

*Habits, Haunts and Anecdotes
of The Moose.*



Burt Jones.

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Burt Jones

*Habits
Haunts
and
Anecdotes
of
The Moose
and
Illustrations from Life*

By Burt Jones

Founder of the National Sportsman

To

E. A. D.

This volume is respectfully dedicated.

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By
CHARLES ALBERT JONES.

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[Pg 8]



**YOUNG BULL MOOSE NEAR RUSSELL POND.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 9]

NOTE TO THE READER.

I wish to extend to the following well-known sportsmen my sincere thanks for their kindness in contributing to the illustrated section of this volume: Mr. G. E. Harrison, of the New York Press Club; Dr. O. H. Stevens, Marlboro, Mass.; Messrs. Harry L. and Louis O. Tilton, Newton, Mass.; Mr. George M. Houghton, Bangor, Maine; and Mr. John E. Barney, Canaan, N. H., who [Pg 10] secured the photographs facing pages 55, 61, 83, and 127, the one opposite page 55 deserving special mention, as, in my estimation, it is the finest photograph of live cow moose and calves in existence.

The entire collection is copyrighted, and any infringement on the same will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

[Pg 11]

PREFACE.

"This is the forest primeval." "It is my home." So spoke the moose. Suffice it is to say, that a prize trophy over one's fireplace is an object to be admired by one and all. It brings you back to a last hunting trip, and well do you remember, as you gaze thereon, what a chase it had led you in life, through bog and alder swamp, until at last an opportunity presented itself whereby the [Pg 12] deadly missile from your rifle sends him to his death. As the blue rings of smoke from your brier pipe float up and away, you are carried in thought to the North Woods wherein he roamed. There he lived, a monarch of all he surveyed. The excitement of the chase, while it is on, knows no bounds, but at the death it subsides, and you return to civilization to recall the event only when the time arrives that another pilgrimage to the happy hunting grounds is in order. On the other hand, you find him as a subject for your camera. An excellent one, too. Exiled in his domain for a few weeks and a wealth of enjoyment is yours, as, during the long winter evenings, [Pg 13] you may open your album and see him before you as he was in life. The smoke from the same pipe will float up and away, and you can for a moment realize what a happy pastime you have enjoyed while a guest of Dame Nature in the Haunts of the Moose.

[Pg 15]

TO HIS LORDSHIP.

"Deep in the silent forest, where oft I've chanced to roam,The monarch moose inhabits, it is his woodland home;By silent lake at morning, by logan, calm at night,Majestic stands his lordship, stands motionless in sight.The north wind to him is music, the tall pines are his friends,The rivers madly rushing, o'er the rocks and round the bends,Seems to him a heavenly blessing, seems to him the work aboveOf a kind and thoughtful Father, and His beings He doth love." [Pg 18]



**BULL MOOSE IN BLACK POND.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 19]



CHAPTER I.

HABITS AND HAUNTS. SECTIONS WHERE FOUND. STILL HUNTING. CALLING. POSSIBLE EXTERMINATION.

Throughout the vast depths of the northern forests, bordered by the virgin growth of a trackless wilderness, often with an imperial fringe of timber-crowned hills, lives the moose. He is the largest, as well as the most highly prized, live game animal extant today on the American continent. Formerly, this species was very abundant throughout the region of country extending [Pg 20] from the wilds of Northern Maine westward through the wilderness bordering on the Great Lakes and far beyond; but great havoc has been wrought, especially during the past twenty-five years, in the supply of this variety of game.

Comparatively few are killed annually in the United States, and those mostly within the limits of Northern Maine and the States of the far Northwest, where the pernicious activity of the professional hunters and self-styled sportsmen, who kill the large beasts during the prevalence of deep snows, will, if not checked, bring the moose into the list of extinct species of American game before the close of another decade.

No animal is so persistently hunted, [Pg 21] and when killed, none considered so grand a trophy as his lordship. Owing to the comparatively small section of this country that he inhabits they are few in number, the Maine and Canadian wildernesses sheltering by far more moose than any other section. What few specimens found in far-off Alaska are world beaters in regard to size of body and spread of antlers, one having been shot in that territory whose horns measured over eight feet from tip to tip.

The best breeding and feeding grounds are along the Canadian border, while favorite localities for the sportsmen are in the vicinity of lakes, ponds, and dead waters throughout the aforementioned sections.

In appearance the moose is large and [Pg 22] awkward; its huge head and broad nose, combined with its short, thick neck, giving it a rather grotesque appearance. In color, he is brown, while his legs and belly are grayish. His mane is almost black, and at any approaching danger rises upward, making him a most formidable foe to look upon.

The moose travels over the ground in a swinging trot, exhibiting remarkable speed. This style of locomotion is adopted only when the animal is suddenly started. If the presence of man is detected, while the hunter is yet some distance away, the moose moves off

with considerable caution, often selecting a course which the follower can pursue only with the greatest difficulty.[Pg 24]



**COW MOOSE ON BLACK POND.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 25]

The endurance of the animal is such that only the hardest of hunters can hope to overtake him in a stern chase when he has once become alarmed. The broad, palmate antlers are a distinguishing feature, and happy is the hunter who can boast the possession of a head as a trophy taken from an animal killed by himself. While few are successful in this respect the greater majority must be content with perhaps a view of his lordship at a distance.

Still hunting, or stalking the moose in his native wilds, is a branch of sport successfully followed by none except the skilled woodsmen and hardy hunter. The fatigue and

countless obstacles to be met with are such that comparatively few amateur sportsmen attempt it.[Pg 26] More frequently the animal is driven to the water by the guides and woodsmen, or attracted to such localities by calling.

In Northern Maine and in the Canadian Provinces, the moose is often hunted during early winter by pursuing him on snow-shoes. Jacking is often effectively followed in mid-summer, along the lakes and rivers. This method is considered unsportsmanlike by those who possess the requisite skill and endurance to adopt the style of still hunting.

In size and weight he exceeds that of the horse, specimens having been shot that weighed over twelve hundred pounds and stood seven and one-half feet to the shoulder.[Pg 28]



**COW MOOSE IN HARRINGTON LAKE.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

In the summer he is to be seen feeding in and near the streams on the lily roots, of which he is exceedingly fond. This is the time of year that he is easily approached from a canoe as he stands, with head submerged, eating that dainty morsel. The black flies, at this season, are also to a great extent responsible for his taking to the water, as any of my readers who have had a few of these insects on them at one time usually feel disposed to follow his example in their endeavor to rid themselves of this pest.

As winter approaches he leaves the lakes and streams, forming a yard or runway by passing to and fro, beating a track, and keeping the snow packed down hard. These runways are always located where there is good feed to be had from young hardwood trees, such[Pg 30] as the moosewood (a species of ash), also poplar, birch, and mosses near at hand. He does not feed from the ground, and, owing to the great height of his forelegs, he can reach from eight to ten feet to secure his food. Nor are all these twigs tender, for his lordship makes short work of biting off a sapling an inch through if it is to his liking.

