been nothing to stop them. Fortunately, he did a great deal of eating and chewing, and the constant friction kept them worn down, and at the same time served to sharpen them. Like a beaver's, they were formed of thin shells of hard enamel in front, backed up by softer pulp behind; and of course the soft parts wore away first, and left the enamel projecting in sharp, chisel-like edges that could gnaw crumbs from a hickory axe-handle.

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The next few months were pleasant ones, with plenty to eat, and nothing to do but keep his jaws going. By and by the leaves began to fall, and whenever the Porky walked abroad they rustled around him like silk skirts going down the aisle of a church. A little later the beechnuts came down from the sky, and he feasted more luxuriously than ever. His four yellow chisels tore the brown shells open, his molars ground the sweet kernels into meal, and he ate and ate till his short legs could hardly keep his fat little belly off the ground.

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Then came the first light snow, and his feet left tracks which bore a faint resemblance to a baby's—that is, if your imagination was sufficiently vigorous. The snow grew deeper and deeper, and after a while he had to fairly plough his way from the hollow log to the tree where he took his meals. It was hard work, for his clumsy legs were not made for wading, and at every step he had to lift and drag himself forward, and then let his body drop while he shifted his feet. A porcupine's feet will not go of themselves, the way other animals' do. They have to be picked up one at a time and lifted forward as far as they can reach—not very far at the best, for they are fastened to the ends of very short legs. It almost seems as if he could run faster if he could drop them off and leave them behind. One evening, when the snow was beginning to freeze again after a thawing day, he lay down to rest for a few minutes; and when he started on, some of his quills were fast in the hardening crust and had to be left behind. But no matter how difficult the walk might be, there was always a good square meal at the end of it, and he pushed valiantly on till he reached his dinner-table.

Sometimes he stayed in the same tree for several days at a time, quenching his thirst with snow, and sleeping in a crotch.

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He was not by any means the only porcupine in the woods around the Glimmerglass, although weeks sometimes passed without his seeing any of his relations. At other times there were from one to half a dozen porkies in the trees close by, and when they happened to feel like it they would call back and forth to each other in queer, harsh, and often querulous voices.

One afternoon, when he and another porcupine were occupying trees next each other, two land-lookers came along and camped for the night between them. Earlier in the day the men had crossed the trail of a pack of wolves, and they talked of it as they cut their firewood, and, with all the skill of the *voyageurs* of old, cooked their scanty supper, and made their bed of balsam boughs. The half-breed was much afraid that they would have visitors before morning, but the white man only laughed at the idea.

The meal was hardly finished when they lay down between their blankets—the white man to sleep, and the half-breed to listen, listen, listen for the coming of the wolves. Beyond the camp-fire's little circle of ruddy light, vague shadows moved mysteriously, as if living things were prowling about among the trees and only waiting for him to fall asleep. Yet there was no wolf-howl to be heard, nor anything else to break the silence of the winter night, save possibly the dropping of a dead branch, or the splitting open of a tree-trunk, torn apart by the frost. And by and by, in spite of himself, the half-breed's eyelids began to droop.

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But somebody else was awake—awake, and tempted with a great temptation. The porcupine—not ours, but the other one—had caught the fragrance of coffee and bacon. Here were new odors—different from anything that had ever before tickled his nostrils—strange, but indescribably delicious. He waited till the land-lookers were snoring, and then he started down the tree. Half-way to the ground he encountered the cloud of smoke that rose from the camp-fire. Here was another new odor, but with nothing pleasant about it. It stung his nostrils and made his eyes smart, and he scrambled up again as fast as he could go, his claws and quills rattling on the bark. The half-breed woke with a start. He had heard something—he was sure he had—the wolves were coming, and he gave the white man a punch in the ribs.

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"Wake up, wake up, m'shoor!" he whispered, excitedly. "The wolves are coming. I can hear them on the snow."

The white man was up in a twinkling, but by that time the porcupine had settled himself in a crotch, out of reach of the smoke, and the woods were silent again. The two listened with all their ears, but there was not a sound to be heard.

"You must have been dreaming, Louis."

The half-breed insisted that he had really heard the patter of the wolves' feet on the snow-crust, but the timber cruiser laughed at him, and lay down to sleep again. An hour later the performance was repeated, and this time the white man was angry.

"Don't you wake me up again, Louis. You're so rattled you don't know what you're doing."

Louis was silenced, but not convinced, and he did not let himself go to sleep again. The fire was dying down, and little by little the smoke-cloud grew thinner and thinner until it disappeared entirely. Then the half-breed heard the same sound once more, but from the tree overhead, and not from across the snow. He waited and watched, and presently a dark-brown animal, two or three feet in length and about the shape of an egg, came scrambling cautiously down the trunk. The porky reached the ground in safety, and searched among the tin plates and the knives and forks until he found a piece of bacon rind; but he got just one taste of it, and then Louis hit him over the head with a club. Next morning the land-lookers had porcupine soup for breakfast, and they told me afterward that it was very good indeed.

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Our Porky had seen it all. He waited till the men had tramped away through the woods, with their packs on their backs and their snow-shoes on their feet, and then he, too, came down from his tree on a tour of investigation. His friend's skin lay on the snow not very far away—if you had pulled the quills and the longer hairs out of it, it would have made the pelt which the old fur-traders sometimes sold under the name of "spring beaver"—but he paid no attention to it. The bacon rind was what interested him most, and he chewed and gnawed at it with a relish that an epicure might have envied. It was the first time in all his gluttonous little life that he had ever tasted the flavor of salt or wood-smoke; and neither lily-pads, nor beechnuts, nor berries, nor anything else in all the woods could compare with it. Life was worth living, if only for this one experience; and it may be that he stowed a dim memory of it away in some dark corner of his brain, and hoped that fortune would some day be good to him and send him another rind.

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The long, long winter dragged slowly on, the snow piled up higher and deeper, and the cold grew sharper and keener. Night after night the pitiless stars seemed sucking every last bit of warmth out of the old earth and leaving it dead and frozen forever. Those were the nights when the rabbits came out of their burrows and stamped up and down their runways for hours at a time, trying by exercise to keep from freezing to death, and when the deer dared not lie down to sleep. And hunger came with the cold and the deep snow. The buck and the doe had to live on hemlock twigs till they grew thin and poor. The partridges were buried in the drifting snow, and starved to death. The lynxes and the wild-cats hunted and hunted and hunted, and found no prey; and it was well for the bears and the woodchucks that they could sleep all winter and did not need food. Only the Porcupine had plenty and to spare. Starvation had no terrors for him.

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But the hunger of another may mean danger for us, as the Porcupine discovered. In ordinary times most of the animals let him severely alone. They knew better than to tackle such a living pin-cushion as he; and if any of them ever did try it, one touch was generally enough. But when you are ready to perish with hunger, you will take risks which at other times you would not even think about; and so it happened that one February afternoon, as the Porky was trundling himself deliberately over the snow-crust, a fierce-looking animal with dark fur, bushy tail, and pointed nose sprang at him from behind a tree and tried to catch him by the throat, where the quills did not grow, and there was nothing but soft, warm fur. The Porcupine knew just what to do in such a case, and he promptly made himself into a prickly ball, very much as his mother had done seven or eight months before, with his face down, and his quills sticking out defiantly. But this time his scheme of defence did not work as well as usual, for the sharp little nose dug into the snow and wriggled its way closer and closer to where the jugular vein was waiting to be tapped. That fisher

must have understood his business, for he had chosen the one and only way by which a porcupine may be successfully attacked. For once in his life our friend was really scared. Another inch, and the fisher would have won the game, but he was in such a hurry that he grew careless and reckless, and did not notice that he had wheeled half-way round, and that his hind-quarters were alongside the Porcupine's. Now, sluggish and slow though a porky may be, there is one of his members that is as quick as a steel trap, and that is his tail. Something hit the fisher a whack on his flank, and he gave a cry of pain and fury, and jumped back with half a dozen spears sticking in his flesh. He must have quite lost his head during the next few seconds, for before he knew it his face also had come within reach of that terrible tail and its quick, vicious jerks. That ended the battle, and he fled away across the snow, almost mad with the agony in his nose, his eyes, his forehead, and his left flank. As for the Porky, he made for the nearest tree as fast as he could go, hardly trusting in his great deliverance. And I don't believe there is any sight in all the Great Tahquamenon Swamp much funnier than a porky in a hurry—a porky who has really made up his mind that he is in danger and must hustle for dear life. He is the very personification of haste and a desire to go somewhere quick, and he picks his feet up and puts them down again as fast as ever he can; and yet, no matter how hard he works, his legs are so short and his body so fat that he can't begin to travel as fast as he wants to.

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Another day the lynx tried it, and fared even worse than the fisher—not the Canada lynx, with whom we are already somewhat acquainted, but the bay lynx. The fisher had had some sense, and would probably have succeeded if he had been a little more careful, but the lynx was a fool. He didn't know the very first thing about the proper way to hunt porcupines, and he ought never to have tried it at all, but he was literally starving, and the temptation was too much for him. Here was something alive, something that had warm red blood in its veins and a good thick layer of flesh over its bones, and that was too slow to get away from him; and he sailed right in, tooth and claw, regardless of the consequences. Immediately he forgot all about the Porcupine, and his own hunger, and everything else but the terrible pain in his face and his forepaws. He made the woods fairly ring with his howls, and he jumped up and down on the snow-crust, rubbing his head with his paws, and driving the little barbed spears deeper and deeper into the flesh. And then, all of a sudden, he ceased his leaping and bounding and howling, and dropped on the snow in a limp, lifeless heap, dead as last summer's lily-pads. One of the quills had driven straight through his left eye and into his brain. Was it any wonder if in time the Porcupine came to think himself invulnerable?

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Even a northern Michigan winter has its ending, and at last there came an evening when all the porcupines in the woods around the Glimmerglass were calling to each other from one tree to another. They couldn't help it. There was something in the air that stirred them to a vague restlessness and uneasiness, and our own particular Porky sat up in the top of a tall hemlock and sang. Not like Jenny Lind, nor like a thrush or a nightingale, but his harsh voice went squealing up and down the scale in a way that was all his own, without time or rhythm or melody, in the wildest, strangest music that ever woke the silent woods. I don't believe that he himself quite knew what he meant or why he did it. Certainly no one else could have told, unless some wandering Indian or trapper may have heard the queer voices and prophesied that a thaw was coming.

The thaw arrived next day, and it proved to be the beginning of spring. The summer followed as fast as it could, and again the lily-pads were green and succulent in the shallow water along the edge of the Glimmerglass, and again the Porcupine wandered down to the beach to feed upon them, discarding for a time his winter diet of bark and twigs. Why should one live on rye-bread when one can have cake and ice-cream?

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And there among the bulrushes, one bright June morning, he had a fight with one of his own kind. Just as he was approaching his favorite log, two other porcupines appeared, coming from different directions, one a male, and the other a female. They all scrambled out upon the log, one after another, but it soon became evident that three was a crowd. Our Porky and the other bachelor could not agree at all. They both wanted the same place and the same lily-pads, and in a little while they were pushing and shoving and growling and snarling with all their might, each doing his best to drive the other off the log and into the water. They did not bite—perhaps they had agreed that teeth like theirs were too cruel to be used in civilized warfare—but they struggled and chattered and swore at each other, and made all sorts of queer noises while they fought their funny little battle—all the funnier because each of them had to look out for the other's quills. If either had happened to push the wrong way, they might both have been in serious trouble. It did not last long. Our Porky was the stronger, and his rival was driven backward little by little till he lost his hold completely and slipped into the lake. He came to the surface at once, and quickly swam to the shore, where he chattered angrily for a few minutes, and then, like the sensible bachelor that he was, wandered off up the beach in search of other worlds more easily conquered. There was peace on our Porky's log, and the lily-pads that grew beside it had never been as fresh and juicy as they were that morning.

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Two months later, on a hot August afternoon, I was paddling along the edge of the Glimmerglass in company with a friend of mine, each of us in a small dug-out canoe, when we found the Porky asleep in the sunshine. He was lying on the nearly horizontal trunk of a tree whose roots had been undermined by the waves till it leaned far out over the lake, hardly a foot from the water.

My friend, by the way, is the foreman of a lumber-camp. He has served in the British army, has hunted whales off the coast of Greenland, married a wife in Grand Rapids, and run a street-car in

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Chicago; and now he is snaking logs out of the Michigan woods. He is quite a chunk of a man, tall and decidedly well set up, and it would take a pretty good prize-fighter to whip him, but he learned that day that a porcupine at close quarters is worse than a trained pugilist.

