

The Philosophy of the Deer Hunter

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manlike, and on that account he suffered mentally.

There must be a charm in following the red deer through the bush, seeing that it draws annually several thousand men from the comfortable firesides to uncomfortable deer camps. When you see a man who is accustomed to get down to his office at nine o'clock in the morning rolling out of a springless bunk at five-thirty, donning a suit of rusty brown, putting three pairs of socks inside two clumsy shoe packs, eating a hasty breakfast from a tin plate placed on a plain pine table, and getting out on the trail before the sun rises, you then realize that he is called by some mighty instinct. If only a dozen men did this annually, they might be classed as lunatics. When you see five or ten thousand respectable and progressive business men doing this you realize that the lunacy charge would be as inaccurate as it would be inadvisable.

It may be that these men are seeking relief from business worries and business cares. It may be that some of them are looking for an excuse for a holiday. It may be that others feel that fifteen days in the woods will clear their mind, strengthen their body, and prolong their days. It may be that some of them find a peculiar charm in the few days spent in a deer camp free from the narrow restrictions which civilization imposes. But behind and beyond these possible explanations there lies something greater and stronger. Not one of these reasons is sufficient, nor is any combination of them. A greater impulse than any is the desire for a trophy of one's prowess. In every age and in every class of men this desire for trophies is elemental. Not that the trophy be valuable or useful; but the trophy indicates that its owner has done something which is just a little different and just a little superior to that which has been done by other men with whom he lives. The deer hunter brings home his deer, and with it he is able to prove to those whose opinion he values that he is a man with a man's ability, a man's skill, and a man's prowess. He probably hates venison and knows that his friends are not fond of this sort of human food. Nevertheless, with the air of a public benefactor and the graciousness of a king, he distributes tid-bits amongst his friends and relatives. Each tid-bit is a pawn in the game, the object of which is to prove that physically the donor has unusual skill.

THE deer hunter must be a man of great perseverance as well as a man of more than usual patience. He tumbles out of his none too comfortable bunk at five or five-thirty in the morning. He eats a generous breakfast of porridge and bacon and eggs, but he must eat it hastily. At six-thirty or seven he must be on the move, because the deer is most active in the early hours of the morning and the late hours of the evening. If his shoe-packs need grease or his rifle needs oiling, that work must be done the night before. There is no time for these little things when morning comes.

He and his companion must needs leave camp before the sun rises. If the camp is near a railway it is probably some distance from the runways of the deer. He may tramp three, four, or five miles across rocky hills, beaver meadows and thickets, before he comes to the deer country. If there are lakes along the route with canoes suitably placed he may have a pleasant morning paddle. This saves much time and personal exertion. In a camp where there are ten to fifteen deer hunters, it is usual to place canoes on the little lakes which lie along the route to the choice shooting district. If the dogs are to be taken along they are usually sent overland with some volunteer member of the party.

About the time the sun rises the various members of the party are stationed along the different runways, and the man with the hounds is ready to hunt up a trail. At an approximate hour or a previously arranged moment the dogs are let loose and the fun begins. In a few minutes the dogs have picked up a warm trail and the yap, yap of the pack echoes among the hills and dales. Each hunter fills the magazine of his Remington or

Savage or Winchester, and begins to wonder if he will be the lucky man on this particular drive. He probably stations himself on the top of a rock in as open a space as he can find, and more or less impatiently awaits development. If he be the lucky man the yap, yap, comes closer and closer. His excitement grows, especially if he is a comparative novice in the game. He knows that if the deer comes his way there will be some quick shooting, and if he misses he will not be able to conceal his lack of expertness from the other members of the party.

There is a little rustling in the bush two hundred yards away. Over the crest of a ridge appears a set of horns and a nose sniffing up the wind for dangers ahead. It takes an expert rifleman to hit a deer's head at two hundred or even at one hundred yards. Very few of them will waste a cartridge on a mere head. At the next jump the deer is probably in full view. If he is coming straight on, the target is none too large. So the hunter reserves his cartridge for a side shot. Suddenly the buck turns and his full side is presented to view. Then comes a bang, bang, bang, bang! The first bullet has probably struck its mark, but few deer are stopped by the first bullet. Most of them will take two or three before they succumb.