Moose bring forth their young in May. Two calves are born, as a rule, though sometimes not more than one. The calf stays with the mother at least a year, and often two. While the cow moose is a timid animal, she is brave in defending her young. A story told by a trustworthy Indian guide illustrates this point.

While paddling on Chesuncook Lake,[Pg 31] one day, the guide saw a cow moose and a calf come down the bank and enter the water. He watched them until they had waded some distance from shore, when his attention was arrested by another animal coming out of the woods near them. It was a black bear. The bear was not seen by the cow. He slipped easily into the water and waded towards the cow and calf. Presently he got beyond his depth, his legs being much shorter than even a calf moose's, and therefore had to swim. He swam directly for the calf, and was rapidly nearing it when the cow saw him. The ungainly beast turned with remarkable quickness towards the bear, whom she attacked with her fore feet. Three or four sharp jabs with her pointed hoofs[Pg 32] was enough to insure the protection of her offspring, with whom she soon left the water. The bear appeared to be *hors de combat*, and the guide paddled up to him, to find that his back had been broken by the powerful blows of the cow. The Indian dispatched the bear with his knife and saved the pelt.

In size and strength the bull moose is probably the equal of any antlered animal that ever lived, one having been shot in Maine with a spread of over six feet. He sheds these splendid antlers every winter, generally in January. They are found sometimes by woodsmen, but usually are gnawed and eaten up by small animals as soon as dropped, as they have a salty flavor that makes them palatable to squirrels, sable, and the like.[Pg 33]

Owing to the color of his coat, it is hard to detect a moose sometimes in "black growth," that is, spruce or hemlock, for his upper part is brownish black, and his legs tone off into gray or yellowish white. The shanks are esteemed by residents of the woods country for making boots or "shoepacks," the hair being left on and turned outward. Such foot covering lasts indefinitely and sheds water perfectly. The hoof is peculiarly flexible, and divided farther, for example, than in the case of the ox. This enables him to walk easily on slippery surfaces, and through bogs, by spreading the hoofs. It is said that he can pass through a swamp where a man would become foundered, while the speed with which he passes over moss-grown boulders,[Pg 34] or masses of blown-down trees, is remarkable.

It is most discouraging, after tracking your game for hours at a time, to finally have to give it up on account of darkness setting in. Lighting your pipe, you retrace your steps to camp and await the coming of the morrow, when the routine of the previous day is gone over. It is the quiet, careful man who succeeds in tracking, as the breaking of a twig or the brushing of one's coat against a tree will jump your game, and in his fright he travels many miles before stopping.

He is an exceptionally keen-scented animal, and mark you well as to the general direction of the wind before leaving camp, as to work along with it is fatal. Miles before you have seen him he smells you and immediately increases the distance from his would-be foe.[Pg 36]



TWIN MOOSE CALVES, THREE DAYS OLD.
(Taken at the Headwaters of the Liverpool River, Nova Scotia.)
Photographed from Life.

[Pg 37]

When the rutting season is at its height, along about the first of October, and the days warm, another method of moose-hunting is brought into play,—that of imitating the call of the cow with a birch horn about eighteen inches in length. There are many expert moose-callers in Maine and the Canadian Provinces, though they have by no means a monopoly of this accomplishment. The sound is most peculiar, and can only be acquired by long practice. The most expert callers are those who have taken lessons from nature,—that is, have been close to a female moose when she was calling the male. At least one in [Pg 38] three of the Maine guides can call moose. With his birch horn, and seated beside some lake on a quiet evening, he sends back into the forest or across some shallow logan the weird "woo-oo-oo, woo-woo-oo" of the cow moose calling the bull. If there be a bull within hearing he will respond with a deep grunt. He will then tear along through the woods in the direction of the call, and perhaps splash out with a great noise into the shallow water where he expects to find a mate answering his amorous advances.

Ordinarily the moose is a silent animal, being very careful not to make a noise. Old guides have said that in spite of his great spread of horns he will pass quietly through a thick[Pg 39] growth. Generally, if seen in summer at the edge of a lake or stream, he slips noiselessly into the woods, but when the rutting season begins he casts his discretion to the winds and responds to the call of the cow with noisy disregard of consequences. He is also quarrelsome at such times, and should another bull happen to trespass on what he considers his territory there may be trouble. The rutting season is generally over by the first week in October, and the bulls will not answer the calls after that, unless the weather should hold very warm. Most guides claim that during the rutting season the bulls have a wide range, but that the cows remain in one neighborhood.

While yarded moose are very methodical[Pg 40] in their habits: they have, however, a single eye to one object, the detection of any intruder, therefore it is only by a knowledge of their habits that they can be approached by the hunter. It is their keen sense of hearing and smell that are to be guarded against, for as a rule, when the animal can see the hunter, he can also see the moose, and his capture becomes simply a question of marksmanship. It is certainly a unique sport and has few successful aspirants.

Of the two, still hunting is usually the more successful and the greater number of moose are secured in that way. In the late fall, the coming of the first snow doubles one's chances of success as every step of the animal is shown. In tracking he usually goes through the worst places possible for him to find, which adds to one's discomfort and lessens one's chances of a shot.[Pg 42]



BULL MOOSE SWIMMING MUSQUOOCOOK LAKE.

(St. John Waters.)

Photographed from Life.

[Pg 43]

Nature has bestowed upon him methods of passing through underbrush or blowdowns silently where a man in following makes a noise ten times as loud. The very silence of the forest is noisy. The wind whistling through the tree-tops, the bushes grating against one another, both contribute to make noise.

Those of my readers who have heard the low, weird grunt of the bull moose, and have listened to the music of the crashing of the underbrush as he forces his way through in answer to the melancholy and drawn-out bellow of the cow, will understand full well when I say that it cannot be described, but must be [Pg 44] heard to be appreciated, and is certainly worth all the hardships it entails to be listened to only once.

I remember well of a time that my guide called from the edge of a lake at sunset, and received an answer from a large bull on a mountain a mile or two away, where we could

hear him coming nearer and nearer as the moments wore on. After a half hour had elapsed he had reached the other side of the lake, and was so close that we did not dare to repeat the call for fear he would detect the artificial from the natural. He did not venture nearer, and as it was too dark to see him across the lake, we returned to camp, but that fifteen minutes will live long in my memory.[Pg 45]

To hunt moose successfully one must "rough it," and sleep without a fire, as the best time to hunt is at sunset and daylight, and with their keen sight and scent a fire means no moose.

In his visits to the Maine woods half a century ago, Thoreau made copious notes about the moose, which was then slaughtered indiscriminately, by Indians and others, for their hides. This slaughter, which could not be called hunting, shocked the gentle naturalist from Concord, who made the prediction that "the moose will, perhaps, some day become extinct, and exist only as a fossil relic." This may be true, but the animal has judicial friends, and so long as they protect him, it does not appear as if the moose could become extinct from[Pg 46] slaughter. Indeed, it is claimed that as many if not more moose are to be found now than fifty years ago.



