

Left Behind in the Mountains

(By Henry Elliot Thibadeau, in 'The Youth's Companion.' In Three Parts.)

PART II.

One morning, after I had been living alone in the log camp for six or seven weeks, I saw three black elk walking along the opposite bank of the creek. They were an elk cow, her calf and a yearling, all ungainly creatures.

They stopped near the partially burned camp of the trestle-makers, and presently began scuffling together over something on the ground. As there was a log bridge over the creek, I crossed, after they had gone away, and found they had been contending over a quantity of rock salt spilled from the pickle of a corned beef barrel.

They had gnawed the earth out and left a smooth hole where their muzzles and tongues had grubbed up the soakings from the salt. Hoof-prints showed that they had been within the walls of the old camp, which they had entered by the open doorway.

It did not at first occur to me to profit by their appetite; but I sympathized with their craving, and threw out salt for them from several of the old meat-casks in the other camp. For a week or more I saw these three elk now and then. Once a large bull elk, having antlers, appeared with the others; and having once tasted the salt, they began to resort periodically to the place.

After a time the instinct to hunt, coupled with a growing hunger for venison, stirred within me, and I began to ponder plans for capturing those elk. As I had no gun, shooting them was out of the question, but I hit upon a scheme for impounding them in the partly burned camp. I rigged a kind of gate from poles and telegraph-wire, which I suspended from the top log over the doorway in such a manner that I could drop it by pulling a long wire, extending from it across the creek to my camp. Thus I could make a pen or pound of the space within the four blackened walls, which were about nine feet in height. By way of making the pound more secure, I set a top-pole above the walls.

Then I laid trails of salt from the neighboring ground through the doorway to a plentiful supply inside the enclosure. This completed the contrivance, and like a spider in his corner, I could watch in my camp for the approach of my intended victims.

I soon observed that the elk, after coming to the salt, seldom returned till the third day following, and I surmised that they had a regular circuit or beat in feeding through the mountains. I usually saw a panther soon after the elk had gone away, from which I conjectured that the big deer, as they moved through their feeding-grounds, were followed by panthers, which probably hoped to take the elk calf in case its dam should permit it to wander far from her side.

I had no desire to capture and slaughter the elk wantonly. Fresh meat was becoming a prime necessity to me, and I wished to test my trap by catching one beast without alarming or harming the others.

At last, one cloudy morning, I saw four of the animals near my trap, and soon two of them went leisurely into the pen. I had my hand on the wire, when they came out, one behind the other, so closely that it was not possible to separate them. But the yearling immediately strolled in alone. Then, with a sharp tug at my wire, I let the

gate drop and anxiously waited for what might happen.

The impounded creature rushed about inside the pen, plunged at the gate and bleated repeatedly, but was unable to get out. The others, now at a little distance, turned and gazed inquiringly toward the spot, yet did not seem alarmed, for there had been no startling noise. As they soon walked away, I hobbled over to the old camp and inspected my vigorous prisoner through the cracks in the trap-door.

How to make venison of the animal was

one of the beef-barrels. Almost immediately after beginning to live on the broiled and stewed fresh venison I found my strength increasing.

A while afterward, in September, I succeeded in impounding the elk calf in the same way, but before this the offal from my butcher work attracted a number of bears to the neighborhood of the pound. Among these visitors I thought I saw the same large gray bear that had called at my camp earlier in the summer.

The night after I impounded the elk calf



I DIDN'T STOP TO HOBBLE.

something of a problem for me, as I was still much crippled, and, moreover, felt like a beast of prey in planning for the death of the ensnared creature. But hunger, I reasoned, justified me, and the reflection that nearly all human beings subsist upon their weaker fellow animals.

During the day I contrived to toss a slip-noose of rope about the young elk's neck. Against this it pulled till it fell down, and then I used my pole-knife. There were probably two hundred pounds of the meat, about half of which I laid down in salt in

bears came in force. Hearing hideous outcries accompanied by savage growls, I looked out and saw the forms of at least three bears quarreling over the head and other refuse meat.

The ugly brutes soon appeared to have scented the venison which I had hung up over the roof in the smaller camp in which I lived, but they were as yet contented with the offal. The next night, however, they crossed the creek, and I heard them shuffling around outside. By shouting and thrusting out firebrands I contrived to