

## A Northern Coon Hunt

One of the most curious problems in connection with the habits of wild animals is the suddenness with which they sometimes reappear in considerable numbers in localities where for many years owing to altered conditions, they have been only a tradition. I have known this to happen in the case of several species in various places, but I do not recall any instance of animal migration that afforded me so much novel pleasure as did the unexpected return of the coon to its long-forsaken haunts in the mixed woods on my cousin's estate. These woods, mostly of fine old timber, covered an area of some 6,000 acres, and had in past time harbored not a few coons, but promiscuous shooting and the cutting off of extensive tracts of neighboring woodland had long since caused the coons to disappear. For more than fifteen years not one had been seen within a radius of twenty miles, and the conviction of sportsmen was that the circle of total extinction was constantly widening.

The fallacy of this belief was first proved by my cousin's oldest boy Jack, a promising young Nimrod of fourteen. This chip of the old block had gone one morning with a hound called Poker to shoot rabbits, and at about midday my cousin and I, lounging in the gun room, saw him coming across the lawn bending under the weight of a large animal, which at first glance we mistook for a fox. Then the ringed tail established identity, and we hastened outside to extend those hearty felicitations to the lucky sportsman which the novelty of his achievement required. Poker meantime stood around and thumped his tail against our legs, looking as pleased as a man might who bagged his first grizzly. From rabbits to coons was a big jump upward for Poker, and he meant that we should appreciate the greatness of his new dignity, even if he had to thump realization into us.

At first we were inclined to regard this coon as a lone example of that parlor spirit which sometimes moves an animal, even the shyest, to forsake the comparative security of its accustomed haunts for the dangerous, but alluring novelty of unfamiliar pastures. We soon learned differently, however. On the following day Jack went out with Poker and a prize beagle, the result of his morning's work being another full grown coon, which, like the first, was a female. The news of this second achievement, following hard on the heels of the first, naturally excited the dormant coon-hunting proclivities of the neighbors, and soon hunting by daylight became general. Within a week eleven coons had been secured, and as the supply was evidently doomed to be speedily exhausted, my cousin, who had set his face against molesting the animals until they had established themselves, decided to organize a coon hunt that should at least have the benefit of all those spectacular effects which are essential to the proper pursuit of this animal.

The organization of a coon hunt is simple. A certain number of vigorous young men, who would rather fall over logs in a black swamp than lie cosily in bed, a good hound or two, a hurricane lantern, and a .38-calibre revolver, complete the outfit. The revolver is better than a gun for rough travelling at night in the thick woods, as the members of the party are prone to alternate between all fours and supine, while the lantern is useful in keeping the party together. Without a light a capsize man, making an unpremeditated acquaintance with a woodland mudhole, or an invisible tree, is more likely to lose his temper than the accusing eyes of his fellows.

The evening we chose for our hunt was warm and cloudy, and before we had been out half an hour it began to rain. Simultaneously Poker gave tongue on a hot trail. But between us and him lay a long, narrow strip of bad swamp, with a treacherous bog brook running through the middle of it, which would have to be crossed if we went forward. Behind us were the comforts of home. Some of the less enthusiastic of the party, therefore, were for beating a retreat; but the more sporting spirits pushed on, and the quitters fell in behind. Straight across the swamp we went, sometimes up to our knees in the water and mud between the tussocks, and, finding a narrow part of the brook, we assayed to jump it. The first man came down in the middle, and the rest of us waded. Poker all this time had been getting farther away, and by the time we were in the woods again he was to be heard giving tongue faintly on the other side of the Prospect Hill. Then for a moment all was quiet, and someone muttered that, as the dog was at fault, we had better go home; but ere such craven counsel could prevail the hound was heard "barking up," followed by the unmistakable interval of "circling," and immediately the whole party set off helter skelter through the black and dripping woods.

