

THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 1906.

## Pete La Fontaine's Career As Related by His Friends

(Bangor Commercial.)

The arrest this week of Peter La Fontaine by two Hantsley game wardens and his subsequent trial in the Bangor municipal court in which he was found guilty of illegal killing of game, and fined, has revived in the minds of the many who have followed the history of this notorious Fougassian in the last decade many stories which have been told concerning his life in the woods. Much has been written and more has been said of this man—in all enough to give him such a reputation for devilry as has not been given to any other man who has lived and hunted in the Maine woods.

It is a simple matter to connect devilry with almost any man when he is not at hand to answer the accusations made against him and when that man happens to live in the depths of the forest all the year round, is of a very retiring and reticent nature, and more than that is known to have repeatedly broken the laws protecting big game and fur-bearing animals, there is no end to the quantity that may be heaped upon him. Such say men who have known him for a quarter of a century have hunted, eaten, and slept with him, yes, and even pursued him—has been the experience of Pete La Fontaine.

For years this man hunted in the woods of northwestern Maine, trapping the various smaller fur-bearing animals and killing deer and moose, how many nobody but he knows. For years he was sought by game wardens and each fresh evidence of a moose or deer being killed out of season was laid at the door of the wily Frenchman who hunted with impunity, and relied upon his whistling and muscled to carry him out of harm's way. Each time the wardens were fooled in their pursuit only added to the tales of the desperate character of the man they sought, though they had never been near enough to him to see the features so hardened and cruel. Finally Fontaine was traced to his little camp near Turner pond and shot by a game warden as he lay on his cot. It was a dangerous wound and he still suffers pain from it, but his iron constitution and nerve pulled him through. He returned to Maine to hunt and was arrested while getting water from a waterhole near his camp. No force was necessary on this occasion for he made no attempt to escape but went quietly with the wardens.

It has repeatedly been said that Fontaine eluded the wardens for so long because the hunters and guides who knew his whereabouts feared him so that they dared not give evidence against him. In contradiction of these stories no better evidence of their absurdity can be offered than the fact that Fontaine has hundreds of staunch friends among these men and that it is these, very men who repudiate the stories told of the desperate character.

One of the most prominent men connected with the lumbering industry in Maine said one day recently while discussing Fontaine's recent arrest: "I have known Fontaine for great many years. The feeling against him started about 20 years ago and this is how it was."

"At that time Fontaine, Mose Goodness, a man named Bishop,

and two or three others, were trapping up around the headwaters of the St. John. Each had his own line of traps and they covered a big expanse of territory. In those days there was no law against killing beaver and the little devils were thicker than rabbits in that part of the state. It was not at all uncommon for a man to go into the woods and clear up \$400 or \$500 as the result of his season's trapping.

"Well, if you have ever been in the woods where any trapping is going on you know what a line of traps is like. Each man has his own territory and a blazed line on which he sets his traps, maybe on a stump or a log, or a dead tree, or the little dead-falls or 'squat-guts.' Mose Goodness had his line of traps running from Baker lake over toward the Alagash waters and even as far as Eagle lake. The others had their lines all around Baker lake and the headwaters of the St. John.

"Along in the winter Mose was missed and it was found that his line was not being followed as usual. There was no trace of Mose. The next spring news was brought down that Mose's body had been found where he had been caught in one of his own bear traps and died. This was generally accepted but later it was reported that a confession had been made by Bishop, saying that Fontaine killed Goodness. According to the story Bishop said they had agreed to kill Goodness and that he had been appointed to do the job. His courage was not being followed as usual. There was no trace of Mose. The next spring news was brought down that Mose's body had been found where he had been caught in one of his own bear traps and died. This was generally accepted but later it was reported that a confession had been made by Bishop, saying that Fontaine killed Goodness. According to the story Bishop said they had agreed to kill Goodness and that he had been appointed to do the job. His courage was not being followed as usual.

"Now comes the wild part of the yarn. According to Bishop's confession after killing Goodness they tied the body on a sled and dragged it down near Sebomook and left it so as to indicate that Goodness had been caught in the trap and died there. Now from the point where, according to Bishop's confession, Goodness was killed to Sebomook is all of 30 miles and what earthly reason could they have for taking the body all that distance when it might have been left at almost any place with the chances against it ever being found?

"Of course the story was not generally credited but in the light of later events and Pete's persistent violation of the game laws it aroused a great feeling against him. That Pete has violated the game laws time and again there is little doubt and I do not countenance his acts in this regard in the least. He violates the laws much the same as the Indians did. He was here before the laws were made and recognizes the right of no man to interfere with him. Still I do not believe Peter is to blame for but little of the killing of deer and moose with which he is charged. Why should he come into Maine to kill them when he has just as many and just as good right at home? He confesses to killing beaver and probably has killed many of them.

For all of his crimes against the state I think Fontaine has deserved but little of the persecution which has been meted out to him. He has broken the game laws, and as I have said, he does that because he does not recognize the right of any man to prevent him from killing the

killing off the last of the caribou in that country, and then returned with tales of Fontaine's elusiveness and desperate character. So it has been ever since and wardens and romancing tourists have given to Maine her notorious 'desperado.'