[Pg 48]



LARGE BULL

**MOOSE ON MUD POND BROOK.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life. Time exposure.**



CHAPTER II.

THE PROVINCIAL MOOSE. A BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY. LUCK AND ILL-LUCK. THE JUDGE AND THE BANKER.

One of the greatest moose regions in the world is that portion of land drained by the tributaries of the St. John, Miramichi, and Restigouche rivers. It is true that portions of Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Labrador are roamed over by herds of these magnificent animals, but the best specimens of the race are found within the compass of Eastern New Brunswick.[Pg 50]

It is a country of hill and dale, cedar swamps, hardwood ridges, and barrens, where the blueberry, the hackmatack, and here and there stunted tamaracks break the general sweep of waste country. Along these barrens the moose loves to roam. Here he finds the moss of which he is so fond, and here, too, he gets the young shoots of various shrubs on which he feeds. He can also keep a weather eye on the approach of danger, and as he feeds, he occasionally throws his massive head in the air, and takes a sudden and piercing glance around the landscape. If satisfied, he gives a short grunt of evident pleasure and proceeds with his feeding.

The best horns are secured in the months of late October, November, and[Pg 51] early December. In January the horn begins to get soft, and soon falls off. It is said by hunters that the largest animals lose their antlers weeks earlier than the younger bulls. It is also claimed that the natural color of the moose-horn is white; that this is the color when the velvet comes off, but that contact with the trees, and rubbing against the bark—something which the moose apparently delights in—causes the horn to take that pretty shade of antique oak. There is all the difference in the world in horns. Some have a multitude of points; some have wider webs; some have stouter horn stems; some set more gracefully on the skull; some lie more horizontally than others; so that when the term a "choice head" is used it[Pg 52] means that nature has given the bull all the beauty of antlers in profusion.

With far greater agility and cunning than any other animal of its weight, the moose is a formidable opponent when attacked. Some narrow escapes have been made by hunters using the old cap gun, but now with the breech-loader the speed that guarantees security is given.

I have seen a great curiosity in the form of the horns of two moose inextricably interlocked. The story these horns tell is that a duel to the death had taken place in a

forest glade between a bull moose of eight hundred pounds weight and a younger one of perhaps four hundred pounds. The larger had an antler spread of three feet eight inches, the smaller, that of three feet. In the shock of the conflict, the horns of the younger had fitted snugly into the many branches of the other set of antlers, and the heads were as solidly and as perfectly fastened together as if bolted with iron.[Pg 54]



**COW MOOSE, WITH CALVES, SWIMMING MUD POND.
(West Branch Waters.)**

[Pg 55]

That the fight had been long and stubborn the horns showed. Where they had come together they had been rubbed and worn to the depth of half an inch.

The younger had died first, whether from exhaustion, or a broken neck, or starvation, is not apparent, but the condition of the flesh when found showed that he had lost the fight; and the victor did not long survive. Fastened to his dead competitor he could not feed with this weight of four hundred pounds attached to him, and must have succumbed[Pg 56] to starvation. A similar case is reported, and is thus described:—

"No mortal eye witnessed what must have been a prolonged and fearful contest; but when their bodies were found in the lake the story of what had taken place was easily understood. The ground for some distance from the lake was torn and trampled where the ferocious animals had charged upon each other, and when the bodies were examined the antlers were found to be so firmly interlocked that it was impossible to separate them. In order to secure one good pair the finder sawed the other pair away, it not occurring to him at the time that the interlocked antlers would be of considerably more value than many pairs in the ordinary condition.[Pg 57] In this instance it was evident that the stronger had gone to his death because of his strength. One of the two was much stronger than the other, and under ordinary circumstances this would have secured him the victory. As it was, the advantage was fatal. In rushing at each other, the antlers of the two locked together, and it was then that the larger moose thought he had the smaller one at his mercy. So he had, as far as the ability to push him about and force him back was concerned, but when the larger animal forced the smaller into the lake, both were indeed in a common peril and shared a common fate."

Moose are not secured in a day. In fact, the greater majority of sportsmen[Pg 58] require several trips to the woods to assure them success. There are exceptions to this rule, however.

I recall the case of a sportsman who went into the wilderness for a two-weeks stay with his wife, and brought down a moose the first day out. He had no thought of getting one when he started, but it being his wife's birthday, he indulged in a dream and told her that she would be presented with a pair of moose antlers by him for a birthday present. This naturally pleased her ladyship, and her liege lord took his gun, his guide and canoe, and started out to try to fulfil his promise.[Pg 59]



**SPIKE-HORN BULL SWIMMING MUD POND.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 61]

When the canoe emerged from the stream into the pond the hunter and guide were surprised enough to see, at the edge, in shallow water, a large bull moose. The animal was up to his back feeding on the lily roots, splashing his great head about, and having no fear, in his lonely retreat, of being interrupted by hunters. The wind, being in the right direction, gave the men an advantage, as the moose could not scent them. The guide approached cautiously, never taking his paddle from the water as he propelled the light craft along.