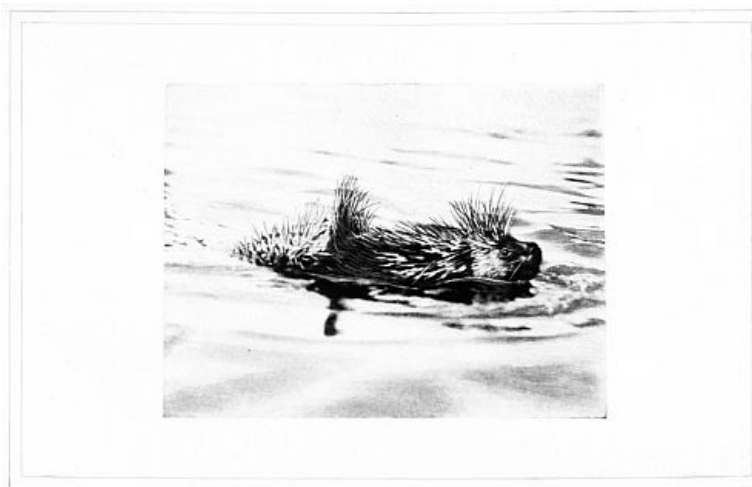
"Look at that porky," he called to me. "I'm going to ram the canoe into the tree and knock him off into the water. Just you watch, and you'll see some fun."

I was somewhat uncertain whether the joke would ultimately be on the Porcupine or the man, but it was pretty sure to be worth seeing, one way or the other, so I laid my paddle down and awaited developments. Bang! went the nose of the dug-out against the tree, and the Porcupine dropped, but not into the water. He landed in the bow of the canoe, and the horrified look on my friend's face was a delight to see. The Porky was wide awake by this time, for I could hear his teeth clacking as he advanced to the attack.

"Great Scott! He's coming straight at me!"

The Porcupine was certainly game. I saw the paddle rise in the air and come down with a tremendous whack, but it seemed to have little effect. The Porky's coat of quills and hair was so thick that a blow on the back did not trouble him much. If my friend could have hit him across the nose it would have ended the matter then and there, but the canoe was too narrow and its sides too high for a crosswise stroke. He tried thrusting, but that was no better. When a good-sized porcupine has really made up his mind to go somewhere he may be slow, but it takes more than a punch with the end of a stick to stop him; and this Porky had fully determined to go aft and get acquainted with the foreman.

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***"He quickly made his way to the beach."***

My friend couldn't even kick, for he was kneeling on the bottom of the dug-out, with his feet behind him, and if he tried to stand up he would probably capsize.

"Say, Hulbert, what am I going to do?"

I didn't give him any advice, for my sympathies were largely with the Porcupine. Besides, I hadn't any advice to give. Just then the canoe drifted around so that I could look into it, and I beheld the Porcupine bearing down on my helpless friend like Birnam Wood on its way to Dunsinane, his ruffle of quills erect, fire in his little black eyes, and a thirst for vengeance in his whole aspect. My friend made one or two final and ineffectual jabs at him, and then gave it up.

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"It's no use!" he called; "I'll have to tip over!" and the next second the canoe was upside down and both belligerents were in the water. The Porcupine floated high—I suppose his hollow quills helped to keep him up—and he proved a much better swimmer than I had expected, for he quickly made his way to the beach and disappeared in the woods, still chattering disrespectfully. My friend waded ashore, righted his canoe, and we resumed our journey. I don't think I'll tell you what he said. He got over it after a while, and in the end he probably enjoyed his joke more than if it had turned out as he had intended.

The summer followed the winter into the past, and the Moon of Falling Leaves came round again. The Porcupine was not alone. Another porky was with him, and the two seemed very good friends. In fact, his companion was the very same lady porcupine who had stood by while he fought the battle of the log and the lily-pads, though I do not suppose that they had been keeping company all those months, and I am by no means certain that they remembered that eventful morning at all. Let us hope they did, for the sake of the story. Who knows how much or how little of love was stirring the slow currents of their sluggish natures—of such love as binds the dove or the eagle to his mate, or of such steadfast affection as the Beaver and his wife seem to have felt for each other? Not much, perhaps; yet they climbed the same tree, ate from the same branch, and drank at the same spring; and the next April there was another arrival in the old hollow log—twins, this time, and both of them alive.

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But the Porcupine never saw his children, for a wandering fit seized him, and he left the Glimmerglass before they were born. Two or three miles away was a little clearing where a mossback lived. A railway crossed one edge of it, between the hill and the swamp, and five miles away was a junction, where locomotives were constantly moving about, backing, hauling, and

making up their trains. As the mossback lay awake in the long, quiet, windless winter nights, he often heard them puffing and snorting, now with slow, heavy coughs, and now quick and sharp and rapid. One night when he was half asleep he heard something that said, "chew-chew-chew-chew-chew-chew," like an engine that has its train moving and is just beginning to get up speed. At first he paid no attention to it. But the noise suddenly stopped short, and after a pause of a few seconds it began again at exactly the same speed; stopped again, and began a third time. And so it went on, chewing and pausing, chewing and pausing, with always just so many chews to the second, and just so many seconds to each rest. No locomotive ever puffed like that. The mossback was wide awake now, and he muttered something about "another of those pesky porkies." He had killed the last one that came around the house, and had wanted his wife to cook it for dinner and see how it tasted, but she wouldn't. She said that the very sight of it was enough for her, and more than enough; and that it was all she could do to eat pork and potatoes after looking at it. [151]

He turned over and tried to go to sleep again, but without success. That steady "chew-chew-chew" was enough to keep a woodchuck awake, and at last he got up and went to the door. The moonlight on the snow was almost as bright as day, and there was the Porcupine, leaning against the side of the barn, and busily rasping the wood from around the head of a rusty nail. The mossback threw a stick of stove-wood at him, and he lumbered clumsily away across the snow. But twenty minutes later he was back again, and this time he marched straight into the open shed at the back of the house, and began operations on a wash-tub, whose mingled flavor of soap and humanity struck him as being very delicious. Again the mossback appeared in the doorway, shivering a little in his night-shirt. [152]

The Porcupine was at the foot of the steps. He had stopped chewing when the door opened, and now he lifted his forepaws and sat half-erect, his yellow teeth showing between his parted lips, and his little eyes staring at the lamp which the mossback carried. The quills slanted back from all around his diminutive face, and even from between his eyes—short at first, but growing longer toward his shoulders and back. Long whitish bristles were mingled with them, and the mossback could not help thinking of a little old, old man, with hair that was grizzly-gray, and a face that was half-stupid and half-sad and wistful. He was not yet two years of age, but I believe that a porcupine is born old. Some of the Indians say that he is ashamed of his homely looks, and that that is the reason why, by day, he walks so slowly, with hanging head and downcast eyes; but at night, they say, when the friendly darkness hides his ugliness, he lifts his head and runs like a dog. In spite of the hour and the cheering influence of the wash-tub, our Porky seemed even more low-spirited than usual. Perhaps the lamplight had suddenly reminded him of his personal appearance. At any rate he looked so lonesome and forlorn that the mossback felt a little thrill of pity for him, and decided not to kill him after all, but to drive him away again. He started down the steps with his lamp in one hand and a stick of wood in the other, and then—he never knew how it happened, but in some way he stumbled and fell. Never in all his life, not even when his wildest nightmare came and sat on him in the wee, sma' hours, had he come so near screaming out in terror as he did at that moment. He thought he was going to sit down on the Porcupine. Fortunately for both of them, but especially for the man, he missed him by barely half an inch, and the Porky scuttled away as fast as his legs could carry him. [153]

In spite of this unfriendly reception, the Porcupine hung around the edges of the clearing for several months, and enjoyed many a meal such as seldom falls to the lot of the woods-people. One night he found an empty pork-barrel out behind the barn, its staves fairly saturated with salt, and hour after hour he scraped away upon it, perfectly content. Another time, to his great satisfaction, he discovered a large piece of bacon rind among some scraps that the mossback's wife had thrown away. Later he invaded the sugar-bush by night, gnawing deep notches in the edges of the sap buckets and barrels, and helping himself to the sirup in the big boiling-pan. [154]

Life was not all feasting, however. There was a dog who attacked him two or three times, but who finally learned to keep away and mind his own business. Once, when he had ventured a little too close to the house, and was making an unusual racket with his teeth, the mossback came to the door and fired a shotgun at him, cutting off several of his quills. And still another night, late in the spring, when he was prowling around the barn, a bull calf came and smelled him. Next morning the mossback and his boys threw that calf down on the ground and tied his feet to a stump, and three of them sat on him while a fourth pulled the quills from his nose with a pair of pincers. You should have heard him grunt.

Then came the greatest adventure of all. Down beside the railway was a small platform on which supplies for the lumber-camps were sometimes unloaded from the trains. Brine and molasses and various other delectable things had leaked out of the barrels and kegs and boxes, and the Porcupine discovered that the planks were very nicely seasoned and flavored. He visited them once too often, for one summer evening, as he was gnawing away at the site of an ancient puddle of molasses, the accommodation train rolled in and came to a halt. He tried to hide behind a stump, but the trainmen caught sight of him, and before he knew it they had shoved him into an empty box and hoisted him into the baggage-car. They turned him loose among the passengers on the station platform at Sault Ste. Marie, and his arrival created a sensation. [155]

When the first excitement had subsided, all the girls in the crowd declared that they must have some quills for souvenirs, and all the young men set to work to procure them, hoping to distinguish themselves by proving their superiority in strength and courage over this poor little twenty-pound beast just out of the woods. Most of them succeeded in getting some quills, and also in acquiring some painful experience—especially the one who attempted to lift the Porcupine by the tail, and who learned that that interesting member is the very hottest and liveliest portion

of the animal's anatomy. They finally discovered that the best way to get quills from a live porcupine is to hit him with a piece of board. The sharp points penetrate the wood and stick there, the other ends come loose from his skin, and there you have them. Our friend lost most of his armor that day, and it was a good thing for him that departed quills, like clipped hair, will renew themselves in the course of time.

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One of the brakemen carried him home, and he spent the next few months in the enjoyment of city life. Whether he found much pleasure in it is, perhaps, a question, but I am rather inclined to think that he did. He had plenty to eat, and he learned that apples are very good indeed, and that the best way to partake of them is to sit up on your haunches and hold them between your forepaws. He also learned that men are not always to be regarded as enemies, for his owner and his owner's children were good to him and soon won his confidence. But, after all, the city was not home, and the woods were; so he employed some of his spare time in gnawing a hole through the wall in a dark corner of the shed where he was confined, and one night he scrambled out and hid himself in an empty barn. A day or two later he was in the forest again.

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The remaining years of his life were spent on the banks of St. Mary's River, and for the most part they were years of quietness and contentment. He was far from his early home, but the bark of a birch or a maple or a hemlock is much the same on St. Mary's as by the Glimmerglass. He grew bigger and fatter as time went on, and some weeks before he died he must have weighed thirty or forty pounds.

Once in a while there was a little dash of excitement to keep life from becoming too monotonous—if too much monotony is possible in a porcupine's existence. One night he scrambled up the steps of a little summer cottage close to the edge of the river, and, finding the door unlatched, he pushed it open and walked in. It proved to be a cottage full of girls, and they stood around on chairs and the tops of wash-stands, bombarded him with curling-irons, poked feebly with bed-slats, and shrieked with laughter till the farmers over on the Canadian shore turned in their beds and wondered what could be happening on Uncle Sam's side of the river. The worst of it was that in his travels around the room he had come up behind the door and pushed it shut, and it was some time before even the red-haired girl could muster up sufficient courage to climb down from her perch and open it again.

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At another time an Indian robbed him of the longest and best of his quills—nearly five inches in length some of them—and carried them off to be used in ornamenting birch-bark baskets. And on still another occasion he narrowly escaped death at the hands of an irate canoe-man, in the side of whose Rob Roy he had gnawed a great hole.

The end came at last, and it was the saddest, hardest, strangest fate that can ever come to a wild creature of the woods. He—who had never known hunger in all his life, who was almost the only animal in the forest who had never looked famine in the eye, whose table was spread with good things from January to December, and whose storehouse was full from Lake Huron to the Pictured Rocks—he of all others, was condemned to die of starvation in the midst of plenty. The Ancient Mariner, with water all around him and not a drop to drink, was no worse off than our Porcupine; and the Mariner finally escaped, but the Porky didn't.

