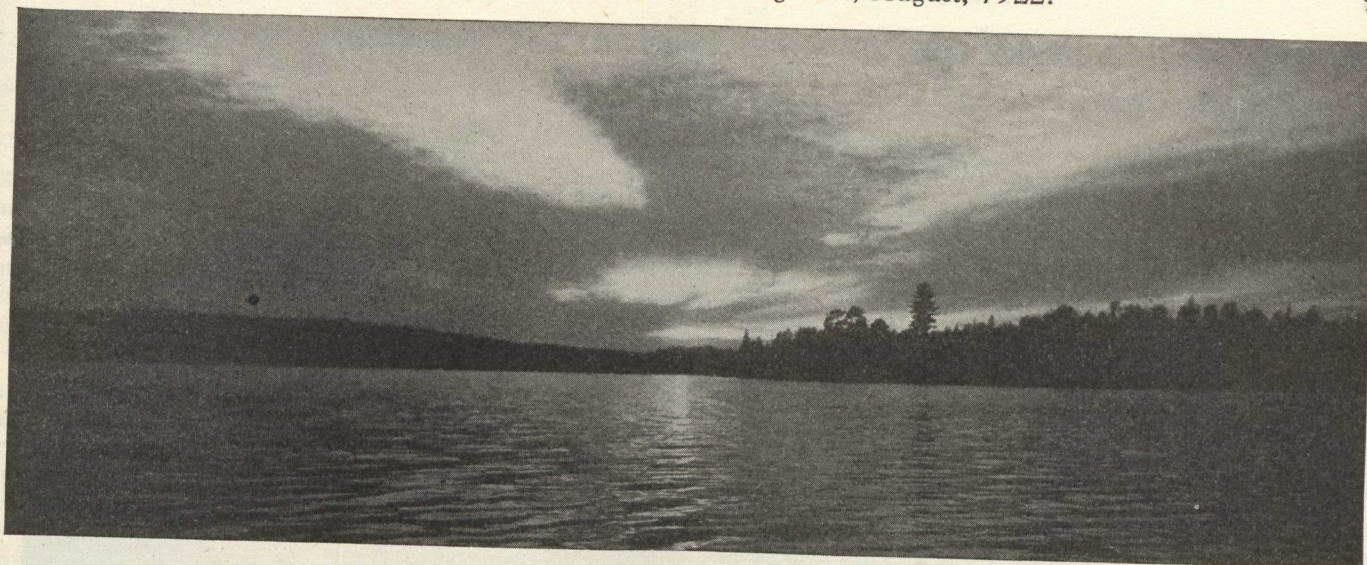




The Tree Fringed Lakes of Algonquin Park.

Tamed Baby Beaver

Three seasons ago a baby beaver, apparently deserted, was brought into our camp, and for a fortnight we tried to rear it. It had obviously never been weaned, and several days went by before we could get it to eat at all. Unfortunately it had been badly injured and did not long survive. But it was an affectionate pet with quaint little ways of its own, and the daintiest slip of a paddle tail that it trailed along behind it. It was scrupulously clean and after dining would always wash its face and smooth its fur with tongue and paws. It was curious to see the beaver traits coming out in it; it would crawl about the floor of the boathouse and when it came to anything resembling a stump (my foot, for instance) it would raise itself up on its hind legs and balancing with paddle tail below and forepaws above, stand there resting like a pigmy kangaroo.

Last season we had almost daily visits from a hen partridge and four of her chicks. We first heard these visitors soon after dawn, when our newly awakened senses became aware of a gentle clucking outside the tent. They usually paid a morning visit, occasionally early afternoon, wandering slowly across our lot, foraging among the brackens and brush; the mother would always mount on a perch—a stump or a log—and begin clucking softly, a kind of crooning lullaby of “all’s well” to her chicks; keeping within hail of this call from the outlook in the crow’s nest, the chicks would feed about at the boathouse steps or under the dining table with all the assurance of barnyard fowl; once as I was shaving at my

boudoir stand of a clump of birch, the mother mounted a log just behind me and purred away in so soft and soothing a key that sometimes, like Homer, she nodded drowsily in her song and almost fell from the perch, while her chicks fed in and out between my feet.

Cocks o’ the Woods

Twice in the middle of last August we had a visit from a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers (the black Cock o’ the woods). On their second visit the birds discovered an old pine stump just west of our clearing and spent the better part of an hour digging into the heart of it. They allowed one of us — camouflaged in khaki — to get within a few feet of them and sit on a log watching their operations. They uttered cries like those of a Flicker, and it was worth a great deal to watch them at work. The smaller of the two birds seemed the more aggressive and drove the other away from its special preserves in the punky heart of the stump.

A Fearless Fawn

On another occasion, while stepping along a little deer trail, I raised my eyes toward a barrier of fallen trees, and there at the foot of a tiny balsam, partly screened by the leafy branch of a honey suckle, lay a little fawn, fast asleep in a bed of leaves. For some moments I stood frozen, a few paces off, and watched it; presently its eyes opened and it looked straight at me in a calm and steady stare, no trace of either fear or surprise; then it lowered its head, closed its eyes, and snuggled down to sleep again.

Backing cautiously away, I stepped out of the charmed circle, and after

a single glance back at the miracle within the magic ring, hurried down to the tent and brought my wife to share the vision. At first so well screened and inconspicuous lay the fawn that I thought it had gone, but presently the dappled back and side revealed themselves among the leaves. We both watched it for some minutes, and twice it opened its eyes drowsily and looked at us, but evidently convinced we had called it too soon, it returned to the Land of Nod.

Half an hour later, I was at Headquarters telling Mr. Bartlett of our latest adventure. Hearing we had left the creature undisturbed, the superintendent caught up his camera, and we paddled full speed to the foot of a steep cliff not far from the sleeping fawn. There it was, just as we had left it. Mr. Bartlett took several snaps of it, and finally, at his suggestion, I stepped round to the back of the fallen tree under which the fawn lay, and thrusting my arm cautiously through the brushwood lowered it till I could touch the creature with outstretched hand. I stroked it, twice, very gently, with the tips of my fingers; but this was too much for even cervine endurance; it twitched its skin violently, as a calf might to dislodge a fly, and then starting up, bounded off a few paces on its long legs. Even then, reluctant (as it were) to go, it faced about for a last look at us before passing leisurely out of sight through the woods.

It never returned to this lair, but chose a new one; and a week later, when I nearly stepped on it lying beneath the broken end of a dead birch in the heart of the woods, it had already learned its first lesson of fear.