By this time, however, we were so wet that it was a savage pleasure to defy the elements, and in the renewed excitement of the chase falls, bumps, and the lance thrusts of snag branches hardly merited attention. We took a straight course up over the hill (a stiff climb, but a short cut, and, we rushed pell-mell down the other slope, through a belt of burnt timber (where the black came off freely on our hands and faces), we could hear Poker talking to that coon in tones ranging from threats to cajolery.

The coon, of course, was up the worst tree in the country—a giant hemlock, one or two that stood with interlocked branches on either side of a uniform border. On the apex of this rock we set the lantern, and I then stood around it to hold convalescence as to how to get at the coon. In the inconspicuous south it is customary to cut down five dollars' worth of tree to secure fifty cents' worth of coon, but here such a

heroic measure was not to be thought of. Two courses were open to us; either we could climb the tree or wait for daylight; and we chose the former.

As a boy I had rather fancied myself as a climber, but, although I had developed an extra inch or two of leg since those days, I had evidently lost ground in other respects. However, I managed to reach the first branches, and after that the work was easy. But the canopy of a hemlock tree is dark at midnight! I searched through it industriously for ten minutes before I discovered the coon, stuck like a limpet on a sagging bough. About this time, too, I discovered that I had left the revolver below. To descend for it was not my intention; once up that tree was enough. So, calling out to those on the ground, I attempted to shake the coon from its perch. I presume the coon laughed. Anyone who has tried to shake a branch gin, thick at the butt will appreciate the futility of my efforts and follow the coon's example. But with half a dozen sarcastic friends standing below I failed to see the humor of the situation. Not to be foiled, however, in desperation, I crawled out along the limb, till it sagged perilously, and then essayed another shake. Crack! It had taken me five minutes to climb that tree; I came down in the fractional part of a second.

It is always a shock to my vanity when I remember that, until the coon was despatched, no one took the trouble to ask how I was. Fortunately, I was all right. But, if the coon had been as badly wounded by the fall as I was, he could never have put up the gallant fight he did. One advantage I had over him, however—he had to be carried home, while I walked.—Lincoln Wilbar.

### INTERESTING NARRATIVE ON LAKE CHAD

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from my line of soundings, the average depth right across was 10 feet.

The water, too, was beautifully clear, cool and sweet, and, so far as could be told from taste alone, without a trace of salt. Contrary also to the experience of Captain Freydenberg, we found the deepest water (average 11 feet) round the islands, the next deep (average 9½ feet) between these and the coast of Seyorum, and the shallowest (average 8½ feet) between them and the mouth of the Shari. On several occasions the men could not see their 17-foot poles, and had to take to paddles, but for no long distances. This probably only indicated small depressions.

On the whole the portion of the lake traversed, produced the impression of a splendid waterway. Should the Northern Nigeria railway ever be continued to Bornu, which, considering the immense trade of the latter province and the easy country through which the line would run, would surely more than repay expenditure, there seems no reason why a regular service of steamers should not be kept up from Seyorum to Fort Lamy on the Shari, and the 4-mile-distant German capital of Kuseri. By this means letters and merchandise would reach the Central Sudan in a less number of weeks than it takes months at the present day, and the magnificent cotton-growing territories of Eastern Nigeria and French Central Africa would be opened up. Such a scheme might perhaps be worth the attention of the British Cotton-growing Association. Though it would be a matter of regret to some should the waters lose their mystery and become a mere commercial high-road.

Possibly the strange fascination which Chad has exercised over so many is due to the fact that she seems never to give the same impression to any two of her visitors, and shows such varied characteristics in different parts. Surely she may be called the Cleopatra among lakes, for, so far as can be judged at present, many years will come and go before exploration can make her known to us, or "custom stale her infinite variety."

### CURIOUS EFFECTS OF MUSICAL VIBRATIONS

"Experiments were made in England to show that a beautiful wave structure can be imparted to the surface of mercury by the vibrations of a tuning-fork, and that even the surface of solid lead which has been subjected to similar vibrations possesses a structure resembling that of a vibrating surface of mercury."

"Iodid of nitrogen, a black powder, is one of the most dangerous of all explosives. When dry, the slightest touch will often cause it to explode with great violence."