One of the summer tourists who wandered up into the north woods that year had carried with him a little rifle, more of a toy than a weapon, a thing that a sportsman would hardly have condescended to laugh at. And one afternoon, by ill luck, he caught sight of the Porcupine high up in the top of a tall tree. It was his first chance at a genuine wild beast, and he fired away all his cartridges as fast as he could load them into his gun. He thought that every shot missed, and he was very much ashamed of his marksmanship. But he was mistaken. The very last bullet broke one of the Porcupine's lower front teeth, and hurt him terribly. It jarred him to the very end of his tail, and his head felt as if it was being smashed to bits. For a minute or two the strength all went out of him, and if he had not been lying in a safe, comfortable crotch he would have fallen to the ground.

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The pain and the shock passed away after a while, but when supper-time came—and it was almost always supper-time with the Porcupine—his left lower incisor was missing. The right one was uninjured, however, and for a while he got on pretty well, merely having to spend a little more time than usual over his meals. But that was only the beginning of trouble. The stump of the broken tooth was still there and still growing, and it was soon as long as ever, but in the meantime its fellow in the upper jaw had grown out beyond its normal length, and the two did not meet properly. Instead of coming together edge to edge, as they should have done, each wearing the other down and keeping it from reaching out too far, each one now pushed the other aside, and still they kept on growing, growing, growing. Worst of all, in a short time they had begun to crowd his jaws apart so that he could hardly use his right-hand teeth, and they too were soon out of shape. The evil days had come, and the sound of the grinding was low. Little by little his mouth was forced open wider and wider, and the food that passed his lips grew less and less. His teeth, that had all his life been his best tools and his most faithful servants, had turned against him in his old age, and were killing him by inches. Let us not linger over those days.

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He was spared the very last and worst pangs—for that, at least, we may be thankful. On the last day of his life he sat under a beech-tree, weak and weary and faint. He could not remember when he had eaten. His coat of hair and quills was as thick and bushy as ever, and outwardly he had hardly changed at all, but under his skin there was little left but bones. And as he sat there and wished that he was dead—if such a wish can ever come to a wild animal—the Angel of Mercy came, in the shape of a man with a revolver in his pistol pocket—a man who liked to kill things.

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"A porky!" he said. "Guess I'll shoot him, just for fun."

The Porcupine saw him coming and knew the danger; and for a moment the old love of life came back as strong as ever, and he gathered his feeble strength for one last effort, and started up the tree. He was perhaps six feet from the ground when the first report came.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" Four shots, as fast as the self-cocking revolver could pour the lead into his body. The Porky stopped climbing. For an instant he hung motionless on the side of the tree, and then his forepaws let go, and he swayed backward and fell to the ground. And that was the end of the Porcupine.

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## THE ADVENTURES OF A LOON

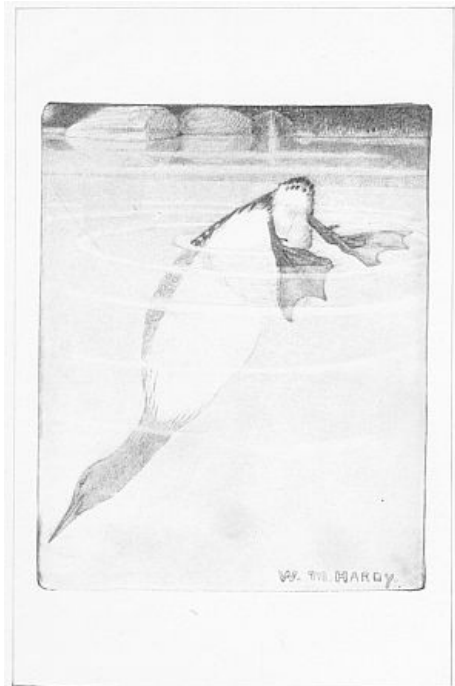
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**H**IS name was Mahng, and the story which I am about to relate is the story of his matrimonial career—or at least of a portion of it.

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One snowy autumn night, three years ago, he was swimming on the Glimmerglass in company with his first wife—one of the first, that is. There may possibly have been others before her, but if so I wasn't acquainted with them. It was a fine evening—especially for loons. There was no wind, and the big, soft flakes came floating lazily down to lose themselves in the quiet lake. The sky, the woods, and the shores were all blotted out; and the loons reigned alone, king and queen of a dim little world of leaden water and falling snow. And right royally they swam their kingdom, with an air as if they thought God had made the Glimmerglass for their especial benefit. Perhaps He had.

It was very, very lonely, but they liked it all the better for that. At times they even lost sight of each other for a little while, as one dived in search of a herring or a young salmon trout. I wish we could have followed Mahng down under the water and watched him at his hunting. He didn't dive as you do, with a jump and a plunge and a splash. He merely drew his head back a little and then thrust it forward and downward, and went under as simply and easily as you would step out of bed, and with a good deal more dignity. It was his feet that did it, of course. They were not good for much for walking, but they were the real thing when it came to swimming or diving. They were large and broad and strongly webbed, and the short stout legs which carried them were flattened and compressed that they might slip edgewise through the water, like a feathered oar-blade. The muscles which worked them were very powerful, and they kicked backward with so much vigor that two little jets of spray were often tossed up in his wake as he went under, like the splash from a steamer's paddles. And he had a rudder, too, for in the after part of his body there were two muscles just like tiller-ropes, fastened to his tail in such a way that they could twist it to either side, and steer him to port or starboard as occasion demanded. With his long neck stretched far out in front, his wings pressed tightly against his sides, and his legs and feet working as if they went by steam, he shot through the water like a submarine torpedo-boat. "The Herdsman of the Deep," the Scottish Highlanders used to say, when in winter a loon came to visit their lochs and fiords. Swift and strong and terrible, he ranged the depths of the Glimmerglass, seeking what he might devour; and perhaps you can imagine how hastily the poor little fishes took their departure whenever they saw him coming their way. Sometimes they were not quite quick enough, and then his long bill closed upon them, and he swallowed them whole without even waiting to rise to the surface.



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*"He went under as simply as you would step out of bed."*

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The chase thus brought to a successful conclusion, or perhaps the supply of air in his lungs giving out, he returned to the upper world, and again his voice rang out through the darkness and the falling snow. Then his wife would answer him from somewhere away off across the lake, and they would call back and forth to each other with many a laugh and shout, or, drawing closer and closer together, they would cruise the Glimmerglass side by side, with the big flakes dropping gently on their backs and folded wings, and the ripples spreading out on either hand like the swell from the bow of a ship.

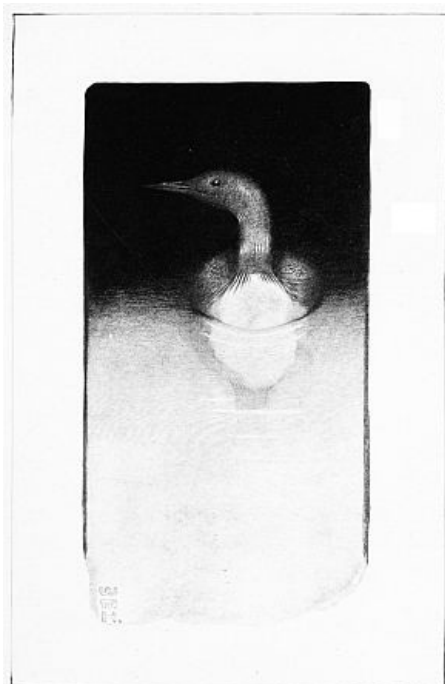
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Once Mahng stayed down a little longer than usual, and when he came up he heard his wife calling him in an excited tone, as if something had happened to her. He hurried toward her, and presently he saw a light shining dimly through the throng of moving snow-flakes, and growing brighter and brighter as he approached until it was fairly dazzling. As he drew nearer still he caught sight of his wife sitting on the water squarely in front of that light, and watching it with all

her eyes. She was not calling now. She had forgotten Mahng, she had forgotten to paddle, she had forgotten everything, in her wonder at this strange, beautiful thing, the like of which had never before been seen upon the Glimmerglass. She herself was a rarely beautiful sight—if she had only known it—with the dark water rippling gently against her bosom, her big black head thrust forward, and the feathers of her throat and breast glistening in the glare of the headlight, white as the snow that was falling around her.

All this Mahng saw. What he did not see, because his eyes were dazzled, was a boat in the shadow behind the light, and a rifle-barrel pointing straight at his wife's breast. There was a blinding flash, a sharp, crashing report, and a cloud of smoke; and Mahng dived as quick as a wink. But his wife would never dive again. The bullet had gone tearing through her body, and she lay stretched out on the water, perfectly motionless, and apparently dead. And then, just as Mahng came to the surface a hundred yards away, and just as my partner put out his hand to pick her up, she lifted her head and gave a last wild cry. Mahng heard it and answered, but he was too far away to see what happened. He dared not return till the light had disappeared, and by that time she was gone. She had straggled violently for a moment, and had struck savagely at the hunter's hand, and then she had as suddenly collapsed, the water turned red, and her eyes closed forever. Did you know that among all God's creatures the birds are the only ones whose eyes close naturally in death? Even among men it is not so, for when our friends die we lay our hands reverently upon their faces, and weight their stiff lids with gold. But for the bird, Nature herself performs the last kindly office, and as the light fades out from the empty windows of the soul, the curtain falls of its own accord.

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*"She herself was a rarely beautiful sight."*

During the next two or three days Mahng's voice was frequently to be heard, apparently calling his wife. Sometimes it was a mournful, long-drawn cry—"Hoo-WOOOO-ooo"—that might have been heard a mile away—a cry that seemed the very essence of loneliness, and that went right down where you lived and made you feel like a murderer. And sometimes he broke into a wild peal of laughter, as if he hoped that that might better serve to call her back to him.

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His children had gone south some time before. They had seemed anxious to see the world. Perhaps, too, they had dreaded the approach of colder weather more than the older birds, who had become somewhat seasoned by previous autumns. Anyhow, they had taken the long trail toward the Gulf of Mexico, and now that his wife was gone Mahng was entirely alone. At last he seemed to make up his mind that he might as well follow them, and one afternoon, as he was swimming aimlessly about, I saw him suddenly dash forward, working his wings with all their might, beating the water at every stroke, and throwing spray like a side-wheeler. Slowly—for his body was heavy, and his wings were rather small for his size—slowly he lifted himself from the water, all the time rushing forward faster and faster. He couldn't have made it if he hadn't had plenty of sea-room, but by swinging round and round in long, wide circles he managed to rise little by little till at last he was clear of the tree-tops. He passed right over my head as he

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stood away to the south—his long neck stretched far out in front, his feet pointing straight back beyond the end of his short tail, and his wings beating the air with tremendous energy. How they did whizz! He made almost as much noise as a train of cars. He laughed as he went by, and you would have said that he was in high spirits; but before he disappeared that lonely, long-drawn cry came back once more—"Hoo-WOOOO-ooo."

In the course of his winter wanderings through the South he happened to alight one day on a certain wild pond down in Mississippi, and there he found another loon—a widow whose former husband had lost his life the previous summer under rather peculiar circumstances.

Beside a small lake in Minnesota there lives an old Dutchman who catches fish with empty bottles. On any calm, still day you may see a lot of them floating upright in the water, all tightly corked, and each with the end of a fishing-line tied around its neck. They seem very decorous and well-behaved, but let a fish take one of the hooks and begin to pull, and immediately that particular bottle turns wrong end up, and acts as if it had taken a drop too much of its own original contents. Then the Dutchman paddles out in his little scow, and perhaps by the time he has hauled in his fish and re-baited the hook another bottle is excitedly standing on its head. But never before nor since have any of them behaved as wildly as the one that a loon got hold of.

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The loon—not Mahng, you understand, but the first husband of his new acquaintance—had dived in search of his dinner, and the first thing he saw that looked as if it might be good to eat was the bait on one of the Dutchman's hooks. He swallowed it, of course, and for the next five minutes he went charging up and down that pond at a great rate, followed by a green glass monster with the name of a millionaire brewer blown in its side. Sometimes he was on the surface, and sometimes he was under it; but wherever he went that horrible thing was close behind him, pulling so hard that the sharp cord cut the corners of his mouth till it bled. Once or

twice he tried to fly, but the line caught his wing and brought him down again. When he dived, it tangled itself around his legs and clogged the machinery; and when he tried to shout, the hook in his throat would not let him do anything more than cough. The Dutchman got him at last, and eventually Mahng got his widow, as you shall see.

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She had her children to take care of, and for a time she was very busy, but after a few weeks they flew away to the south, as Mahng's had done, and she was free to go where she liked and do what she pleased. For a while she stayed where she was, like a sensible person. Minnesota suited her very well, and she was in no hurry to leave. But, of course, she could not stay on indefinitely, for some frosty night the lake would freeze over, and then she could neither dive for fish nor rise upon the wing. A loon on ice is about as helpless as an oyster. And so at last she, too, went south. She travelled by easy stages, and had a pleasant journey, with many a stop, and many a feast in the lakes and rivers along the route. I should like to know, just out of curiosity, how many fish found their way down her capacious gullet during that pilgrimage through Illinois and Kentucky and Tennessee.

