

Some Northern Methods.

BY ROBERT G. HODGSON.

All trappers are interested in the methods as practiced by the trappers of the North, be they whites or Indians; this doubtless being because they think these people as professional trappers would have better methods than they have.

However, to tell the truth, there is nothing very new in trapping in the methods employed, whether it is in rural districts or the far Northern parts of Canada, so long as it is an experienced and well-read trapper who is trapping in each place. Of course, there are the differences made necessary by different climates and different circumstances; but the professional reads the trapping publications in search of new methods, new information of other trappers, who are perhaps only amateurs, quite as much as the amateur and small trapper reads these same publications in the hope of securing valuable information from the professional. There are two points on which most Northern trappers differ, and they are, the traps to be used; and the scents or decoys, commonly termed "medicine" by them. A professional trapper seldom, if ever, buys manufactured lures, for as one old ex-Hudson Bay factor told me, "We can make better 'medicine' for one-tenth of the cost." I have heard many of these old war-horses of the wilds arguing backward and forward on these two questions, and yet when it was all boiled down, it meant little, for as wide apart as their arguments may have been in starting, when they ended, there was not a great deal of difference between the opinions.

In former years, these trappers would no more think of using anything but a Newhouse trap, than I would of using a mouse trap for mink; anything but a Newhouse, no matter by whom made, was no good; but now I notice that the Victor and Jump traps are replacing the Newhouse in the smaller sizes. In the larger sizes they still stick to the Newhouse. I asked an Indian why they did not use the larger sizes of Victor and such of the lighter brands, and he said: "For mink, marten, weasel, muskrat—heem good; for otter, beaver, bear—heem no good," which shows their prejudices you see.

Two Indian fox methods, which give excellent results, are the following:

Save the urine from every fox you catch, and sprinkle some on the beds and places where you make your fox sets. Every fox will stop at this place to cast his water, similar to dogs, and will scratch over it. The trap should be placed a foot or so from the spot where the water is sprinkled, and you will catch them every time when they turn around to scratch. This plan has become "civilized" to some extent, and now one-quarter as much fish brine—taken from salted whitefish or mackerel—as there is urine—is often added to make it go further, improve the formula, and preserve it.

Get some mice nests from the grain bins or a field; now find where the foxes cross meadows, or fields, or run through the woods, or wherever they have a trail. Rake up some fine grass, earth and other debris, and make a "bed" two feet square. Put the mice nests on this bed and setting the traps in the nests, allow the edges of the nests to show, as an attraction to Mr. Fox. Now get some live mice and a handful of wheat; tie the mice by means of a string to the bottom of trap, and sprinkle some wheat around, so they can get it, as it may be several days before the fox comes around, and of course the mice must be alive if they are to be of any use as an attraction. The odor of the nest is very strong and highly attractive to the fox. The trap used for fox by the Indian is the 1½ Victor, Jump or Newhouse.

I do not believe the Indian considers the matter of human scent in trapping any animal. All traps are, of course, set carefully, because the Indian recognizes this of the utmost importance; traps are usually set with gloves or mitts on, not on account of the human scent, but because they wish to protect their hands from the cold.

The following method, while not an Indian method, is one used by a Hudson Bay trapper:

Find where the foxes have been running,

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THAT means you can have your furnace NOW, when you need it most; that you can make your home cozy and be comfortable for the rest of this winter.

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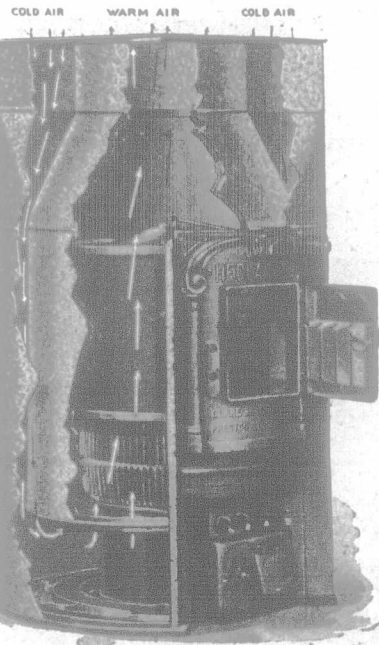
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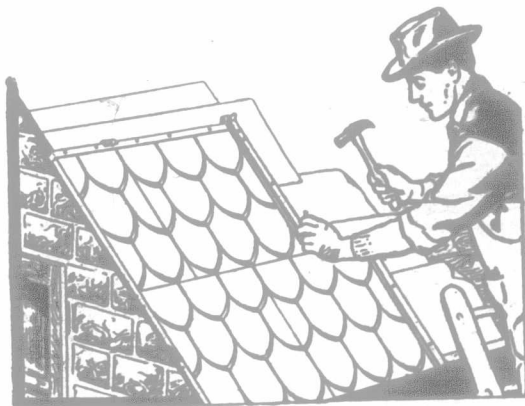
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