"In my opinion, the shooting of Fontaine three years ago was entirely uncalculated. Fontaine has told me his version of the affair and it differs widely from that of the wardens who shot him. Fontaine said to me, 'As God is my judge I had no intention of shooting either of those men.' Fontaine is a staunch Catholic and a deeply religious man and when he makes a declaration of that sort, I am inclined to believe him before all the game wardens in the state of Maine.

"Indicating the manner in which he was shot he says, 'He held his pistol so, indicating with his hand a position less than a foot away from his body.' Furthermore, the gun which lay beside Fontaine, and which he said, he tried to bring round into a position to shoot, was not loaded.

"This statement as to the gun being empty was made by George Houston when he came down after sending Fontaine to his home in Canada. Houston stopped at one of the lumber camps on his way out and in no uncertain terms said the shooting of Fontaine was uncalculated. Houston is known all over northern Maine as one of the squarest men in the woods.

"The burning of Fontaine's camp up on Baker lake, was another dirty piece of business. Pete had a snug little camp there, and made it his headquarters, most of the time while trapping in the state. In the camp, the warden found a number of beaver skins which were confiscated, and the camp burned. In the camp, also Pete had a great many little articles which had been given to him at various times, by sportsmen, whom he guided, for he has done considerable guiding in his long career in the woods. There were a number of hunting knives, one or two small revolvers, Fontaine's razor, and many little trinkets which had been given to him at various times. There was also about \$100 in money, which was hidden under the floor. 'De money probly burn,' I don't think he find it. But de knife don't burn, an' my razor don't burn, an' when I look for dem, I can't find 'em. I know just where dey is, before de camp burn, I mus' find 'em."

"Now what would you or I have probably done if we had been served as Peter was? The chances are ten to one that we would have been looking for the man who shot us, and burned our camp, instead of been looking for us. But Peter Fontaine isn't made that way. He seeks no revenge. He has probably had a hundred chances to get as many wardens out of the way since he was shot three years ago, with the chances being good for his escape.

"Peter Fontaine is as honest as any man who ever walked in the Maine woods, barring his breaking of the game laws, and as I have said, he does that because he does not recognize the right of any man to prevent him from killing the

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game that was in the woods before any laws were made, and which he has always killed where and when he pleased. But of honesty, as good society interprets it, Peter has more than his share. In the supply camps in the region over which he traps, and sets his traps, there are stored thousands of dollars' worth of provisions, tobacco, and everything for the use of lumbermen. Nobody ever knew of Peter Fontaine taking a son's worth for which he did not pay. Many times I have known him to go to a camp to get a lunch or a pound of tobacco, and even if it were a year after, when he met the owner of the stuff, he always wanted to pay.

"Those who have seen Peter at his camp ask for no better treatment than they receive at his hands. There is probably no better woodsman than he alive in Maine today. He knows every track and trail and his endurance is marvelous. You think he is broken now? Well you just try to follow him in the woods and see if he is broken. When you saw him here he had a bad cold and the rheumatism caused by the wound in his shoulder was bothering him but even him in the woods with snowshoes on his feet, and a pack or a sled to tote and he is as different man. Those who know Peter would trust him with anything and when he says that he intends to go back to poaching now I think it's a pretty good guarantee that the game will not be troubled by him any more."

The opinion of this man who comes out in defence of Fontaine is worth pressed in five figures to one of the largest lumbering concerns in Maine and it is doubtless worth as much to the unlucky Frenchman whom he defends. His words are corroborated by other men who are known all over the Maine woods, by Granville Gray, Bill Moriarty, and even by the wardens who have so frequently sought him.

There is nothing in Fontaine's appearance to indicate viciousness. He is about five feet nine inches in height, of slight figure, and weighs about 150 pounds. His features indicate shrewdness and intelligence. His straight black hair is slightly streaked with gray, and his upper lip is adorned with a light moustache, which is jet black and which rises to display strong white teeth when he smiles. He is naturally retiring and when he speaks it is with a strong 'Calan accent.' He speaks softly much as a person with impaired hearing, but he is conscious of every sound and movement about him. He has all the Frenchman's enthusiasm when aroused and in a local taxidermist shop the other day he displayed a childlike ecstasy at the sight of a number of foxes, partridges, and other creatures of the forest mounted in life-like attitudes. One of the workmen was mounting a handsome housecat and Fontaine watched the operation with interest, remarking, "Pretty kitty. She look like she alive." To meet Fontaine is to like him, and a person who has once met him will think twice before crediting many stories they may hear concerning him.

DEAF MUTES IN CHINA.

Washington, March 25.—Mrs. A. T. Mills, a missionary, who has established the only school for deaf mutes now in China, was presented to President Roosevelt yesterday by Dr. E. M. Gallaudet, of this city. Mrs. Mills told the President that there were 400,000 deaf mutes in China, and the school she established seven years ago at the Foo was their only means of education in the empire. The school is supported by the deaf mutes of the United States and Great Britain. Mrs. Mills has conferred with Sir Chen Tung Liang, Cheng, the Chinese minister, who promised to take up with the governor of the province of Shantung a proposition to give the aid of the Chinese Government to the establishment of other schools for the education of Chinese deaf mutes. W. W. Rockhill, recently appointed minister to China, also promised to lend his aid to the project.

Molasses has gone up another cent a gallon. This news was called from Barbados Importing Co., Molasses seems to be closely following the price of sugar. Opening on the 20th of January, at 17 cents, it is now selling at 22.

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