Well, no matter about that. The Mississippi pond was in sight, and she was just slanting down toward the water, when a hunter fired at her from behind a clump of trees. His aim was all too true, and she fell headlong to the ground, with a broken wing dangling helplessly at her side.

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Now, as you probably know, a loon isn't built for running. There is an old story, one which certainly has the appearance of truth, to the effect that when Nature manufactured the first of these birds she forgot to give him any legs at all, and that he had started off on the wing before she noticed her mistake. Then she picked up the first pair that came to hand and threw them after him. Unfortunately they were a misfit, and, what was, perhaps, still worse, they struck his body in the wrong place. They were so very short and so very far aft that, although he could stand nearly as straight as a man, it was almost impossible for him to move about on them. When he had to travel on land, which he always avoided as far as he could, he generally shoved himself along on his breast, and often used his wings and his bill to help himself forward. All his descendants are just like him, so you can see that the widow's chances were pretty small, with the hunter bursting out of the bushes, and a broad strip of beach between her and the friendly pond.

But she was a person of resource and energy, and in this great emergency she literally rose to the occasion, and did something that she had never done before in all her life, and probably will never do again. The astonished hunter saw her lift herself until she stood nearly upright, and then actually *run* across the beach toward the water. She was leaning forward a trifle, her long neck was stretched out, her two short legs were trotting as fast as they could go, and her one good wing was wildly waving in a frantic endeavor to get on. It was a sight that very few people have ever seen, and it would have been comical if it hadn't been a matter of life and death. The hunter was hard after her, and his legs were a yard long, while hers were only a few inches, so it was not surprising that he caught her just as she reached the margin. She wriggled out of his grasp and dashed on through the shallow water, and he followed close behind. In a moment he stooped and made another grab at her, and this time he got his arms around her body and pinned her wings down against her sides. But he had waded out a little too far, and had reached the place where the bottom suddenly shelves off from fifteen inches to seventy-two. His foot slipped, and in another moment he was splashing wildly about in the water, and the loon was free.

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A broken wing is not necessarily as serious a matter as you might suppose. The cold water kept the inflammation down, and it seemed as if all the vital forces of her strong, healthy body set to work at once to repair the damage. If any comparative anatomist ever gets hold of the widow and dissects her, he will find a curious swelling in the principal bone of her left wing, like a plumber's join in a lead pipe, and he will know what it means. It is the place where Nature soldered the broken pieces together. And it was while Nature was engaged in this soldering operation that Mahng arrived and began to cultivate the widow's acquaintance.

*"In the spring a fuller crimson  
comes upon the robin's breast,"*

and in the spring the loon puts on his wedding-garment, and his fancy, like the young man's, "lightly turns to thoughts of love."

But speaking of Mahng's wedding-garment reminds me that I haven't told you about his winter dress. His back and wings were very dark-brown, and his breast and under-parts were white. His head and the upper portion of his neck were black; his bill was black, or blackish, and so were his feet. His coat was very thick and warm, and his legs were feathered right down to the heel-joint. More than five feet his wings stretched from tip to tip, and he weighed at least twelve pounds, and would be still larger before he died.

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As to his nuptial finery, its groundwork was much the same, but its trimmings were different and were very elegant. White spots appeared all over his back and the upper surfaces of his wings, some of them round, and some square. They were not thrown on carelessly, but were arranged in gracefully curving lines, and they quite changed his appearance, especially if one were as near him as one is supposed to be during a courting. His spring neckwear, too, was in exceedingly good taste, for he put on a sort of collar of very narrow vertical stripes, contrasting beautifully with the black around and between them. Higher up on his neck and head the deep black feathers gleamed and shone in the sunlight with brilliant iridescent tints of green and violet. He was a very handsome bird.

And now everything was going north. The sun was going north, the wind was going north, the birds were going, and summer herself was sweeping up from the tropics as fast as ever she could travel. Mahng was getting very restless. A dozen times a day he would spread his wings and beat the air furiously, dashing the spray in every direction, and almost lifting his heavy body out of the water. But the time was not yet come, and presently he would fold his pinions and go back to his courting.

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Do you think he was very inconstant? Do you blame him for not being more faithful to the memory of the bird who was shot at his side only a few months before? Don't be too hard on him. What can a loon do when the springtime calls and the wind blows fresh and strong, when the new strong wine of life is coursing madly through his veins, and when his dreams are all of the vernal flight to the lonely northland, where the water is cold and the fish are good, and where there are such delightful nesting-places around the marshy ponds?

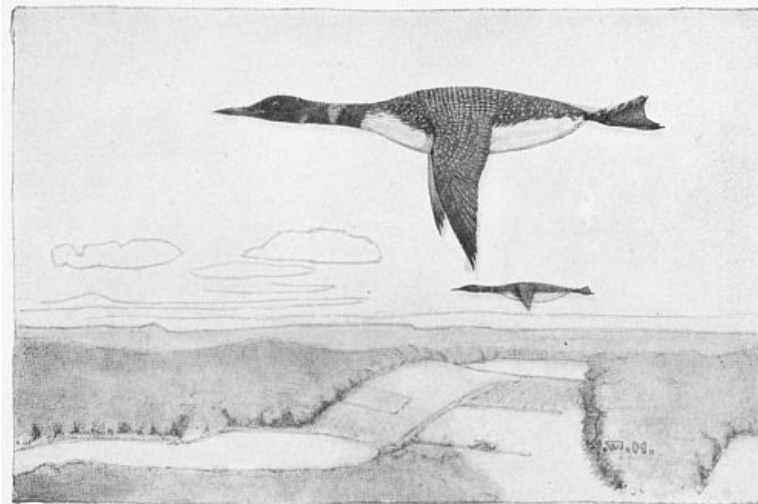
But how did his new friend feel about it? Would she go with him? Ah! Wouldn't she? Had not she, too, put on a wedding-garment just like his? And what was she there for, anyhow, if not to be wooed, and to find a mate, and to fly away with him a thousand miles to the north, and there, beside some lonely little lake, brood over her eggs and her young? Her wing was gaining strength all the time, and at last she was ready. You should have heard them laugh when the great day came and they pulled out for Michigan—Mahng a little in the lead, as became the larger and stronger, and his new wife close behind. There had been nearly a week of cooler weather just before the start, which had delayed them a little, but now the south wind was blowing again, and over and over it seemed to say,

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*"And we go, go, go away from here!  
On the other side the world we're overdue!  
'Send the road lies clear before you  
When the old Spring-fret comes o'er you,  
And the Red Gods call for you."*

And the road was clear, and they went. Up, and up, and up; higher and higher, till straight ahead, stretching away to the very edge of the world, lay league after league of sunshine and air, only waiting the stroke of their wings. Now steady, steady! Beat, beat, beat! And the old earth sliding southward fifty miles an hour! No soaring—their wings were too short for that sort of work—and no quick wheeling to right or left, but hurtling on with whizzing pinions and eager eyes, straight toward the goal. Was it any wonder that they were happy, and that joyful shouts and wild peals of laughter came ringing down from the sky to tell us poor earthbound men and women that somewhere up in the blue, beyond the reach of our short-sighted eyes, the loons were hurrying home?

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*"The old earth sliding southward fifty miles an hour."*

Over the fresh fields, green with the young wheat; over the winding rivers and the smiling lakes; over the—shut your eyes, and dream a little while, and see if you can imagine what it was like. Does it make you wish you were a loon yourself? Never mind; some day, perhaps, we too shall take our wedding-journeys in the air; not on feathered pinions, but with throbbing engines and whizzing wheels, and with all the power of steam or electricity to lift us and bear us onward. We shall skim the prairies and leap the mountains, and roam over the ocean like the wandering albatross. To-day we shall breathe the warm, spicy breath of the tropic islands, and to-morrow we shall sight the white gleam of the polar ice-pack. When the storm gathers we shall mount above it, and looking down we shall see the lightning leap from cloud to cloud, and the rattling thunder will come upward, not downward, to our ears. When the world below is steeped in the shadows of coming night, we shall still watch the sunset trailing its glories over the western woods and mountains; and when morning breaks we shall be the first to welcome the sunrise as it comes rushing up from the east a thousand miles an hour. The wind of the upper heavens will be pure and keen and strong, and not even a sleigh-ride on a winter's night can set the live blood dancing as it will dance and tingle up there above the clouds. And riding on the air, alone with the roaring engines that have become for the time a part of ourselves, we shall know at last what our earth is really like, for we shall see it as the loons see it—yes, as God and His angels see it—this old earth,

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on which we have lived for so many thousand years, and yet have never seen.

But, after all, the upper heavens will not be home; and some day, as we shoot northward, or southward, or eastward, or westward, we shall see beneath us the spot that is to be for us the best and dearest place in all the world, and dropping down out of the blue we shall find something that is even better than riding on the wings of the wind. That was what happened to Mahng and his wife, for one spring evening, as they came rushing over the pine-tops and the maples and birches, they saw the Glimmerglass just ahead. The water lay like polished steel in the fading light, and the brown ranks of the still leafless trees stood dark and silent around the shores. It was very quiet, and very, very lonely; and the lake and the woods seemed waiting and watching for something. And into that stillness and silence the loons came with shouting and laughter, sweeping down on a long slant, and hitting the water with a splash. The echoes awoke and the Glimmerglass was alive, and summer had come to the northland.

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They chose a place where the shore was low and marshy, and there, only two or three yards from the water's edge, they built a rude nest of grass and weeds and lily-pads. Two large greenish eggs, blotched with dark-brown, lay in its hollow; and the wife sat upon them week after week, and covered them with the warm feathers of her broad, white breast. Once in a while she left them long enough to stretch her wings in a short flight, or to dive in search of a fish, but she was never gone very long. It was a weary vigil that she kept, but she sat there in daylight and darkness, through sunshine and storm, till at last the day came when there were four loons instead of two at the Glimmerglass.

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The chicks were very smart and active, and they took to the water almost as soon as they were out of the shell, swimming and diving as if they had been accustomed to it for weeks instead of hours. In some ways, however, they required a good deal of care. For one thing, their little stomachs were not quite equal to the task of assimilating raw fish, and the parents had to swallow all their food for them, keep it down till it was partly digested, and then pass it up again to the hungry children. It made a good deal of delay, and it must have been very unpleasant, but it seemed to be the only practicable way of dealing with the situation. I am glad to say that it did not last very long, for by the time they were two weeks old the young loons were able to take their fish and reptiles and insects at first hand.

When they first arrived the chicks were covered all over with stiff down, of a dark, sooty gray on their backs, and white underneath. But this did not last long, either. The first feathers soon appeared, and multiplied rapidly. I can't say that the young birds were particularly handsome, for even when their plumage was complete it was much quieter and duller of hue than their parents'. But they were fat and plump, and I think they thoroughly enjoyed life, especially before they discovered that there were enemies as well as friends in the world. That was a kind of knowledge that could not be avoided very long, however. They soon learned that men, and certain other animals such as hawks and skunks, were to be carefully shunned; and you should have seen them run on the water whenever a suspicious-looking character hove in sight. Their wings were not yet large enough for flying, but they flapped them with all their might, and scampered across the Glimmerglass so fast that their little legs fairly twinkled, and they actually left a furrow in the water behind them. But the bottom of the lake was really the safest refuge, and if a boat or a canoe pressed them too closely they would usually dive below the surface, while the older birds tried to lure the enemy off in some other direction by calling and shouting and making all sorts of demonstrations.

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Generally these tactics were successful, but not always. Once some boys cornered the whole family in a small, shallow bay, where the water was not deep enough for diving; and before they could escape one of the youngsters was driven up onto the beach. He tried to hide behind a log, but he was captured and earned off, and I wish I had time to tell you of all the things that happened to him before he was finally killed and eaten by a dog. It was pretty tough on the old birds, as well as on him, but they still had one chick left, and you can't expect to raise *all* your children as long as bigger people are so fond of kidnapping and killing them.

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Not all the people who came to see them were bent on mischief, however. There was a party of girls and boys, for instance, who camped beside the Glimmerglass for a few weeks, and who liked to follow them around the lake in a row-boat and imitate their voices, just for the fun of making them talk back. One girl in particular became so accomplished in the loon language that Mahng would often get very much excited as he conversed with her, and would sometimes let the boat creep nearer and nearer until they were only a few rods apart. And then, all of a sudden, he would duck his head and go under, perhaps in the very middle of a laugh. The siren was getting a little too close. Her intentions might possibly be all right, but it was just as well to be on the safe side.