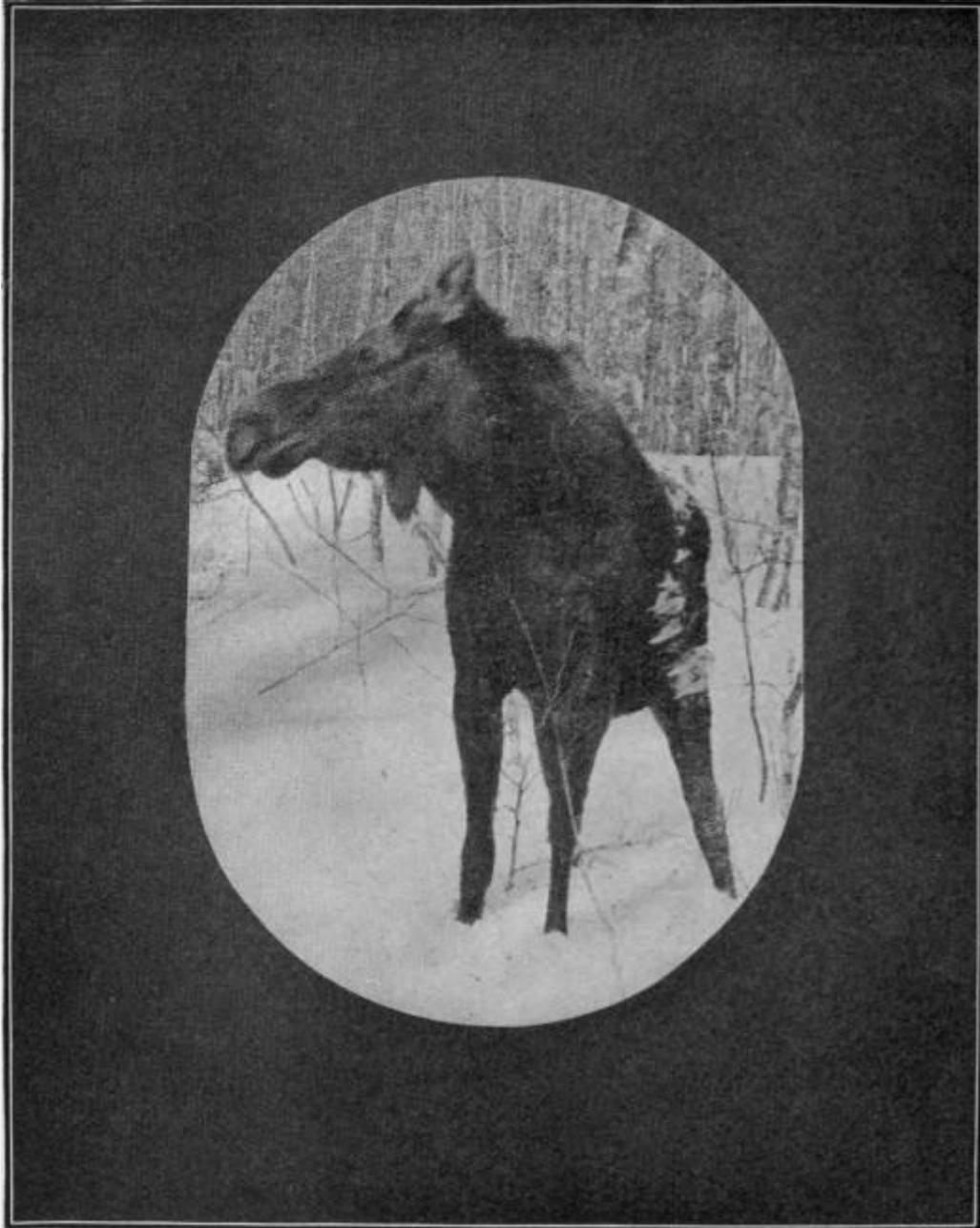
Suddenly the moose heard something, perhaps the gentle splash of water against the canoe, that made him look around. For a second he gazed silently at the two men sitting in the little craft, now scarcely a hundred yards away. Then he swung his great body slowly around [Pg 62] (as there was soft mud on the pond bottom, and he could not make

way swiftly in it) and started for the bank. The hunter held his fire, fingering his gun-lock nervously, until the moose had reached firm ground. It would not have done to shoot him in the mire, for, the water being shallow, half a dozen men could not have extracted the body; but with the first step the great beast (with mud and water dripping from his body) took upon the shore, a bullet pierced him in the neck. Then there was a succession of shots, and little jets of blood spurted out on the dark brown coat of the forest giant, who by this time was making rapid way along the rocky shore of the pond. A dense cedar swamp lay inland from the shore, and into it[Pg 63] the wounded moose did not dare to plunge. He must retreat under fire, like a general with the enemy on one side and a river on the other.

At last he disappeared in a thicket. The hunters had gone ashore and were after him, coming up just as he sank to earth. A bullet behind the ear discharged his debt to nature.

That night a noble head adorned the camp of the hunter, who had unexpectedly made good a promise his wife never expected him to fulfil.

Contrast this experience with another I have in mind, and the two sides of moose hunting will be illustrated. For three seasons a good hunter from a Massachusetts town had gone into Maine to get a moose, and three times he had[Pg 64] returned home empty handed. He scorned to shoot deer. He hardly would have brought down a bear had one presented himself to be shot. He wanted moose. It was a hard country for hunting, a place of boulders and blowdowns and stumps,—a desolate waste. He saw moose tracks, and he was there to follow them, which he did long and wearily, for a day, and at night he slept in an abandoned camp. Again on the next day he followed them, seeing them sometimes on the soft, green moss, again at the side of a stream, or in some boggy place. At times they were lost on a rocky slope, or in a region of hard ground. There was no snow to aid the hunter, and the tracking of moose in such a country without it called for the best traits of the seasoned sportsman,—patience and endurance.[Pg 66]



BULL MOOSE

IN DEEP SNOW.

Taken during January, near Eagle Lake.

Photographed from Life.

[Pg 67]

The trail led uphill at last, and after following it up the base of a mountain, amid scrub growth and blowdowns, the hunter was rewarded by seeing at long range a large bull. The moose scented the hunter almost as soon as sighted, and stood not upon the order of his going but sought a lower level. It was at this juncture that the resource of the

experienced hunter came in. He did not stand and watch the animal disappear. Not he! Sending along a lead missile to announce his intentions, he set out in hot pursuit. There began such a chase as hunters seldom engage in. The moose had an advantage over the man, for he could take long leaps[Pg 68] over depressions in the ground, and over fallen trees and big rocks. The hunter had to jump, run, slide, and bound along as best he could. He saw nothing but the moose, and he saw him only as one sees an express train disappearing in a fog. Whenever, by some change in the course of the animal, or a favorable turn in the ground, a shot was offered, the hunter fired; then he would pump another cartridge into the chamber of his rifle, and resume the pace.

Thus tearing at break-neck speed down a rough mountain side, the sportsman, followed by his puffing guide, gradually came up to the moose. The bullets had taken effect, though not in a vital part, and the animal was weakening. But moose and hunter plunged[Pg 69] on, through woods and under brush that grew at the bottom of the mountain, and at last, after what seemed a chase of a dozen miles, but which in reality might have been three, the hunter came into full sight of his anticipated prize in a clearing. This time the animal was in a position for a telling shot, which was sped with good aim, and brought the great beast to his knees. Another ended his career, and the hunter, out of breath, sat down to wipe his brow. He had lost his hat and mittens in the chase, his clothing was torn, and he was battered and bruised. This counted for nothing. He had brought down his moose after four seasons' work. It was necessary to "swamp" a road, that is, cut one through the woods, for a mile to[Pg 70] get the carcass to a logging road over which it could be hauled to the river. As the first snow of the season fell that night the moose was brought out and it was comparatively easy work to get him to the railroad station on the next day.

One more moose story may not be amiss. It has to do with a party of sportsmen, consisting of a judge and a banker, who went into a famous moose country to try their luck. They fired but one round during their stay in the woods, and with a guide brought down in that one volley three large bull moose. The story is fully vouched for and the heads of two of the bulls may now be seen in an Aroostook town.[Pg 72]



**BULL MOOSE ON BLACK POND. (West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 73]

These two hunters, like the first one mentioned, did not expect to find moose. They thought luck might take a turn in their favor, but were ready to sustain themselves in hope deferred if it did not.

The judge and the banker went into the woods from a little settlement on the Aroostook River. They travelled a good sixty miles by horse-sled in the snow before reaching the place where they were to engage guides. It was another twenty-five miles to the camp where they put up on their first night out, a "depot" camp, where lumber crews going in and out stopped to rest and sleep.