"There appears to be a certain rate of vibration which this compound can not resist. In experiments to determine the cause of its extreme explosiveness, damp iodide of nitrogen was rubbed on the strings of a bass viol. It is known that the strings of such an instrument will vibrate when those of a similar instrument, having an equal tension, are played upon."

"In the present case, after the explosive had become thoroughly dry upon the strings, another bass viol was brought near and its strings were sounded. At a certain note the iodide of nitrogen on the prepared instrument exploded."

"It was found that the explosion occurred only when a rate of vibration of 60 per second was communicated to the prepared strings. Vibration of the G string caused an explosion, while that of the E string had no effect."

"The question is often asked, What force least expected does the greatest damage to

buildings? One architect's answer to this question may be a surprise to those who do not understand that it is the regularity of vibration that makes it powerful.

"I venture to say," remarked this architect, "that you would never suspect that violin-playing would injure the walls of a building. Yet it certainly does. There have been instances when the walls of stone and brick structures have been seriously damaged by the vibrations of a violin. These cases are, of course, unusual, but the facts are established."

"The vibrations of a violin are really serious in their unseemly force, and when they come with regularity, they exercise an influence upon structures of brick, iron, or stone. It follows, of course, that there must have been continuous playing for years to cause the loosening of masonry or to make iron brittle, but it will do so in time."—Scientific American.

### A SLICE OF TERRITORY GERMANY DESIRES TO ADD TO HER POSSESSIONS

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fifty schools. The military forces consist of natives offered by Europeans. Local revenues are mainly derived from custom duties, and there are native hut and poll taxes. The sale of alcohol to natives is restricted, and in some areas entirely prohibited. For 1908 the general budget of the separate colonies amounted to 6,434,985 (about £257,400), and the State subventions to 600,000 (£24,000). The estimated expenditure of France on the French Congo for 1910 was no less than 6,422,000.

The total exports were valued in 1909 at 10,915,000, and the exports at 17,280,000. The latter comprised rubber ivory, various woods palm oil, palm kernels, coffee, cocoa, kola nuts, and other produce. The tenure of conceded land by concession companies now depends on actual cultivation or exploration of the soil. The Central African telegraph line connects Brazzaville with Loango and is in communication with the English Atlantic cable, whilst wireless telegraphy is also soon to be employed for the purpose of intercommunication. A line is being laid to connect Brazzaville with Stanley Pool, in the Belgian Congo, and ultimately with the German East African telegraph system at Lake Tanganyika. In fact, science and enterprise may be said to be actively engaged in opening up a region where, if climatic conditions are not entirely favorable to Europeans, natural compensations in many directions are not wanting.

### LUXURY OF A ROMAN VILLA

Since the days when Horace delighted the world with his epistles and satires a special glamor has hung round the neighborhood in which were situated the farm and villa given by the discriminating generosity of Maecenas to his friend, and an immense deal of labor and learning has been expended in order to ascertain with certainty the exact position of this delectable spot.

The approximate site was settled during the second half of the eighteenth century by a French abbe, Mgr. Capmartin de Chaupy, who spent a considerable part of his life in visiting the many places up and down Italy which claimed to be the actual ground praised with so much fervor by the great poet. But Mgr. de Chaupy was able to prove with certainty that the only situation which answered entirely to the description given was about eight miles from the modern Vicovaro, the Vicus Varia that Horace mentions as his nearest town, at the foot of which runs the little river now called the Licenza, a name which is obviously the Digentia of which Horace speaks, and which passes close to the little ancient Roman town of Mandella.

The Italian Government has initiated systematic excavations to bring to light all that has been left by past vandals, who as late as seventy years ago did not hesitate to carry off the beautiful marbles and statues lying about among the ruins in order to burn them and turn them into lime. From what has already been found it would appear that the historic villa was in the middle of an extensive garden, and was surrounded by a crypto portico, which protected it from the excessive heat of summer. Besides, there was an artificial lake in the middle of the garden 350 yards square and six feet deep, standing in front of the house, fed by the waters of the river Licenza through a most ingenious hydraulic system, the pipes of which have been found almost intact.