The summer was nearly gone, and now Mahng did something which I fear you will strongly disapprove. I didn't want to tell you about it, but I suppose I must. Two or three male loons passed over the Glimmerglass one afternoon, calling and shouting as they went, and he flew up and joined them, and came back no more that summer. It looked like a clear case of desertion, but we must remember that he had stood by his wife all through the trying period of the spring and early summer, and that the time was at hand when the one chick that was left would go out into the world to paddle his own canoe, and when she would no longer need his help in caring for a family of young children. But you think he might have stayed with her, anyhow? Well, so do I; I'm sorry he didn't. They say that his cousins, the Red-throated Loons, marry for life, and live together from the wedding-day till death, and I don't see why he couldn't have done as well as

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they. But it doesn't seem to be the custom among the Great Northern Divers. Mahng was only following the usual practice of his kind, and if his first wife had not been shot it is likely that they would have separated before they had gone very far south. And yet it does not follow that the marriage was not a love-match. If you had seen them at their housekeeping I think you would have pronounced him a very good husband and father. Perhaps the conjugal happiness of the spring and early summer was all the better for a taste of solitude during the rest of the year.

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As I said, the time was near when the chick would strike out for himself. He soon left his mother, and a little later she too started for the Gulf of Mexico. Summer was over, and the Glimmerglass was lonelier than ever.

Mahng came back next spring, and of course he brought a wife with him. But was she the same wife who had helped him make the Glimmerglass ring with his shouting twelve months before? Well, I—I don't quite know. She looked very much like her, and I certainly hope she was the same bird. I should like to believe that they had been reunited somewhere down in Texas or Mississippi or Louisiana, and that they had come back together for another season of parental cares and joys. But when I consider the difficulties in the way I cannot help feeling doubtful about it. The two birds had gone south at different times and perhaps by different routes. Before they reached the lower Mississippi Valley they may have been hundreds of miles apart. Was it to be reasonably expected that Mahng, when he was ready to return, would search every pond and stream from the Cumberland to the Gulf? And is it likely that, even if he had tried for weeks and weeks, he could ever have found his wife of the previous summer? His flight was swift and his sight keen, and his clarion voice rang far and wide over the marshes; but it is no joke to find one particular bird in a region covering half a dozen States. If they had arranged to come north separately, and meet at the Glimmerglass, there would not have been so many difficulties in the way, but they didn't do that. Anyhow, Mahng brought a wife home. That much, at least, is established. They set to work at once to build a nest and make ready for some new babies; but, alas! there was little parental happiness or responsibility in store for them that year.

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If you had been there you might have seen them swimming out from shore one bright, beautiful spring morning, when the sun had just risen, and the woods and waters lay calm and peaceful in the golden light, fairer than words can tell. They were after their breakfast, and presently they dived to see what was to be had. The light is dim down there in the depths of the Glimmerglass, the weeds are long and slimy, and the mud of the bottom is black and loathsome. But what does that matter? One can go back whenever one pleases. A few quick, powerful strokes will take you up into the open air, and you can see the woods and the sky. Aha! There is a herring, his scales shining like silver in the faint green light that comes down through the water. And there is a small salmon trout, with his gray-brown back and his golden sides. A fish for each of us.

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The loons darted forward at full speed; but the two fish made no effort to escape, and did not even wriggle when the long, sharp bills closed upon them. They were dead, choked to death by the fine threads of a gill-net. And now those same threads laid hold of the loons themselves, and a fearful struggle began.

Mahng and his wife did not always keep their wings folded when they were under water. Sometimes they used them almost as they did in flying, and just now they had need of every muscle in their bodies. How their pinions lashed the water, and how their legs kicked and their long necks writhed, and how the soft mud rose in clouds and shut out the dim light! But the harder they fought the more tightly did the net grapple them, winding itself round and round their bodies, and soon lashing their wings down against their sides. Expert divers though they were, the loons were drowning. There was a ringing in their ears and a roaring in their heads, and the very last atoms of oxygen in their lungs were almost gone. Death was drawing very near, and the bright, sunshiny world where they had been so happy a moment before, the world to which they had thought they could return so quickly and easily, seemed a thousand miles away. One last effort, one final struggle, and if that failed there would be nothing more to do but go to sleep forever.

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Fortunately for Mahng, his part of the net had been mildewed, and much of the strength had gone out of the linen threads. He was writhing and twisting with all his might, and suddenly he felt something give. One of the rotten meshes had torn apart. He worked with redoubled energy, and in a moment another thread gave way, and then another, and another. A second more and he was free. Quick, now, before the last spark goes out! With beating wings and churning paddles he fairly flew up through the green water toward the light, and on a sudden he shot out into the air, panting and gasping, and staring wildly around at the blue sky, and the quiet woods, and the smiling Glimmerglass. And how royally beautiful was the sunshine, and how sweet was the breath of life!

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But his mate was not with him, and a few hours later the fisherman found in his net the lifeless body of a drowned loon.

Mahng went north. He had thought that his spring flight was over and that he would go no farther, but now the Glimmerglass was no longer home, and he spread his wings once more and took his way toward the Arctic Circle. Over the hills, crowded with maple and beech and birch; over the Great Tahquamenon Swamp, with its cranberry marshes, its tangles of spruce and cedar, and its thin, scattered ranks of tamarack; over the sandy ridges where the pine-trees stand tall and stately, and out on Lake Superior. The water was blue, and the sunshine was bright; the wind was fresh and cool, and the billows rolled and tumbled as if they were alive and were having

a good time together. Together—that's the word. They were together, but Mahng was alone; and he wasn't having a good time at all. He wanted a home, and a nest, and some young ones, but he didn't find them that year, though he went clear to Hudson Bay, and looked everywhere for a mate. There were loons, plenty of them, but they had already paired and set up housekeeping, and he found no one who was in a position to halve his sorrows and double his joys.

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Something attracted his attention one afternoon when he was swimming on a little lake far up in the Canadian wilderness—a small red object that kept appearing and disappearing in a very mysterious fashion among the bushes that lined the beach. Mahng's bump of curiosity was large and well developed, and he gave one of his best laughs and paddled slowly in toward the shore. I think he had a faint and utterly unreasonable hope that it might prove to be what he was looking and longing for, though he knew very well that no female loon of his species ever had red feathers—nor a male, either, for that matter. It was a most absurd idea, and his dreams, if he really had them, were cut short by the report of a shotgun. A little cloud of smoke floated up through the bushes, and a charge of heavy shot peppered the water all around him. But if Mahng was curious he was also quick to take a hint. He had heard the click of the gun-lock, and before the leaden hail could reach him he was under water. His tail feathers suffered a little, but otherwise he was uninjured, and he did not come to the surface again till he was far away from that deceitful red handkerchief.

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The summer was an entire failure, and after a while Mahng gave it up in despair, and started south much earlier than usual. At the Straits of Mackinac he had another narrow escape, for he came very near killing himself by dashing head first against the lantern of a lighthouse, whose brilliant beams, a thousand times brighter than the light which had lured his first wife to her death, had first attracted and then dazzled and dazed him. Fortunately he swerved a trifle at the last moment, and though he brushed against an iron railing, lost his balance, and fell into the water, there were no bones broken and no serious damage done.

The southland, as everybody knows, is the only proper place for a loon courtship. There, I am pleased to say, Mahng found a new wife, and in due time he brought her up to the Glimmerglass. That was only last spring, and there is but one more incident for me to relate. This summer has been a happy and prosperous one, but there was a time when it seemed likely to end in disaster before it had fairly begun.

Just northeast of the Glimmerglass there lies a long, narrow, shallow pond. I believe I mentioned it when I was telling you about the Beaver. One afternoon Mahng had flown across to this pond, and as he was swimming along close to the shore he put his foot into a beaver-trap, and sprung it. Of course he did his best to get away, but the only result of his struggling was to work the trap out into deeper and deeper water until he was almost submerged. He made things almost boil with the fierce beating of his wings, but it was no use; he might better have saved his strength. He quieted down at last and lay very still, with only his head and neck out of water, and there he waited two mortal hours for something to happen.

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Meanwhile his wife sat quietly on her eggs—there were three of them this year—and drowsed away the warm spring afternoon. By and by she heard a tramping as of heavy feet approaching, and glancing between the tall grasses she saw, not a bear nor a deer, but something far worse—a man. She waited till he was within a few yards, and then she jumped up, scuttled down to the water as fast as she could go, and dived as if she was made of lead. The trapper glanced after her with a chuckle.

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"Seems pretty badly scared," he said to himself, but his voice was not unkindly. His smile faded as he stood a moment beside the nest, looking at the eggs, and thinking of what would some day come forth from them. He was a solitary old fellow, with never a wife nor a child, nor a relation of any kind. His life in the woods was just what he had chosen for himself, and he would not have exchanged it for anything else in the world; but sometimes the loneliness of it came over him, and he wished that he had somebody to talk to. And now, looking at those eggs, and thinking of the fledglings that were coming to the loons, he wondered how it would seem if he had some children of his own. Pretty soon he glanced out on the lake again, and saw Mahng's wife sitting quietly on the water, just out of range.

"Hope she won't stay away till they get cold," he thought, and went on his way across the swamp. The loon watched him till he passed out of sight, and then she swam in to the beach and pushed herself up her narrow runway to her old place. The eggs were still warm.

Half an hour later the trapper stepped out of the bushes beside the pond, and caught sight of Mahng's head sticking out of the water. He was considerably astonished, but he promptly laid hold of the chain and drew bird, trap, and all up onto the bank, and then he sat down on a log and laughed till the echoes went flying back and forth across the pond. Plastered with mud, dripping wet, and with his left leg fast in the big steel killing-machine, Mahng was certainly a comical sight. All the fight was soaked out of him, and he lay prone upon the ground and waited for the trapper to do what he pleased. But the trapper did nothing—only sat on his log, and presently forgot to laugh. He was thinking of the sitting loon whom he had disturbed a little while before. This was probably her mate, and again there came over him a vague feeling that life had been very good to these birds, and had given them something which he, the man, had missed. He was growing old. A few more seasons and there would be one trapper less in the Great Tahquamenon Swamp; and he would die without—well, what was the use of talking or thinking about it? But the loons would hatch their young, and care for them and protect them until they were ready to go out into the world, and then they would send them away to the south. A few weeks later they

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would follow, and next spring they would come back and do it all over again. That is—they would if he didn't kill them.

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He rose from his log, smiling again at the abject look with which Mahng watched him, and putting one foot on each of the two heavy steel springs, he threw his weight upon them and crushed them down. Mahng felt the jaws relax, and suddenly he knew that he was free. The strength came back with a rush to his weary limbs, and he sprang up, scrambled down the bank and into the water, and was gone. A few minutes later he reappeared far down the pond, and rising on the wing he flew away with a laugh toward the Glimmerglass.

## THE MAKING OF A GLIMMERGLASS BUCK

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I DON'T know that he was a record-breaker, but he was certainly much larger and more powerful than the average buck, and he was decidedly good-looking, even for a deer. There were one or two slight blemishes—to be described later—in his physical make-up; but they were not very serious, and except for them he was very handsome and well-formed. I can't give you the whole story of his life, for that would take several books, but I shall try to tell you how he became the biggest buck and the best fighter of his day and generation in the woods around the Glimmerglass. He was unusually favored by Providence, for besides being so large and strong he was given a weapon such as very few full-grown Michigan bucks have ever possessed.

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He had a good start in life, and it is really no wonder that he distanced all his relations. In the first place, he arrived in the woods a little earlier in the year than deer babies usually do. This was important, for it lengthened his first summer, and gave more opportunity for growth before the return of cold weather. If the winter had lingered, or if there had been late frosts or snowstorms, his early advent might have been anything but a blessing; but the spring proved a mild one, and there was plenty of good growing weather for fawns. Then, too, his mother as in the very prime of life, and for the time being he was her only child. If there had been twins, as there were the year before, he would, of course, have had to share her milk with a brother or sister; but as it was he enjoyed all the benefits of a natural monopoly, and he grew and prospered accordingly, and was a baby to be proud of.

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*"He was a baby to be proud of."*

And his mother took good care of him, and never tried to show him off before the other people of the woods. She knew that it was far safer and wiser to keep him concealed as long as possible, and not let anyone know that she had him. So instead of letting him wander with her through the woods when she went in search of food, she generally left him hidden in a thicket or behind a bush or a fallen tree. There he spent many a long, lonely hour, idly watching the waving branches and the moving shadows, and perhaps thinking dim, formless, wordless baby thoughts, or looking at nothing and thinking of nothing, but just sleeping the quiet sleep of infancy, and living, and growing, and getting ready for hard times.