On the morning after their arrival the two hunters set out in the snow with their guide to look for moose signs. They walked half a dozen miles without finding any, and, getting tired, went[Pg 74] back to camp, leaving the guide to pursue the quest, and let them know when he came up to a moose. This was not thoroughly sportsmanlike, they

knew, but they were a pair of worthy men, past the meridian of life, and they did not stand on the ethics of the hunt.

That night the guide returned and told them he knew where there was a yard of moose. Next morning, in the sharp air of a snappy-cold dawn, they set out to find the moose, and had walked but a few miles when tracks were found in the snow. Then, with the guide leading them, stopping as he went to avoid low branches laden with snow that hung across their way, or bending aside some twig to avoid noise,[Pg 75] they half walked, half crawled for upwards of a mile.

They saw moose signs that seemed to them good. At last the guide held up a warning hand, and proceeded more slowly than formerly.

After many cranings of his neck and changes of position, he drew aside a branch and told his followers by signs to look in the direction he indicated with his snow-covered mitten. They looked, but could see nothing special at first. The guide patiently pointed out to them a clump of bushes against which he could see the heads of two moose. The animals were lying down, with their heads to the wind, as is always their custom. The hunters were for firing precipitately, but their ardor, so quickly[Pg 76] aroused, was dampened by the guide, who motioned them to wait. There was a good wind blowing, and it came from the moose to the men. Moreover, it made a noise in the trees, and whispering was therefore safe among the hunters crouched in the snow. The guide informed them that there were three moose in the bunch. The judge and the banker could see but two, and these presented as fair a mark as ever man found for rifle.

When the word was given the two men fired, also the guide. There was a movement among the moose, and the hunters rushed forward to see the execution they had wrought. It was startling. There in the snow, still kicking and quivering, lay three large moose. To the worthy judge and banker they looked as big as oxen. All three were in the throes of death.[Pg 78]



**COW AND CALF MOOSE LEAVING THE WATER. (Lobster Lake.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 79]

There was great rejoicing in the depot camp that night. The two friends thought themselves favored by the gods of the chase beyond their deserts. The story of the great hunt was soon current in the community in which the hunters lived. The version of it given here, with slight variations, is that of one of the principals in the episode.



[Pg 82]



**COW MOOSE AND CALVES SWIMMING MUD POND.
(West Branch Waters.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 83]



CHAPTER III.

ANECDOTES OF THE MOOSE. A LARGE BULL IN THREE HOURS. MOOSE WILL ANSWER A CALL. TWO PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. FROM A GUIDE'S STANDPOINT. CRACK SHOTS.

A JACK, A MOOSE, AN ACCIDENT. A NOBLE ANIMAL—BUT 'T WAS JUNE. THE ABLEST ROMANCE IN MOOSE HISTORY.

Picture a hungry group at supper around the camp-fire as night shuts down, when the noisy jest and laughter are suddenly interrupted by your guide. Listen! There it is again from over the lake,—the fierce challenge of the bull and the horn-like note of the cow! [Pg 84] I'll not try to record the many exciting incidents of those glorious morning and evening watches; how this one saw his lordship in broad daylight swagger across the open, just out of rifle range; how that one, in the darkness of the homeward trail, called a jealous bull so near that he could hear him breathe ere the tell-tale human scent turned his course; or how another stalked a cow moose by mistake, and watched her some time, vainly hoping her lord would call; for every hunter knows of these slips, making success more pleasant when it is yours.

I must tell you, however, of that still October morning, of the faint mist rising from the lake, of the bright hills so fairly mirrored by the clear waters, and [Pg 85] of the rising sun so dazzling on the mist and the water. Suddenly the guide and I drop the half-prepared breakfast and take to the canoe in haste. We had heard that note of notes—the angry challenge of a bull moose. The remembrance of that morning brings back the sound as I heard it a few miles away over the hills. Watch how the guide is carefully following the course of the sound. We soon reach the other side. There he is, head on! Wait! he may give a better shot. No! he sees the canoe. Shoot now or he will be gone! Bang! A miss, for he did not flinch! The smoke hides him! Bang! Bang! The guide has fired, too, but the smoke hampers both. There he goes, crashing through the thicket! Let's give him [Pg 86] another for luck! He certainly was hard hit, and in that event it was best to let him go, for after a short period of time he would lie down, become stiff, and die. We paddled back to camp, finished breakfast, and in about three hours returned to the place from whence he had entered the woods, and there we found him, cold in death. He was a monster! A wealth of black, glossy hair, a splendid bell, and massive antlers, fit to adorn any mantel. [Pg 88]



Under full head of steam

*A Summer
Episode in the
Life of a young
Bull Moose*



Nearing terra firma

Photographed from Life.

[Pg 89]

Three days later another fine bull fell to my party. Just at sunset he was called out from across a pond, and strolled with that majestic woodland swagger through the shallow water. The first shot so confused him that he turned and came directly towards us, but soon veered off. At a closer range this might have been interpreted as a fierce charge of the dying bull, though it was merely an aimless start of surprise. He fell, with the ball behind his shoulder, and we found him quite dead. It was a fatal one, though it failed to stop him until he had gone fifty yards.

There was one section I had not visited, and this was to the east, in the direction of the brook which had proven too small for floating logs. So it was that after pulling the cabin door to, I made tracks toward the stream, which I knew must be asleep under four or five inches of ice and two feet of snow.

In half an hour's time I had reached the bank and crossed over, keeping close to it all the time. I had not gone far[Pg 90] beyond the ravine-like formation with the brook hugging its lowest point, when there were unmistakable evidences of large game. Moose it was. Tracks as large as a cow, great rents in the snow crust, through which the brown earth showed in spots; these were some of the traces. I went back across the ravine and proceeded up-stream, following the east bank; saw several fresh tracks, but they were cows, and along in the afternoon, while travelling up an old brook, I saw the imprints of a large bull, and they were big ones, together with a cow and calf. It did not take me long to decide what to do, and as they followed the brook I knew that they had not heard me. The wind was favorable and they were working up[Pg 92]



Photographed from

Life.

[Pg 93]

into it. Finally they left the brook and that necessitated more caution on my part. I had covered about half a mile and I heard the cow calling. Suddenly she came into view. I

worked up to within forty yards of her in hopes to find the bull, but ran into the calf, a two-year-old; luckily he did not see me. Things were getting interesting, with a moose on my left and another in front of me. Working my way cautiously along I heard the bull in the thick growth. He was so covered that I could hardly see him. By careful inspection, one antler and part of his shoulder showed. Raising my rifle I fired, at which he stepped into the clearing and stood defiant. What a noble looking fellow he was, and a monster in[Pg 94] size as he stood there shaking his head, blood running from his mouth and nostrils. Once again I fired. As the last one struck he went down, the shot breaking his shoulder blade—another victim of the 30-30.