The hydraulic works extended to the thermæ or baths, which latter date from the time of the Antonines, and of which the remains have also been found next to the villa on the left, with all the different rooms for bathing, cooling, or resting after the bath, showing the extreme of luxury which the ancient Romans enjoyed even in their country houses.

Magnificent mosaic pavements, fragments of beautiful frescoes and stucco work, and marble heads—one of which represents Faustina the younger—have also come to light. The body of the villa is composed of reticulated work, which is characteristic of the finest period of Roman architecture, in which the exquisitely regular form of the stones gives the appearance of a network to the walls, and which must have been particularly difficult to carry out in the hard limestone of the neighborhood. Meanwhile the excavations are being continued with great patience and care.—London Standard.

"Then you don't think I practice what I preach, eh?" queried the minister in talking with one of the deacons at a meeting.

"No, sir, I don't," replied the deacon. "You've been preachin' on the subject o' resignation for two years, an' we haven't resigned yet."

## Life On a Boer Farm

In Health Culture an American woman gives the following gloomy account of the home life in what was Dutch South Africa. It is interesting if only it serves as a contrast to the darkest pictures that have been painted of the lonely life of Canadian women:

The farmer and his family lived chiefly on sour bread and sour skimmed milk. I was, therefore, hungry most of the time, and the ripe figs hanging in clusters were pretty alluring. After pushing back the skin of the fig and enjoying the soft fruit with its tropical taste, I had a refreshing night's sleep, only to awaken in the morning pretty well scared, for my tongue was so swollen and black that I could not talk.

The Boer wife laughed and enjoyed my discomfort and explained that the skin of the fig had numerous fine thorns and I had not been careful to remove it when eating.

When I told the farmer's wife that I liked buttermilk in quantity, I noticed that I had a cupful or so given me, but she threw it by the painful to the pigs. They were of far more consequence to her than I, for they would stay longer with her, and were her familiars. I was not.

Then, again, when I was hungry for butter on my bread, a white clammy substance made from "sheep tail fat" was handed to me, and I could not allow the farmer's wife to see me quiver. She sold her butter in the village close by, at seventy-five cents a pound, more or less. Sour bread and green strawberries (plenty of them) were considered good enough.

This Boer family was one of the wealthiest of their kind. There was not a ripple of fun or exuberant life in anything but the livestock. Conversation was a dead language—unknown. The women are mute beings, accepting

their destiny with a deep stillness. The wife gives of her strength to the limit, and dies after giving birth to a dozen or more children, to make way for wife number two, who gives another dozen children to her country. Her adobe house, with its dirt floor made of anthill clay mixed with beef gall, is a chamber of horror to an American traveler.

The farmer depends upon his ten or eighteen children, of all sizes, to help him. A Kaffir as an employee is un dependable as the wind that blows. Yet that Kaffir is the hired man in the mines and elsewhere in South Africa. The white man as a day laborer is a general failure. He can not be worked in droves like the Kaffir from the interior, whose language, in clicks and vowel sounds, is hardly human.

The Boer is not long-lived. One seldom met an aged Boer of the old stock. Oom Paul Kruger, who was seventy-five years old when he died, was an exception. Hatred toward the Uitlander and the lust for gold and power was what kept the fires of life burning at white heat within him.

To stem the elements alone in Africa takes the stoutest heart. Fevers assail the discouraged and underfed home boy. The easily forced streams become rivers, like swirling Niagara, in a few hours, and the terrific thunderstorms paralyze one sensitive to electrical influences.

There is no pretty, little, far-off streak in the sky which the amateur photographer can catch on his film, but the air is charged with electricity so appalling in its violet-hued and deep orange earth-bound clouds that one has to come to a complete standstill, whether walking or riding in the open veldt, so as not to attract the ribbonlike lightning playing around him and venting its fury on any moving object.

So he went down to the rectory, rang the bell—and the bell was answered by his son in buttons.