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At first the Fawn knew no difference between friends and enemies, but the instinct of the hunted soon awoke and told him when to be afraid. If a hostile animal came by while the doe was gone, he would crouch low, with his nose to the ground and his big ears laid back on his neck; or if pressed too closely he would jump up and hurry away to some better cover, with leaps and bounds so light and airy that they seemed the very music of motion. But that did not happen very often. His hiding-places were well chosen, and he usually lay still till his mother came back.

When she thought he was large enough, and strong and swift enough, she let him travel with

her; and then he became acquainted with several new kinds of forest—with the dark hemlock groves, and the dense cedar swamps; with the open tamarack, where the trees stand wide apart, and between them the great purple-and-white lady's-slippers bloom; with the cranberry marshes, where pitcher-plants live, and white-plumed grasses nod in the breeze; with sandy ridges where the pine-trees purr with pleasure when the wind strokes them; with the broad, beautiful Glimmerglass, laughing and shimmering in the sunshine, and with all the sights and the sounds of that wonderful world where he was to spend the years of his deerhood.

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They were a very silent pair. When his breakfast was ready she would sometimes call him with a low murmuring, and he would answer her with a little bleat; but those were almost the only sounds that were ever heard from them, except the rustling of the dry leaves around their feet. Yet they understood each other perfectly, and they were very happy together. There was little need of speech, for all they had to do the livelong day was to wander about while the doe picked up her food, and then, when she had eaten her fill, to lie down in some sheltered place, and there rest and chew the cud till it was time to move again.

Life wasn't all sunshine, of course. There were plenty of hard things for the baby Buck to put up with, and perhaps the worst were the mosquitoes and the black-flies and "no-see-'ems" that swarmed in the woods and swamps through the month of June. They got into his mouth and into his nose; they gathered in circles around his eyes; and they snuggled cosily down between the short hairs of his pretty, spotted coat, and sucked the blood out of him till it seemed as if he would soon go dry. For a while they were almost unbearable, but I suppose the woods-people get somewhat hardened to them. Otherwise I should think our friends would have been driven mad, for there was never any respite from their attacks, except possibly a very stormy day, or a bath in the lake, or a saunter on the shore.

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At the eastern end of the Glimmerglass there is a broad strip of sand beach, where, if there happens to be a breeze from the water, one can walk and be quite free from the flies; though in calm weather, or with an offshore wind, it is not much better than the woods. There, during fly-time, the doe and her baby were often to be found; and to see him promenading up and down the hard sand, with his mother looking on, was one of the prettiest sights in all the wilderness. The ground-color of his coat was a bright bay red, somewhat like that of his mother's summer clothing; but deeper and richer and handsomer, and with pure white spots arranged in irregular rows all along his neck and back and sides. He was so sleek and polished that he fairly glistened in the sunshine, like a well-groomed horse; his great dark eyes were brighter than a girl's at her first ball; and his ears were almost as big as a mule's, and a million times as pretty. But best and most beautiful of all was the marvellous life and grace and spirit of his every pose and motion. When he walked, his head and neck were thrust forward and drawn back again at every step with the daintiest gesture imaginable; and his tiny pointed hoofs touched the ground so lightly, and were away again so quickly, that you hardly knew what they had done. If anything startled him, he stamped with his forefoot on the hard sand, and tossed his head in the air with an expression that was not fear, but alertness, and even defiance. And when he leaped and ran—but there's no use in trying to describe that.

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By the middle of July most of the flies were gone, and the deer could travel where they pleased without being eaten alive. And then, almost before they knew what had happened, the summer was gone, too, and the autumn had come. The Fawn's white spots disappeared, and both he and his mother put off their thin red summer clothing and donned the blue coat of fall, which would by and by fade into the gray of winter—a garment made of longer, coarser hairs, which were so thick that they had to stand on end because there wasn't room for them to lie down, and which made such a warm covering that one who wore it could sleep all night in the snow, and rise in the morning dry and comfortable.

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The Fawn had thriven wonderfully. Already the budding antlers were pushing through the skin on the top of his head, which alone is pretty good proof that he was a remarkable baby. But, of course, the infancy of a wild animal is always much shorter than that of a human child. It is well that this is so, for if the period of weakness and helplessness was not shortened for them, there would probably be very few who would ever survive its dangers and reach maturity. The Fawn was weaned early in the autumn; though he still ran with his mother, and she showed him what herbs and leaves were pleasantest to the taste and best for building up bone and muscle, and where the beechnuts were most plentiful. The mast was good that fall, which isn't always the case, and that was another lucky star in young Buck's horoscope. So much depends on having plenty to eat the first year.

And now the doe was thriving as well as her son. Through the summer she had been thin and poor, for the Fawn had fed on her life and strength, and the best of all that came to her she had given to him; but the strain was over at last, and there were granted her a few weeks in which to prepare for the season of cold and storm and scanty food. She made the best of them, and in an amazingly short time she was rolling fat.

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Everything was lovely and the goose hung high, when all of a sudden the peace and quiet of their every-day lives were rudely broken. The hunting season had come, and half-a-dozen farmers from lower Michigan had camped beside the Glimmerglass. They were not really very formidable. If one wants to kill deer, one should learn to shoot straight and to get around in the woods without making quite as much noise as a locomotive. But their racket was intolerable, and after a day or two the doe and the Fawn left home and spent the next three or four weeks near a secluded little pond several miles away to the southeast.

By the first of December these troublous times were over, and they had returned to their old haunts in the beech and maple woods, where they picked up a rather scanty living by scraping the light snow away with their forefeet in search of the savory nuts. But before Christmas there came a storm which covered the ground so deeply that they could no longer dig out enough food to keep them from going hungry; and they were forced to leave the high lands and make their way to the evergreen swamps around the head-waters of the Tahquamenon. There they lived on twigs of balsam and hemlock and spruce, with now and then a mouthful of moss or a nutritious lichen. Little by little the fat on their ribs disappeared, they grew lank and lean again, and the bones showed more and more plainly through their heavy winter coats. If one of those November hunters had succeeded in setting his teeth in their flesh he would have found that it had a very pleasant, nutty flavor, but in February it would have tasted decidedly of hemlock. Yet they were strong and healthy, in spite of their boniness, and of course you can't expect to be very fat in winter.

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There were worse things than hunger. One afternoon they were following a big buck down a runway—all three of them minding their own business and behaving in a very orderly and peaceable manner—when a shanty-boy stepped out from behind a big birch just ahead of them, and said, "Aah!" very derisively and insultingly. The wind was blowing from them to him, and they hadn't had the least idea that he was there until they were within three rods of his tree. The buck was so startled that for an instant he simply stood still and stared, which was exactly what the shanty-boy had expected him to do. He had stopped so suddenly that his forefeet were thrust forward into the snow, and he was leaning backward a trifle. His head was up, his eyes were almost popping out of their sockets, and there was such a look of astonishment on his face that the man laughed as he raised his gun and took aim. In a second the deer had wheeled and was in the air, but a bullet broke his back just as he left the ground, and he came tumbling down again in a shapeless heap. His spinal cord was cut, and half his body was dead; but he would not give up even then, and he half rose on his forefeet and tried to drag himself away. The shanty-boy stepped to his side with a knife in his hand, the deer gave one loud bleat of fear and pain, and then it was all over.

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But by that time the doe and the Fawn were far down the runway—out of sight, and out of danger. Next day they passed that way again, and saw a Canada lynx standing where the buck had fallen, licking his chops as if he had just finished a good meal. It is hard work carrying a deer through the woods, and the shanty-boy had lightened his load as much as possible. Lynxes are not nice. The mother and son pulled their freight as fast as they could travel.

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When the world turned green again they went back to the Glimmerglass, but they had not been there long before the young Buck had his nose put out of joint by the arrival of two new babies. Thenceforth his mother had all she could do to take care of them, without paying any further attention to him. The days of his fawnhood were over, and it was time for him to strike out into the world and make his own living.

However, I don't think he was very lonesome. There were plenty of other deer in the woods, and though he did not associate with any of them as he had with his mother, yet he may have enjoyed meeting them occasionally in his travels. And there was ever so much to do and to think about. Eating took up a good deal of time, for he was very active and was still growing, and his strong young body was constantly calling for more food. And it wasn't enough merely to find the food and swallow it, for no sooner was his stomach full than he had to lie down and chew the cud for an hour or so. And, of course, the black-flies and mosquitoes and "no-see-'ems" helped to make things interesting, just as they had the year before. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to be lonely in the woods during fly-time. He changed his clothes, too, and put on a much handsomer dress, though I doubt if he took as much interest in that operation as most of us would. The change contributed greatly to his comfort, for his light summer garment was much better adapted to warm weather than his winter coat, but it did not require any conscious effort on his part. On hot days he sometimes waded out into the lake in search of lily-pads, and the touch of the cool water was very grateful. Occasionally he would take a long swim, and once or twice he paddled clear across the Glimmerglass, from one shore to the other.

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And it was during this summer that he raised his first real antlers. Those of the previous autumn had been nothing but two little buds of bone, but these were pointed spikes, several inches in length, standing straight up from the top of his head without a fork or a branch or a curve. They did not add very much to his good looks, and, of course, they dropped off early in the following winter, but they were the forerunners of the beautiful branching antlers of his later years, and if he thought about them at all they were probably as welcome as a boy's first mustache.

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Late in the following autumn an event occurred which left its mark on him for the rest of his life. One night he wandered into a part of the woods where some lumbermen had been working during the day. On the ground where they had eaten their lunch he found some baked beans and a piece of dried apple-pie, and he ate them greedily and was glad that he had come. But he found something else, too. One of the road-monkeys had carelessly left his axe in the snow with the edge turned up. The Buck stepped on it, and it slipped in between the two halves of his cloven hoof, and cut deep into his foot. The wound healed in the course of time, but from that night the toes—they were those of his left hind foot—were spread far apart, instead of lying close together as they should have done. Sticks and roots sometimes caught between them in a way that was very annoying, and his track was different from that of any other deer in the woods, which was not a thing to be desired. He was not crippled, however, for he could still leap almost, if not

quite, as far as ever, and run almost as fast.

He continued to grow and prosper, and the next summer he raised a pair of forked antlers with two tines each. [214]

And now he is well started down the runway of life, and we must leave him to travel by himself for two or three years. He ranged the woods far and near, and came to know them as a man knows his own house; but no matter what places he visited, the old haunts that his mother had shown him were the best of all, as the deer have learned by the experience of generation after generation. He always came back again to the Glimmerglass, and as the seasons went by I often saw his broad, spreading hoof-print on the sandy beach where they two had so often walked in that first summer. He evidently had plenty of company, and was probably enjoying life, for all around were other foot-prints that were narrow and delicately pointed, as a deer's should be. Some of them, of course, were his own, left by his three perfect feet; but others were those of his friends and acquaintances, and it is quite possible that some of the tiniest and daintiest were made by his children.

That beach is a delightful place for a promenade on a summer night, and besides the deer-tracks one can sometimes find there the trails of the waddling porcupines, the broad, heavy print left by a black bear as he goes shambling by, and the handwriting of many another of the woods-people. Strange and interesting scenes must often be enacted on the smooth, hard sand that lies between the woods and the water, and it is a pity that the show always comes to a sudden close if any would-be spectators appear, and that we never see anything but the foot-prints of the performers. [215]

With each recurring hunting season the Buck and the other deer that made their homes around the Glimmerglass were driven away for a time. A few stayed, or at least remained as near as they dared; but compared with summer the neighborhood was almost depopulated. And in his fourth year, in spite of all his efforts to keep out of harm's way, the Buck came very near losing his life at the hands of a man who had really learned how to hunt—not one of the farmers who went ramming about the woods, shooting at everything in sight, and making noise enough to startle even the porcupines.