The experience of a young New Yorker will serve to exemplify both the uncertainty of moose calling and the manner in which it is prosecuted. He was hunting in the Bear River woods, accompanied by one of the most expert guides of that section. Two nights of calling proved fruitless. The sportsman frankly told his guide he had no faith in it, and that he did not believe a moose would come to the call of a man. This considerably ruffled the guide's conceit, and he resolved, if possible, to make a[Pg 95] lasting impression to the contrary on the mind of his employer. That afternoon an ideal place for calling was chosen. The tent was pitched beside a giant boulder, on one side of which a narrow, open bog stretched away between wooded banks, and on the other a sort of natural park extended to the foot of a ridge covered with hard wood. The guide exacted the promise that his companion would not shoot until he gave the word. All arrangements being complete, as the sun was nearing the western horizon, the guide climbed to the top of the boulder and sounded the call.

Almost immediately, from the ridge, about two miles away, came the deep-voiced answer of an old bull. A few minutes sufficed to show that he was[Pg 96] coming at a rapid pace. The guide continued to call at regular intervals, and in a few minutes another answer was heard far down the bog, though this time from a smaller moose. A few seconds later brought a reply from a third, in another direction. The sport was getting exciting. The guide came down from his perch on the rock and stationed his employer and himself behind a smaller boulder, over which it was possible to look while lying on the ground. The guide thought the young moose would not come up for fear of the larger ones, and of course the one he wanted was the monster that had first answered. In that, however, he was disappointed. The distance was considerable, and while the big bull was still a long way off he was[Pg 98]



BULL MOOSE

**IN CARIBOU LAKE.
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 99]

interrupted and turned from his course by another party of hunters. The little one on the bog ceased to answer, but the large one that had started last was, when the sun went down, already quite near, and coming steadily along. When the moose was about breaking cover the guide climbed partly up the big rock and noted the direction from which he was coming, satisfying himself the game would appear on the side of the

boulder on which they were stationed. Another call, and the bull's hoofs were heard beating the firm ground as he trotted up the slope toward the men. In full view of the hunters, and about ten yards from them, grew a bunch of sapling birches. There the moose paused and began a furious onslaught with his antlers. Having[Pg 100] tired of that, he turned toward the hunters, and going down on his knees plowed his horns along the ground some distance, tossing them, well loaded with vines, moss, and earth. With a snort, he shook these from his head, the dirt falling on and around the two men lying behind the rock. The city man about that time was enjoying his first acute attack of moose fever. His teeth fairly chattered, and the guide had to grip his rifle barrel to prevent it from rattling against the rock. Again the moose came on and stood with his broadside toward them, not more than twelve feet from the muzzle of the rifle. That was about as close quarters as the guide cared for on his own account, so he gave the word to fire. The moose went down[Pg 101] with the shot, but immediately rose to his feet again. Again the rifle spoke, and down he went, only to rise again. The third shot, however, dropped him for the last time. Any of them would have proved fatal, but the moose was too close for the men to take any chances.

The sportsman was convinced a moose would come at a man's call, and was so excited over the fact that he slept none on that night.

I recall an experience of mine with an old bull on Pockwockamus Dead Water (from my note book), Oct. 21, 1899.

I had gone only a few steps when I heard the splashing of a moose around the bend of the stream ahead. There was a stretch of sand that led to an[Pg 102] island for which I made. There I concealed myself in the brush. I could hear the big fellow wading along and ploughing through the reeds. I first saw his antlers above the brush, and then his majestic head appeared. That was all he would show, as he suspected a hidden foe and was on the lookout for any apparent danger. For distance, he was about one hundred yards from me and close inshore. Finally an opportunity presented itself, and I raised my rifle and let go through the leaves where his neck should be. At the report he made a quick turn and disappeared in the thick growth. I dashed through the water, which was only about three feet deep, up the opposite bank, and pushed my way through the bushes to where I had last seen him. There he lay. My shot was fatal. As I appeared he snorted at me and tried to regain his feet, but his efforts were ineffectual. I then put him out of his misery with a shot through the heart.[Pg 104]



**COW MOOSE IN UMSASKIS LAKE.
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 105]

Still another is worthy of mention.

At one time the guide and myself were coming back to camp, just about dusk, after a long tramp, and were within sight of the tents, when we heard a moose off to the right

and close to the trail. The guide tried to coax him out of the thicket by gently sounding the birch horn, which he had with him. The moose turned with a crash and ran towards us, grunting all the time. We were crouched behind a pile of birch brush. The big fellow kept coming,[Pg 106] until it seemed as if he might at any moment jump over the brush pile and appear before us. It was too dark to shoot, so I slightly changed my position, thinking I might see the moose outlined against the sky. Just as I moved, the moose turned, ran some distance back into the woods and stopped, grunting again as if he was not certain about it all; but he was soon off, this time silently.

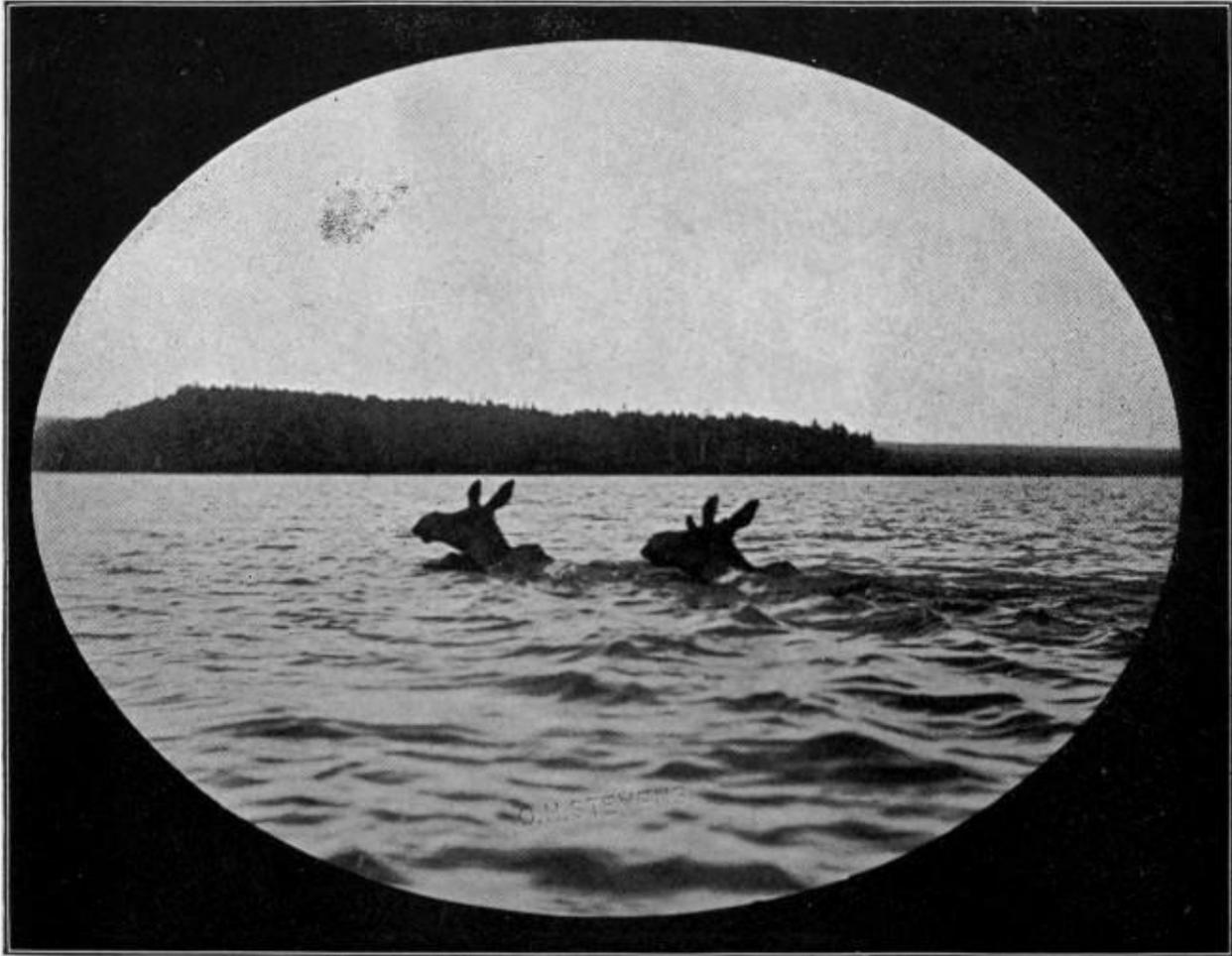
The next morning I was out early examining the tracks, and found it only sixteen paces from where we were behind the brush pile to where his lordship had been standing. I could see where he had barked the trees with his antlers when he was first frightened.

