



The Buck Fever Immune

BY L. A. B.

"D'you see how steady I can hold this gun?" remarked Bill, as his eye gleamed over the barrel of a 38-55 Winchester. "I'll just bet you at the top round of anything you want, that I won't get it, and to show you that I can shoot, too, I'll just pick you out that white rock on yonder bank of the railroad tracks and make it smoke."

A steady aim, a sharp report, and a puff of dust from the indicated rock told the story of Bill's marksmanship.

"Well done!" and "Good" came from several of the bystanders.

"But that don't prove that you can't get the fever, or be able to control yourself when it comes on," said one "Here comes your partner, who has killed a few and seen more. We'll see what he says."

As I came up, Bill's theory of buck fever was explained, and as to passing an opinion, I could only inform them that I had had it more than once and knew of older hands who have been bothered with it. As to Bill, a tenderfoot, hunting deer without an attack of the shakers, it would be one chance out of more than I can tell. Bill and I had planned a deer hunt as soon as the season opened, and of course polished up a little before hand, so as not to go into the woods and be grinned at by the Jacks on the first morning after our arrival. We fared pretty well at practice, and on the following morning we landed with an inward feeling of satisfaction as to our ability. A drive of about twenty miles into the woods landed us at Camp Sunrise, at the head of French Lake, where live Barney and Mrs. Pripps and their boy Raymond. A cheerful greeting, a stretching of our lame limbs and backs, a little grumbling of the inner man, and we were seated around a well-spread table, loaded with all that we needed, I say needed, but could you have seen Bill knock in on that dinner you might have thought we needed more. Barney looked alarmed, and his face showed great doubt as to whether she would take Bill's 310 pounds to board or not, but he quieted her fear a little when he arose from his chair and left a crust of bread on the plate for the cat. I'd think it well for Mrs. Barney to adjust her rates according to a man's capacity.

Bill bunked in early and dreamed of the morrow, but not the rest of us; for of all the buzzes, scrapes, scratches, squeaks or groans Bill's snoring beats everything. I almost believe one could run a 25-light dynamo with just the sound of it; anyway, it kept me awake all night, and Bill never missed a note, either up or down. We rose at five o'clock and prepared for a stand somewhere near the camp for Bill's first, real hunt for the buck that couldn't give him the fever.

I took him to a place where the signs of deer were thick and fresh. Bill's eyes dilated, goose-flesh covered his face that one could have scratched matches on, and once or twice I noticed him tug at his cap as if the calm, frosty, morning air had intentions of blowing it off. Bill sized up the tracks as if he wanted to gather them in a basket to take home. He was all absorbed, but on being told to stay there and keep a sharp look out for the buck, he came to and meant business. We waited and watched till our teeth began to chatter, which is a sign to go home, so we did. The next morning proved to be Bill's eventful day. History should not omit it. Bill took his stand as the morning before and had not long to wait when a fine spike-horn made his appearance. With a steady aim, a sharp report, a crashing of brush and a dull thud, Bill had him down.

Well, to leave space for something better I'll simply say that you couldn't reach Bill with a ten-foot pole that day; his cap was two sizes too small for his head and his feet covered enough ground to raise a peck of beans on.

"What'd I tell you about getting the fever?" he said. "You fellows don't want to get excited, that's all." And much more of the same sort.

The next day was my chance, and I succeeded in killing a nice fawn. Two days later came Bill's downfall, and, oh! how he fell! I'll tell you how it was. I wouldn't, but Bill nettled me about some politics once, so here's where I'll even matters up a little:

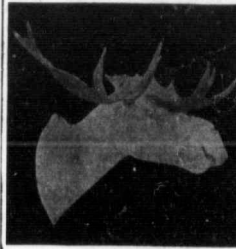
Bill, this morning, took his stand as usual, but having gotten tired of standing he took with him an old cracker box to sit on, and by so doing and leaning his back up against a tree, enjoyed comfort. How it ever happened Bill don't know. Anyway, he said that all of a sudden he saw a

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great, big buck stand a few rods away from him, sizing him up with a pair of eyes as big as billiard balls. Bill looked at the buck and the buck looked at Bill. Finally it dawned upon Bill that he had his rifle with him and might shoot the monster.

"Such a pair of antlers," thought Bill. "What a fine show they'll make in the office." Bang! "He's there yet." Bang! Bang! Bang! Click? "What? Empty!"

Well, you may imagine that Bill did some tall fumbling around in his pockets for the wanted goods, the buck in the meantime running a semi-circle around him. Concealing himself behind a thicket, the buck started to give Bill that well-known snort, which Bill says he repeated nine times, and at which Bill shot at two of them. I don't know if Bill's gun was sighted right that day or not, but I know that when a fellow shoots at the snort of a buck there is something wrong. How that beast ever walked so close to Bill before he spied him I don't know. It must have been the fault of his cap, which had shifted too far over his eyes.

Bill and I enjoyed a pleasant vacation and returned home with the limit.

"There! You have a black eye, and your nose is bruised, and your coat is torn to bits," said Mamma, as her youngest appeared at the door. "How many times have I told you not to play with that bad Jenkins boy?"

"Now, look here, Mother," said Bobby, "do I look as if we'd been playing?"

A party of young men were camping, and to avert annoying questions they made it a rule that the one who asked a question that he could not answer himself had to do the cooking.

One evening, while sitting around the fire, one of the boys asked: "Why is it that a ground-squirrel never leaves any dirt at the mouth of its burrow?"

They all guessed and missed. So he was asked to answer it himself.

"Why," he said, "because it always begins to dig at the other end of the hole."

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"But," one asked, "how does it get to the other end of the hole?"
"Well," was the reply, "that's your question."