One afternoon, late in the autumn, the judge left his court-room in Detroit and started for his house. He bought an evening paper as he boarded the street-car; and, as Fate would have it, the first thing that met his eye as he unfolded it was the forecast for upper Michigan: "Colder; slight snow-fall; light northerly winds." The judge folded the paper again and put it in his pocket, and all the rest of the way home he was dreaming of things that he had seen before—of the white and silent woods, of deer-tracks in the inch-deep snow, of the long still-hunt under dripping branches and gray November skies, of a huge buck feeding unconcernedly beneath the beech-trees, of nutty venison steaks broiling on the coals, and, finally, of another pair of antlers for his dining-room. Court had adjourned for three days, and that night he took the train for the north. And while he travelled, the snow came down softly and silently, melting at first as fast as it fell, and then, as the cold grew sharper, clothing the woods in a thin, white robe, the first gift of the coming winter. [216]

Next day the Buck was lying behind a fallen tree, chewing his cud, when the breeze brought him a whiff of an unpleasant human odor. He jumped up and hurried away, and the judge heard him crash through the bushes, and searched until he had found his trail. An hour later, as the Buck was nosing for beechnuts in the snow, a rifle cracked and a bullet went zipping by and carried off the very tip of his left antler. He dropped his white flag and was off like a shot. [217]

Chase a wounded deer, and he will run for miles; leave him alone, and if he is badly hurt he will soon lie down. The chances are that he will never get up again. The judge knew that the Buck was hit, for he had seen his tail come down. But was he hit hard? There was no blood on the trail, and the judge decided to follow.

The Buck hurried on, but before long his leaps began to grow shorter. After a mile or so he stopped, looked back, and listened. The woods were very, very still, and for all that he could see or hear there was not the least sign of danger. Yet he was afraid, and in a few minutes he pushed on again, though not as rapidly as before. As the short afternoon wore away he travelled still more slowly, and his stops were longer and more frequent. And at last, just before sunset, as he stood and watched for the enemy who might or might not be on his trail, he heard a twig snap, and saw a dark form slip behind a tree. This time he ran as he had never run before in all his life.

The judge spent the night at the nearest lumber-camp, and the next morning he was out again as soon as he could see, following his own trail back to where he had left that of the Buck. On the way he crossed the tracks of two other deer, but they had no temptations for him. He wanted to solve the mystery of that spreading hoof-print, and to make sure that his shot had not been a clean miss. And now began a day which was without precedent in the Buck's whole history. Those woods are not the best in the world for a deer who has to play hide-and-seek with a man, for there are few bare ridges or half-wooded slopes from which he can look back to see if anyone is following him. Even the glades and the open cranberry swamps are small and infrequent. An almost unbroken forest sweeps away in every direction, and everywhere there is cover for the still-hunter. And when the ground is carpeted with snow an inch and a half deep, as it was then, and at every step a deer must leave behind him a trail as plain as a turnpike road, then it is not strange if he feels that he has run up against a decidedly tough proposition. Eyes, ears, and nose are all on the alert, and all doing their level best, but what eye can penetrate the cedar swamp [218]

beyond a few yards; or what ear can always catch the tread of a moccasin on the moss and the snow before it comes within rifle range; or what nose, no matter how delicate, can detect anything but what happens to lie in its owner's path, or what the wind chooses to bring it? Many a foe had crossed the Buck's trail in the course of his life; but none had ever followed him like this—silently and relentlessly—slowly, but without a moment's pause. A few leaps were always enough to put the judge out of sight, and half an hour's run left him far behind; but in a little while he was there again, creeping cautiously through the undergrowth, and peering this way and that for a glimpse of a plump, round, blue-gray body. Once he fired before the deer knew that he was at hand, and if a hanging twig had not turned the bullet a trifle from its course, the still-hunt would have ended then and there.

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But late in the afternoon the Buck thought that he had really shaken his pursuer off, and the judge was beginning to think so, too. They had not seen each other for two or three hours, the day was nearly over, and there were signs of a change in the weather. If the Buck could hold out till nightfall, and then the snow should melt before morning, he would be comparatively safe.

In his fear of the enemy lurking in the rear, he had forgotten all other dangers; and without quite realizing what he was doing he had come back to the Glimmerglass, and was tramping once more up and down the old familiar runways. Presently he came upon a huge maple, lying prostrate on the ground. He walked around its great bushy head and down toward its foot; and there he found a broad, saucer-shaped hollow, left when the tree was torn up by the roots in some wild gale. On one side rose a mass of earth, straight as a stone wall and four or five feet in height; and against its foot lay one of the most tempting beds of dead leaves that he had ever seen, free from snow, dry as a whistle, soft and downy. The sight of it was too much for him. He was very weary, his limbs fairly ached with fatigue, and for the last hour his spread hoof had given him a good deal of pain. His enemy was nowhere in sight, and in spite of his misgivings he sank down on the couch with a sigh of comfort, and began to chew his cud.

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The judge was about ready to give up for the night when he, too, came upon that fallen maple. He saw the wall of earth and twisted roots, with the deer-tracks leading toward it; and slowly, softly, silently, he crept down toward the Buck's shelter.

There was no wind that evening, and the woods seemed perfectly still; but now, unnoticed by the judge, a faint, faint puff came wandering among the trees, as if on purpose to warn the deer of his danger. Suddenly he started, sniffed the air, and was up and away like a race-horse—not leaping nor bounding now, but running low, with his head down, and his antlers laid back on his neck. If he had been in the cedar swamp he would have escaped unhurt, but up in the hardwood the trees do not stand so close, and one can see a little farther. The judge fired before he could get out of sight, and he dropped with three ribs broken and a bullet lodged behind his right shoulder. He was up again in an instant, but there were blood-stains on the snow where he had lain, and this time the judge did not follow. Instead of giving chase he went straight back to the lumber-camp, feeling almost as sure of that new pair of antlers as if he had carried them with him.

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The Buck ran a little way, with his flag lowered and the blood spurting, and then he lay down to rest, just as the judge knew he would. The bleeding soon stopped, but it left him very weak and tired, and that night was the most miserable he had ever known. The darkness settled down thick and black over the woods, the wind began to blow, and by and by the rain commenced to fall—first a drizzle, and then a steady pour. Cold and wet, wounded and tired and hungry, the Buck was about as wretched as it is possible for a mortal to be. And yet that rain was the one and only thing that could save him. Under its melting touch the snow began to disappear, and before morning the ground was bare again. Even the blood-stains were washed away. It would take a better nose than the judge's to track him now.

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Yet the danger was not over, by any means. The judge knew very nearly where to look for him, and could probably find him if he did not get up and move on. And to move on, or even to rise to his feet, seemed utterly impossible. The least motion sent the most exquisite pain shooting through his whole body, and I believe he would have died where he lay, either at the hands of the judge or from exhaustion, if another man hadn't come along. The judge would have advanced slowly and quietly, and the deer might never have known he was coming till a rifle bullet hit him; but this man's errand must have been a different one, for he came striding noisily through the trees and bushes and over the dead leaves, whistling "I Want Yer, Ma Honey," at the top of his whistle. If you are obliged to be out in the woods during the hunting season, and don't care to kill anything, it is always best to make as much noise as you can. There is less danger that some other fool will take you for a deer and shoot you dead. The Buck heard him, of course, and tried to rise, only to sink back with a groan. He couldn't do it, or at least he thought he couldn't. But when the man came around a little balsam only two rods away, then his panic got the better of his pain, and he jumped up and made off at a clumsy, limping run. Every joint seemed on fire, and he ached from the top of his head to the toes of that poor left hind-foot. But after the first plunge it was not quite so bad. The motion took some of the stiffness out of his limbs, and by the time the judge arrived he was a mile away and was thinking about breakfast.

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We must do the sportsman the justice of saying that his remorse was very keen when he stepped aboard the train that night, bound for Detroit. He had wounded a deer and had let it get away from him, to suffer, and probably to die a painful, lingering death. The whole day—the last of the hunting season and of his court recess—had been spent in an unavailing search; not merely because he wanted some venison and a pair of antlers to carry home with him, but because he

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wanted to put the Buck out of his misery. He had failed everywhere, and he felt sorry and ashamed, and wished he had stayed at home. But, as it happened, the Buck did not want to be put out of his misery. Just as the judge took the train he was lying down for the night. He would be stiff when he rose again, but not as stiff as he had been that morning. He would be weak and tired, but he would still be able to travel and find food. He would lose his plumpness and roundness, no doubt, and lose them very rapidly. The winter would probably be a hard one, with such a misfortune as this at its very beginning. But no matter, it would pass. He wasn't the first Buck who had had his ribs smashed by an injection of lead and had lived to tell the tale.

The next year it was his antlers that got him into trouble—his antlers and his quarrelsomeness. Two round, black, velvet-covered knobs had appeared in spring on the top of his head, and had pushed up higher and higher till they formed cylindrical columns, each one leaning outward and a little backward. They were hot as fever with the blood that was rushing through them, building up the living masonry; and at the upper ends, where the work was newest, they were soft and spongy, and very sensitive, so that the least touch was enough to give pain. Longer and longer they grew, and harder and harder; by and by curving forward and inward; and one after another the tines appeared. And at last, in the early autumn, the tall towers of bone were complete, the blood ceased to course through them, and the Buck rubbed them against the tree-trunks until the velvety skin was all worn off, and they were left smooth and brown and polished. They were a handsome pair, spreading and branching very gracefully over his forehead, and bearing four tines to each beam. It is a mistake to suppose, as so many people do, that the number of tines on each antler invariably corresponds to the number of years that its owner has lived; but it very often does, especially before he has passed the prime of life.

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No sooner were the antlers finished than the Buck began to grow fat. He had been eating heartily for months, but he hadn't been able to put much flesh on his ribs as long as he had that big, bony growth to feed. Bucks and does are alike in this, that for both of them the summer is a season of plenty, but not of growing plump and round and strong. The difference between them is that the does give their strength and vitality to the children they are nursing, while the bucks pile theirs up on their own foreheads.

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And there was another change which came with the autumn. Through the summer he had been quiet and gentle, and had attended very strictly to his own affairs; but now the life and vigor and vitality which for weeks and months had been pouring into that tall, beautiful structure on his forehead were all surging like a tide through his whole body; and he became very passionate and excitable, and spent much time in rushing about the woods in search of other deer, fighting those of his own sex, and making love to the does. The year was at its high-water mark, and the Buck was nearing his prime. Food was plenty; everywhere the beechnuts were dropping on the dry leaves; the autumn sunshine was warm and mellow; the woods were gay with scarlet and gold and brown, and the very taste of the air was enough to make one happy. Was it any wonder if he sometimes felt as if he would like to fight every other buck in Michigan, and all of them at once?



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*"The buck was nearing the prime of life."*

One afternoon in October he fought a battle with another buck who was very nearly his match in size and strength—a battle that came near being the end of both of them. There was a doe just vanishing among the bushes when the fuss began, and the question at issue was which should follow her and which shouldn't. It would be easy enough to find her, for, metaphorically speaking, "her feet had touched the meadows, and left the daisies rosy." Wherever she went, a faint, faint fragrance clung to the dead leaves, far too delicate for a human nose to detect, yet quite strong enough for a buck to follow. But the trail wasn't broad enough for two, and the first thing to be done was to have a scrap and see which was the better and more deserving deer. And, as it turned out, the scent grew cold again, and the doe never heard that eager patter of hoofs hurrying down the runway behind her.

The bucks came together like two battering-rams, with a great clatter and clash of antlers, but after the first shock the fight seemed little more than a pushing-match. Each one was constantly trying to catch the other off his guard and thrust a point into his flesh, but they never succeeded. A pair of widely branching antlers is as useful in warding off blows as in delivering them. Such a perfect shield does it make, when properly handled, that at the end of half an hour neither of the bucks was suffering from anything but fatigue, and the issue was as far as ever from being settled. There was foam on their lips, and sweat on their sides; their mouths were open, and their breath came in gasps; every muscle was working its hardest, pushing and shoving and guarding; and they drove each other backward and forward through the bushes, and ploughed up the ground, and scattered the dry leaves in their struggles; and yet there was not a scratch on either shapely body.

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Finally, they backed off and rushed together again with such violence that our Buck's antlers

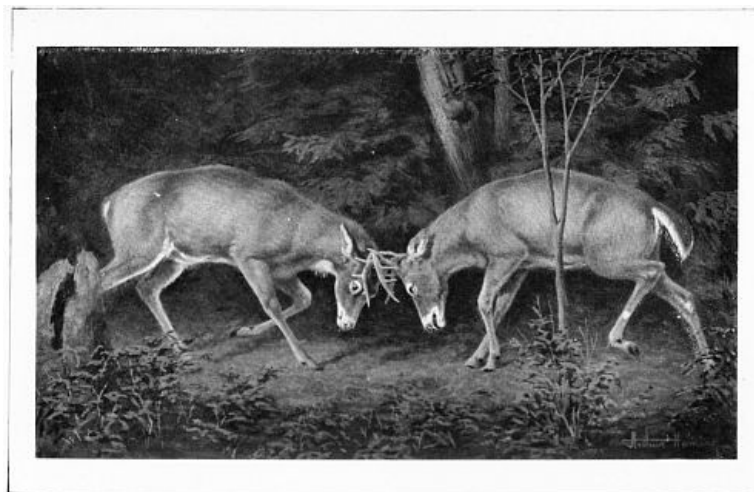


were forced apart just a trifle, and his enemy's slipped in between them. There was a little snap as they sprang back into position, and the mischief was done. The two foes were locked together in an embrace which death itself could not loosen.