It is fortunate for some of the sportsmen[Pg 107] who journey to the north woods after big game in the fall that their guides live so far away, otherwise their reputation might suffer. This concerns both their personal traits and their ability as hunters. Camp life brings out a man's true qualities. The experience of a sportsman during his first attempt to lure a moose from his home in the forest is related as follows:—

One of the party tried his luck at calling. He left the guide at the camp. Quietly hiding among some shrubs, he gave a gentle but long-drawn-out call and waited results. Hardly had the notes died away than there was a tremendous crash, the alders parted, and the head of a large bull moose appeared in the leafy frame within ten feet of the[Pg 108] hunter. This abrupt entrance dumfounded the sportsman whose confusion and consternation were pretty evenly balanced at a moment when he needed his wits. Who was the more frightened it was hard to tell. At any rate the caller returned to camp posthaste minus his gun, horn, and hat, and with an expression that was indeed pitiable.

A guide, who had a well-known preacher in the woods for a short time one season, refused to take him the following year. On being asked the reason he said:—

"That man cares only for himself and thinks his guide can be wound up with a key to work like a machine. He may be good enough to preach the Gospel, but he ain't good enough for me to guide." [Pg 110]



**YOUNG BULL AND COW MOOSE SWIMMING.
(Lobster Lake.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 111]

Many are the stories told by the guides about the unsuccessful sportsmen who lack the moral courage to go home empty-handed. So accustomed have the guides become to this sort of thing that they take it for granted, unless instructed to the contrary, that they are to kill the game their employer is to take home with him, provided he does not meet with success in the early part of the hunt.

Another guide has to say of visiting sportsmen: "Some of them shoot all right, of course, but others are regular Spaniards. I had a fellow up this way last fall that thought he was death on anything walking on four legs, and[Pg 112] that his gun was the best shooting tool ever turned out of a gun factory. I paddled him right up to a bull moose standing in the water one day, and he fired every shot in his magazine at it without rumpling a hair.

"He didn't know enough to stop pumping the lever when all his shells were gone, and just about then I chipped in with my rifle and put a ball through the moose's shoulder that dropped him handy to the bank. The sportsman was in the act of pulling the trigger of his empty gun, when he saw the moose fall, and he didn't for a moment doubt but what he had killed him. He felt so good that he rose right up in the canoe and yelled, and the next thing I knew the canoe kind of slid out from under us and over we went into four feet of mud and water." [Pg 114]



BULL

MOOSE IN CARIBOU LAKE.

Photographed from Life.

[Pg 115]

A New York sportsman had his guide call a moose into the East Branch thoroughfare one evening just before dark, and the guide tells of his difficulty in pointing him out to the sportsman, who happened to be nearsighted. The moose walked right out into the water away from the concealment of the bushes and stopped. The guide nudged the sportsman and whispered to shoot.

"Shoot what?" said the sportsman in a louder tone than was prudent under the circumstances. "I don't see anything to shoot."

"Shoot the moose," he whispered again, "there he stands under that broken-topped spruce." [Pg 116]

The lawyer craned his neck and peered into every shadow but the right one. Two or three rods below the moose was a clump of bushes growing out beyond the general shore line. The lawyer finally singled this out as the moose and opened fire. He was perfectly cool, and every one of his shots went straight to the centre of the object at which he was firing.

Moose are notoriously slow to start when alarmed, provided they have not scented the hunter, and the one in question stood motionless until the sportsman had fired five shots at his inanimate target and had but one cartridge left in the magazine. Then the moose turned to escape, and, as luck would have it, dashed directly into the line of fire. The lawyer saw it, and with his sixth and last shot dropped the moose stone dead. [Pg 118]



BULL MOOSE IN ALLAGASH STREAM.

(St. John Waters.)

Photographed from Life.

[Pg 119]

On another occasion, a sportsman, to show his contempt for Maine's prohibition law, got gloriously full every day before ten o'clock.

The guide left him in the canoe one afternoon while he went ashore to look for some game signs on a bog near at hand. As he was returning he saw a nice moose step out of

cover within ridiculously easy rifle shot of the sportsman. The sportsman at once opened fire on the moose, but after many shots the animal trotted off, untouched.

"T was this haway," said the bibulous hunter, in explaining his misses, "when that moose came out there was only[Pg 120] one, all right enough, but when I cut loose with the old gun, blame if the moose didn't double up into two. I couldn't shoot both at once, and while I was pumping it into one the other got away. Mus' ha' been I shot at the wrong moose."

"You want to hear how my sports shoot?" said another native guide. "Well, I'll tell you a little story and then you can judge for yourself. I started out on the river one afternoon with a man from Boston, to look for moose. It was a nice, quiet afternoon, and a good one to get game. We dropped down stream with the current, and the first thing we knew there was a big bull moose right out in the centre of the stream, sousing his head under[Pg 122]



**BULL AND COW MOOSE.
Photographed from Life.**

water, and feeding on the lily roots. Mr. A. was paralyzed at the sight, for he never attempted to shoot. I held the canoe by putting my paddle down to the bottom, to give him a chance to recover his nerve, and after a while he realized what was expected of him, raised his rifle and fired. The shot did not go any where near the moose, and the animal just raised his head and stood there, looking back over its shoulder. I whispered to Mr. A.: 'You missed. Shoot again.' As it happened, my paddle slipped off into deep water, and we were floating down on the moose and getting a good deal closer than necessary. Mr. A. raised his gun and shot again, and then, as the moose started to walk towards the bank, he got the action[Pg 124] limbered up and fired four more shots as quick as he could work the lever. None of them touched the moose, and it moved off into the bushes, without seeming to mind the racket very much. The moose wasn't nearly as rattled as Mr. A. That man was completely prostrated with excitement. Nothing would do but we must go straight back to camp. He said his nerves were too badly broken up to stand anything more of the kind that day.

