

Hints on Moose Hunting

By Chas. A. Bramble

AN altogether exaggerated idea has gone abroad as to the difficulties of moose hunting. Numbers of men, who are good shots, and who make each year large bags of quail, duck, snipe, ruffed grouse, and woodcock, become nervous and timid when a proposal is made to them that they shall hunt the lordly moose up across the Canada line. Now, after having tried them all, I think that for a man who understands the habits of the game he intends to pursue, and who has made a study of the equipment necessary, that it is very little harder to kill the moose than it is to make satisfactory bags of any of the game birds before mentioned.

The rock upon which most tyros come to grief is that of outfit. They insist upon taking all sorts of useless things into the woods, the totting around of which would drive their men to drink very shortly, were it not that the only beverage obtainable in large quantities is clear cold water—something that the guides prefer to keep as much as possible for washing purposes, not being reckless in its use, even then.

"Man wants but little here below, but wants that little strong," should be the motto of the moose-hunter. I have known some misguided individuals start off for a hunt dressed in their oldest and most thread-bare clothes; as a consequence, the repairs that were necessary, and which had to be begun soon after they reached the woods, were on an alarmingly large scale. It will be found that the best economy is to start out with new clothing adapted for the bush. Waistcoats are generally in the way, the best garment being a Norfolk jacket of homespun or strong tweed, lined with flannel, and having several large pockets of wash leather. The question of boots is a most important one. Nothing could be better than the English shooting boot, were it not that the Englishman invariably makes his footgear too heavy for work in the Canadian bush. It is one thing to swing along over a fiat country, and another to lift the feet over rocks and wind-falls, or, still more tiring, to pull them out of the quaking muskeg, whose suction is a thing to be remembered. The uppers need not be of heavy leather, and the soles are sufficiently thick if they will carry the soft Hungarian nails usually preferred on this side of the At-

lantic, the square-headed English nail being rarely seen.

Several pairs of moccasins should be included in the outfit, both oil-tans and Indian-dressed, as they are ideal wear in camp and canoe. Some men are even able to hunt in this foot gear, just as does the Indian, but such must always be exceptions, for few civilized beings are able to walk over rough stones and broken ground, with nothing but the paper-like sole of an Indian moccasin under the foot. The only white man I have known able to meet the Indian on an equal footing is Mr. Warburton Pike. He was tramping all over the Dease Lake country in Northern British Columbia during the summer of '98 wearing but thin, caribou hide moccasins. Of course, light foot-gear is an enormous advantage as far as ease of travel goes, and the point to be aimed at is to wear nothing heavier than the peculiarities of your case demand. Socks should, of course, be hand-knitted, and of stout wool; half a dozen pairs would not be any too many to start with.

All sorts of head-gear is seen among campers, but I do not think that anything will beat the modern golf cap. It seems to me to be an actual improvement over the old soft felt, which is still de rigueur among the guides.

By far the most important article, however, is the blanket; it is more vital even than the rifle, because the latter merely secures you fresh meat while the blanket is a necessity for the preservation of your health. No matter how long or how hard the day may have been, if you can curl up at night in a warm, dry, blanket and get seven or eight hours rest, you will awake fit and happy next morning. On the other hand, if you have become separated from your blankets, and have passed the night, as I have often foolishly done, crouched under the lee of some rock, or up-turned root, your feelings next morning are likely to be the reverse of buoyant. And of all the blankets that I have ever seen, there are none to compare, even distantly, with the heavy four-point blue blanket made by the Hudson Bay Co. These blankets are the result of a couple of hundred years' experience in the northern trade, and you may be very sure that they are the best of their kind. A water-proof sheet is almost a necessity, not only does it save you from rheumatism, but it serves to wrap things

in when Jupiter Pluvius is getting in his fine work.

Nine men out of ten take with them into the bush tents that are both large and heavy. This is a great mistake. Stout drilling is the best material for tents, it weighs but little, and if properly pitched is about as good as ordinary canvas. There are many dodges known to experienced men for keeping out the rain. Should you have the tent made as a simple lean-to, with one side open to the fire, you will never have any leaks, even in the heaviest rain, unless your fire should go out, because the heat dries the inside of the tent as fast as the rain wets the other side. By taking two lean-to tents, six feet long by five feet high, and about the same width, you will have shelter for one or two sportsmen, and three guides. Pitch these tents facing one another, leaving sufficient space for the fire between them. I have been away for months at a time, both winter and summer, and never found that anything more is needed. It is always better if a permanent shelter be desired to erect a small log camp. This can be done by a couple of good axe-men in a day, and will be far more comfortable than any closed tent. A great deal of nonsense has been written of late as to the insufficiency of the modern small bore rifle for big game. It is to be feared the fault lay behind the trigger, for the theory and practice, each proves that the American 30 and the English .503 are amply powerful for anything on this continent. All the crack Indian hunters of the northern Rockies, and Canadian bush, are trying to get hold of these rifles. They have learned that such weapons are easier to shoot with and lighter than the old style. Should, however, the sportsman have a favorite rifle of .45 or .50 calibre, he may take it to the woods with the assurance that it will be just the thing for moose-hunting. Plenty of sportsmen think the English double Express absolutely the best weapon for forest game. It certainly is as good as any. If moose be the object of the expedition it would be better, perhaps, to leave the shot-gun behind. The ground cannot be kept too quiet, as a moose will hear and recognize unusual sound at an extraordinary distance—and then, that long, loose-jointed trot will soon carry him miles and miles beyond probable pursuit.

Camps should be pitched in a hollow, because sound will then be muffled and will not travel so far as it would from a hill top. Very little chopping must be indulged in, and only on windy days, and the camp fire should be fed with dry wood that will not cause much smoke. These precautions are all necessary, for remember the moose is one of the most wary animals in the world, and his hearing and