The next few weeks were worse than a nightmare. If one went forward, the other had to go backward; and neither could go anywhere or do anything without getting the consent of the other or else carrying him along by main force. Many things could not be done at all—not even when both were willing and anxious to do them. They could not run or leap. They could not see, except out of the corners of their eyes. They would never again toss those beautiful antlers in the air, for they had come together with their heads held low, and in that position they must remain. They could not even lie down without twisting their necks till they ached as if they were breaking. With their noses to the ground, and with anger and misery in their hearts, they pushed and hauled each other this way and that through the woods. And wherever they went, they were always struggling and fighting and striving for every mouthful of food that came within reach. It was little enough that they found at the best, and it would have been better for both of them if they could have agreed to divide it evenly, but of course that would have been asking too much of deer nature. Each took all he could get, and at first they were so evenly matched that each secured somewhere near his fair share. They spied a beechnut on the ground, or a bit of lichen, or a tender twig; and together they made a dive for it. Two noses were thrust forward—no, not forward, sidewise—and two mouths were open to grasp the precious morsel which would enable its possessor to keep up the fight a little longer. Sometimes one got it, and sometimes the other; but from the very beginning our Buck was a shade the stronger, and his superiority grew with every mouthful that he managed to wrest from his fellow-prisoner. Both of them were losing flesh rapidly, but he kept his longer than the other. And at last they reached the point where, by reason of his greater strength, he got everything and the other nothing, and then the end was near. It would have come long before if both had not been in prime condition on the day of the battle.

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***"Wherever they went they were always struggling and fighting."***

One dark, stormy night the two deer were stumbling and floundering over roots and bushes, trying to find their way down to the beach for a drink. Both of them were pretty well used up; and one was so weak that he could hardly stand, and could only walk by leaning heavily on the head and antlers of the other, who supported him because he was obliged to, and not out of friendliness. They were within a few rods of the beach when he whose strength was least stepped into a hole and fell, and his leg-bone snapped like a dry twig. He struggled and tried to rise; but his story was told, and before morning he was dead. For once our Buck's instinct of self-preservation had carried him too far. He had taken all the food for himself, and had starved his enemy; and now he was bound face to face to a corpse.

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Well, we won't talk about that. He stayed there twenty-four hours, and there would soon have been two dead bucks instead of one if something had not happened which he did not in the least expect—something which seemed like a blessed miracle, yet which was really the simplest and most natural thing in the world. A buck has no fixed time for the casting of his antlers. It usually occurs during the first half of the winter, but it has been known to take place as early as November and as late as April. The second night passed, and as it began to grow light again our friend lifted himself on his knees and his hind-legs, and wrestled mightily with his horrible bed-fellow; and suddenly his left antler came loose from his head. The right one was still fast, but it was easily disengaged from the tangle of branching horns, and in a moment he stood erect. The blood was running down his face from the pedicel where the antler had stood, and he was so weak and dizzy that his legs could hardly carry him, and so thin and wasted that he seemed the mere shadow of his former self. But he was free, and that long, horrible dream was over at last.

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He tried to walk toward the lake, but fell before he had taken half-a-dozen steps; and for an hour he lay still and rested. It was like a taste of heaven, just to be able to hold his neck straight. The sun had risen by the time he was ready to try it again, and through the trees he saw the shimmer and sparkle of the Glimmerglass. He heard the wind talking to itself in the branches overhead, and the splashing of the ripples on the beach; and he staggered down to the margin

and drank long and deep.

That December was a mild one. The first light snow had already come and gone, and the next two weeks were bright and sunshiny. The Buck ate as he had never eaten before, and it was astonishing to see how rapidly he picked up, and how much he gained before Christmas. His good luck seemed to follow him month after month, for the winter was comparatively open, the snow was not as deep as usual, and the spring came early. By that time the ill effects of his terrible experience had almost entirely disappeared, and he was in nearly as good condition as is usual with the deer at that season of the year—which, of course, isn't really saying very much.

Again, Nature's table was spread with good things, and again he set to work to build a pair of antlers—a pair that should be larger and handsomer than any that had gone before. But as the summer lengthened it became evident that there was something wrong with those antlers, or at least with one of them. One seemed to be quite perfect. It was considerably longer than those of last year, its curve was just right, and it had five tines, which was the correct number and all that he could have asked. But the other, the left, was nothing but a straight, pointed spike, perhaps eight inches in length, shaped almost exactly like those of his first pair. The Buck never knew the reason for this deformity, and I'm not at all certain about it myself, though I have a theory. One stormy day in the early summer, a falling branch, torn from a tree-top by the wind, had struck squarely on that growing antler, then only a few inches long. It hurt him so that for a moment he was fairly blind and dizzy, and it is quite possible that the soft, half-formed bone was so injured that it could never reach its full development. Anyhow, it made him a rather queer-looking buck, with one perfect antler and one spike. But in everything else—except his spread hoof—he was without spot or blemish. He had well fulfilled the promise of his youth, and he was big and strong and beautiful. Something he had lost, no doubt, of the grace and daintiness of his baby days; but he had also gained much—gained in stateliness and dignity, as well as in size and weight and strength. And even that spike antler was not without its advantages, as he learned a little later.

As the autumn came round he was just as excitable and passionate, just as ready for fighting or love-making, as ever, and not one whit subdued by the disaster of the year before. And so one day he had another battle with another buck, while another doe—or perhaps the same one—made off through the trees and left a fragrant trail behind her. He and his adversary went at each other in the usual way, and for some time it seemed unlikely that either of them could ever do anything more than tire the other out by hard pushing. There was little danger that their antlers would get locked this time, with one pair so badly mismatched; and it bade fair to be a very ordinary, everyday sort of a fight. But by and by our Buck saw his opportunity. The enemy exposed his left side, in an unguarded moment, and before he could recover himself that deformed antler had dealt him a terrible thrust. If the force of the blow had been divided among five tines it would probably have had but little effect, but the single straight spike was as good as a sword or a bayonet, and it won the day. The deer with the perfect antlers was not only vanquished, but killed; and the victor was off on the trail of the doe.

And so our friend became the champion of the Glimmerglass, and in all the woods there was not a buck that could stand against him.

But his brother deer were not his only enemies. With the opening of the hunting season those farmers from lower Michigan came again, and day after day they beat the woods in search of game. This time, however, the Buck did not leave, or at least he did not go very far. For the last month he had been fighting everyone who would fight back, and perhaps his many easy victories had made him reckless. At any rate he was bolder than usual, and all through the season he stayed within a few miles of the Glimmerglass.

The farmers had decidedly poor luck, and after hunting for two or three weeks without a single taste of venison they began to feel desperate. Finally, they secured the help of a trapper who owned a big English foxhound. Hunting with dogs was against the law, and at home they claimed to be very law-abiding citizens, but they had to have a deer, no matter what happened.

The morning after the hound's arrival he got onto the trail of a doe and followed it for hours, until, as a last resort, she made for the Glimmerglass, jumped into the water, and started to swim across to the farther shore. The dog's work was done, and he stood on the bank and watched her go. For a few minutes she thought that she was out of danger, and that the friendly Glimmerglass had saved her; but presently she heard a sound of oars, and turning half-way round she lifted her head and shoulders out of the water, and saw a row-boat and three men bearing down upon her. A look of horror came into her face as she sank back, and her heart almost broke with despair; but she was game, and she struck out with all her might. Her legs tore the water frantically, the straining muscles stood out like ropes on her sides and flanks and shoulders, and she almost threw herself from the water. But it was no use, the row-boat was gaining.

The farmers fired at her again and again, but they were too wildly excited to hit anything until finally the trapper pulled up alongside her and threw a noose over her head. And then, while she lay on her side in the water, with the rope around her neck, kicking and struggling in a blind agony of despair, one of the farmers shot her dead at a range of something less than ten feet. When he went home he bragged that he was the only one of the party who had killed a deer, but he never told just how the thing was done.

That is the kind of fate that you are very likely to meet if you are a deer. But vengeance came on the morrow, for that day it was the Buck's turn to be chased by that horrible fog-horn on four legs. Hour after hour he heard the hound's dreadful baying behind him as he raced through the

woods, and at last he, too, started for the water, just as the doe had done. But he never reached it, or at least not on that trip. He was within a few rods of the beach when his spread hoof caught on a root and threw him, and the hound was so close behind that they both went down in a heap. They sprang to their feet at the same instant, and stood for a second glaring at each other. The dog had not meant to fight, only to drive the other into the water, where the hunters would take care of him; but he was game, and he made a spring at the deer's throat. The Buck drew back his forefoot, with its sharp, pointed hoof, and met the enemy with a thrust like that of a Roman soldier's short-sword; and the hound went down with his shoulder broken and a great gash in his side. And then, with a sudden twist and turn of his head, the Buck caught him on the point of that terrible spike antler, ripped his body open, and tossed him in the air.

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The worst enemy was disposed of. But that wasn't all. The man who killed the doe was waiting on the beach and had heard the scuffle, and now he came creeping quietly through the bushes to see what was going on. The Buck was still trampling the body of the dog, and noticed nothing till a rifle bullet grazed his right flank, inflicting just enough of a wound to make him still more furious. He faced around and stood for a moment staring at this new enemy; and then he did something which very few wild deer have ever done. Probably he would not have done it himself if he had not been half crazy with rage and excitement, and much emboldened by his easy victory over the hound. He put his head down and his antlers forward, and charged on a man!

The farmer was jerking frantically at the lever of his repeating rifle, but a cartridge had stuck in the magazine, and he couldn't make it work. The hound's fate had shown him what that spike antler could do; and when he saw it bearing down on him at full tilt he dropped his gun and ran for his life to his dug-out canoe. He reached it just in time. I almost wish he hadn't.

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One more adventure the Buck had that fall. Providence, or Fate, or someone took a hand in affairs, and rid the Glimmerglass of all hunters, not for that season alone, but for many years to come. One night, down beside a spring in the cedar swamp, the Buck found a half-decayed log on which a bag of salt had been emptied. He stayed there for an hour or two, alternately licking the salt and drinking the cold water, and it was as good as an ice-cream soda. The next night he returned for another debauch; but in the meantime two other visitors had been there, and both had seen his tracks and knew that he would come again. As he neared the spring, treading noiselessly on the soft moss, he heard two little clicks, and stopped short to see what they meant. Both were quick and sharp, and both had come at exactly the same instant; yet they were not quite alike, for one had come from the shutter of a camera, and one from the lock of a rifle. Across the salt-lick a photographer and a hunter were facing each other in the darkness, and each saw the gleam of the other's eyes and took him for a deer. So close together were the two clicks that neither man heard the sound of the other's weapon, and both were ready to fire—each in his own way.

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The Buck stood and watched, and suddenly there came two bursts of flame—one of them so big and bright that it lit the woods like sheet-lightning. Two triggers had been touched at the same instant, and each did its work well. The flash-light printed on the sensitive plate a picture of a hunter in the act of firing, and the rifle sent a bullet straight through the photographer's forehead. The Buck saw it all as in a dream—the white flame of the magnesium powder; the rifle, belching out its fire and smoke; the camera, silent and harmless, but working just as surely; the two men, each straining his eyes for a sight of his game; the water gleaming in the fierce light, and the dark ranks of the cedars all around. And then, in the tenth of a second, it was all over, and the Buck was bumping against trees, and stumbling and floundering over roots, in his dazed haste to get away from this terrifying mystery. He heard one horrified shout from the hunter, but nothing from the photographer—and the woods were silent again.

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That was the end of the hunting season at the Glimmerglass. With the hunter's trial for manslaughter, we and the Buck are not concerned; and there is nothing more to tell except that the next year the owners of the lands around the lake gave warning that all trespassers would be prosecuted. They wanted no more such tragedies on their property.

And so the Buck and his sweethearts and his rivals lived in peace, except that the rivals still quarrelled among themselves, as Nature meant them to. The Buck had reached his prime, but you are not to suppose that he began to age immediately afterward. It was long before his eye was dimmed or his natural force abated; and as the years went by, with their summers of lily-pads and tender young browse, and their autumns of beechnuts and fighting and love-making, the broad cloven track of his split foot was often to be found in the hard, smooth sand of the beach. Perhaps it is there now. I wish I could go and see.

## THE END

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THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS  
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