### WEBBED FEET THIS WAY

The weary African traveler had been riding his still more weary horse almost all day in the rain, and had only one more river to cross to get to his destination.

On arrival at the river he asked a small Dutch lad if it was still fordable.

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

Thereupon the traveler guided his horse innocently in.

After about five minutes of struggling and buffeting about, he staggered out minus his horse, on the same side as he went in.

"I thought you said that this river was still crossable?" he asked the youngster in a spluttering rage.

"So it is," was the reply. "My mother's ducks crossed it only a few minutes before you tried."

Bore—"I see you're rather busy now. I'll look in again when you have a couple of hours to spare." Assistant Editor (wearily)—"Ah, thanks. Then you'll be present at my funeral."

Landlady—"The price of this room is two guineas a week. Will that suit you?" Student—"Perfectly." Landlady—"Then you can't have it. Anyone who meekly accepts such an exorbitant price obviously does not intend to pay his bill."

Willie—Pa! Pa—Yes. Willie—Teacher says we're here to help others. Pa—Of course we are. Willie—Well, what are the others here for?

The two old friends met after a separation of ten years. "I declare, you've kept your youthful looks to a surprising extent," said one.

"Thank you," said the other man. "You've done pretty well, too. You know you expected to be absolutely bald long before this, like your father, instead of which I really believe you've as much hair left as I have, if not more."

"Absurd!" said his friend. "It can't be. Let's count it!"

French Visitor—"I call to see Monsieur Rollard." Maid—"You can't see him, sir. He's not up." French Visitor—"Vat you tell? I come yester, and you say, 'Can't see him, because he is not down.' Now you say, 'Can't see him, because he's not up.' Vat you mean by all dat? Ven vil he be in ze middle?"

May and Molly are sisters. But they look upon life from very different standpoints. May, aged five, was watching the foam in the wake of a Liverpool-Birkenhead ferry. "Isn't it lovely?" she exclaimed to Molly. "It's just like the creamy lace on a wedding dress." "Yes, it does look nice," answered her younger sister; "like the froth of a bottle of ginger beer."

Said Mr. Bullion to his intended son-in-law—"Have you fixed up the date for the wedding yet, young man?" "That," replied the taciturn young man, "I shall leave entirely with Mary." "And what kind of an affair is it going to be? Do you want it done in style, or would you prefer it to be a quiet show?" The young man considered a moment. Then he said: "I think, sir, I would leave that entirely to Mrs. Bullion." "Um! And what is the amount of your income?" "Oh, that, sir," answered the pleasant young fellow, "I leave it entirely to you, Mr. Bullion!"

### SICK OF IT

It is not always good to be the pet of the ladies. This is the lesson that was learnt by little Archie, aged nine, and with a lace frill round his neck, at a children's picnic.

Little Archie had long golden curls, and a velvet suit, and the ladies just loved him. Tea-time came, and they all besieged him. Cakes they gave him, and ices, and wafers, and chocolates, and buns, and lemonade. They were most pressing, and Archie liked it.

A little later, however, Archie went into a quiet corner to think, and there, with one hand on his head and one on his sash, a dainty lady found him.

"Why, Archie, pet," she exclaimed, "what's the matter? Haven't you got all you want?"

"Yes, I've got all I want, please," murmured Archie, ever polite; "but, please, I don't want all I've got."

### OVER THE WIRE

Everybody who has used a telephone knows exactly what is meant by the following description of the way a certain person talked over the wire.

The man at one end had become thoroughly exasperated, and asked his friend if he was losing his hearing.

His friend was an Irishman, and replied, "I can hear you all right till you begin to talk, and then I can't understand a word you say."

### EDUCATION IN BUTTONS

"A client of mine had his experience of that," said the taciturn solicitor, stirred to reminiscence by a mention of Dotheboys' Hall. "Anglo-Indian had sent his boy home to live at a rectory. Paid £300 a year for it. Food, lodging, education—all told. Couldn't bring up the boy in India. Paid for two years, and then he came back to England, and thought he would like to see how his son was getting on."