"Well, sir, we hadn't gone more than three hundred yards on our return trip, when I saw another bull on the bog adjacent to the stream. I paddled Mr. A. within good, easy range, and he tried his luck again, but the bullet struck the water twenty feet to the right. With that he began to swear, and he threw his rifle down on the bottom of the canoe, cussing it and everything else in sight. The moose gave a sudden jump and disappeared in the alders. I reckon the swearing scared it more than the shooting.[Pg 126]



**MOOSE CALVES LEAVING WATER.
(Mud Pond Region.)
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 127]

"We hadn't more than a mile to go to reach camp, when Providence, just to tantalize that man, gave him another opportunity. As we came around the last bend, there stood a bull and a cow on the bank, not a great way off. Mr. A. shot twice at the bull, as he stood there, and never touched a hair. 'T ain't no use trying,' he said, 'I can shoot at a paper target all right, but when it comes to game it's a different matter.' If all the hunters who go into Maine could[Pg 128] shoot as well in the woods as they can at a mark there wouldn't be a decent head left in the State.

"Now, there is a sample of your city sportsmen. That man fired nine shots at those moose and he never drew blood, and I could have hit the larger majority of them with a brick. Yes, sir; if I'd had a good brick I could have swatted any one of those animals in the short ribs." [Pg 130]



COW MOOSE SWIMMING MOOSEHEAD LAKE
Photographed from Life.

[Pg 131]

One of the most amusing incidents to others than the participants, and a most painful one to them, was the experience of two young moose hunters from far off Oregon, who tried their luck in the lower Dead River region of Maine with a jack. The night selected was one of exceptional darkness, the scene, a large bog about five miles from camp, and all conditions pointed to a most successful first attempt at this most unsportsmanlike branch of hunting. Supper over, with both eager for the fray, an early start was in order, and soon the silent craft with its over-anxious freight left the bank and started down stream. The intense stillness of an early summer night was not broken save by an occasional muskrat hurrying to its home in the bank or the ripples playing round the bow of their canoe. Mile after mile was reeled off, when suddenly a loud splashing was heard dead ahead in the stream. It was a simple matter for the man with the jack to light it, but his experience with the instrument in question was limited, and he had not discovered the slide [Pg 132] arrangement by which the light is quickly covered without

extinguishing it. The splashing continued, and both were undecided whether to back out of their present position or light up and see what the real cause of the disturbance was. The man in the stern suggested that the lamp had better remain in the bottom of the canoe, while his friend in the bow considered it far better to have a little light on the subject and therefore be able to get their bearings. By scratching a match and connecting it with the wick, the jack threw a strong light far ahead on the silent waters. It required but a second to see a large dark object ten rods ahead, waist deep in the water, and standing head on. Moose fever had attacked both of the men, and they sat motionless[Pg 134]



TWO

MAGNIFICENT TROPHIES OF THE CHASE.

The one on the left formerly held the Maine Record.

[Pg 135]

as the large black object cautiously moved nearer, wondering at each step who was challenging him in his woodland retreat. By a superhuman effort the stern man, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, told his friend to extinguish the light, as the animal would be upon them in a short space of time. The animal, which proved to be a large bull moose, decided that a closer inspection of these trespassers was in order. He was

now scarce a rod away, and the light from the jack being exceedingly bright made him somewhat bewildered, with the result that he charged the canoe. The water, being shallow at this point, favored the men and prevented a possible catastrophe. His lordship jumped in and the men jumped out of the canoe. They[Pg 136] crawled to the bank and secreted themselves as best they could under a neighboring tree, while the animal made short work of the frail craft he had suddenly taken possession of. A reasonable time having expired, the guides at the camp became somewhat anxious as to the safety of their charges, and started in search. At the approach of another craft the moose trotted off into the woods, leaving the thoroughly frightened sportsmen in their undesirable position, where they were found and taken back to camp, two sadder, and I might add, wiser Oregonians.



[Pg 138]



YOUNG BULL MOOSE CAUGHT IN DEEP SNOW.

**(Northern Aroostook.)
Photographed from Life.**

A NOBLE ANIMAL—BUT 'T WAS JUNE.

The waters of Black Pond, which but a scarce hour before had been lashed into foam by a southwardly breeze, were silent. In the west the myriad tints of a golden sunset were disappearing and the tiny stars were beginning to peep through their blanket of blue. Against this majestic picture, in the foreground, stood tall pines, rising like sentinels from the bog in which for years they had found their growth. Far out on the lake could be heard the solitary cry of a loon calling to his mate. What can be more sublime, more entertaining, to the true sportsman than to be left alone with nature in this paradise? A suggestion[Pg 140] from the guide that we skirt the shore and see if there be any game in the pond brought hearty approval from his employer, and seating myself in the bow, we were soon under way. Such music the tiny ripples make as they frolic and dance at the bow, as the craft glides noiselessly along, the whirr of many wings, and a large flock of wild ducks are up and away at our approach. The moon is on the rise, and lights this woodland paradise with its shining rays. Suddenly a loud splashing was heard down the shore not many rods distant, and the guide sheers off so as to approach the forest denizen from the side. Again the splashing, and twenty rods distant can be seen a large moose, throwing the water from off his sides, unconscious of[Pg 142]



**COW MOOSE ON SHORE OF ALLAGASH LAKE.
Photographed from Life.**

[Pg 143]

any human intruders. Such a picture as he made, standing side on, fearless and brave. The guide had stopped paddling, and the momentum gained was carrying us nearer every second. Suddenly, coming into his line of vision, he turned his head in our direction and showed us a most magnificent pair of velvet-covered antlers. In his eye was the look of defiance, and, with his great head lifted high in the air, the water still dripping from his brown coat, he seemed to say, "Well, it's June, what are you going to do about it?" And so it was. We left him, and slowly paddled back to camp, wishing

that the seasons for a scarce minute had changed,—that October had been June, that June had been October,—and most of all that we could have used a rifle.[Pg 144]

THE ABLEST ROMANCE IN MOOSE HISTORY IS THUS DESCRIBED:

The man who tells it says he was hunting in the mountains of Nova Scotia, when he saw a huge bull moose grazing on a patch of moss, a hundred yards away. He up and fired but when the smoke had cleared away, there stood the moose grazing as before.

Again he fired, and again he was chagrined to see that the moose didn't seem to mind it. A third shot, and the moose disappeared. Much excited, the hunter ran to the moss patch, and there, on the further slope, lay three dead moose. Pretty risky story to tell in Maine.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HABITS, HAUNTS AND ANECDOTES OF THE MOOSE AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM LIFE ***

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