One hunter whom I met this year in the camp had an excellent method for making sure of his target. When the buck came within fifty or seventy-five yards of him he let out a loud "blat, blat." The buck stopped for a second to listen since he could scarce distinguish between this yell and the voice of a doe. That second was fatal to Mister Buck. The man was usually expert enough to put a bullet through his heart.

AFTER the run is over, and the noble quarry is down, there is a general halloo. The other members of the party gather in and the work of bleeding and stripping begins. Then the problem of how to get the deer to camp is seriously considered. For let it be known far

Dr. Aram Kalfian

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Mrs. Alston's eyes flashed angrily. "No," she answered; "I brought you here in all good faith to give you a warning which you scarcely deserve at my hands. But, first, I will have one or two points set at rest. Since my husband's death you have not written me one line, Dick, and all that time I have been starving for a word of affection from you. Why have you been so cruel?"

He hesitated, then suddenly turned and faced her.

"I thought it wiser not," he said. "The remembrance of my great folly shamed me. I met Ted the other day, Denise; when he gave me his hand, when I saw his face light up with pleasure at seeing me, I thanked God that I could meet his honest eyes without flinching. If you had not been the noblest, the best of women, I should have lost my friend for ever."

"And the reward of being the noblest and best of women is to be forgotten," she said bitterly. "To be calendared amongst the saints, Dick, is but a poor comfort to a living, breathing woman, who is heart hungry for a little human affection."

A deep red flush rose to Dick's forehead, and he wished himself with masculine cowardice, miles away; he wriggled uneasily in his seat as he racked his brains to discover how to present the truth to his companion in the way least humiliating to her pride.

There was a smouldering fire in Mrs. Alston's dark eyes as she watched him. "Something has been whispered to me of a certain Miss Anerley, at whose house you are a constant visitor," she said at last, a dangerous quiet in her voice; "what am I to believe, Dick?"

"I am engaged to Miss Anerley," he said, thankful for the opening, and in his desperation blurring the truth out with almost brutal abruptness.

Denise shrank back in the corner of

and wide, that this is the most arduous part of the hunter's work. To cart a dead buck weighing from a hundred and sixty to two hundred pounds through four or five miles of trackless bush and thicket is no easy task. He is a strong man physically who can horse a deer for five hundred yards without taking a rest. It is usual to cut down two green birch saplings, make a hurdle, tie the deer thereto and thus enable two men to transport the animal on a primitive cradle to the nearest lake or cadge road. But even then five or six men will be tired out before a big deer is safely landed in camp.

As the deer arrive day by day they are hung up on a long pole resting in the crotches of two trees. The first deer up looks rather lonesome, but the reputation of the camp depends entirely on the growth of that row of hanging bucks, does and fawns. As the number gets nearer the limit the camp grows more and more anxious to know if there will be enough to go round. In Ontario each man is now entitled to only one deer, and, therefore, the task is not heavy. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of hunters and the decrease in the deer country keeps every hunter in the camp on the qui vive. There are said to be hunters who are inclined to be tired and anxious to go home after they have secured their own deer. This is exceptional, however, and the more fortunate ones usually stay to help the other fellows. The member of a camp who gets his deer and hikes for home is likely to suffer seriously in popularity.

SUCH is the deer hunter, and such is the fifteen days which he spends in the bush. He has had a few days away from the drudgery and routine of farm or office. He has had the pleasure of doing some really hard work which is not absolutely necessary as a matter of business. He has had an opportunity to satisfy that elemental hunter instinct which stirs more or less vaguely within him. He returns home invigorated by mental relaxation and physical toil in the fresh crisp air. And he brings with him the trophy which indicates that he is a man with all a man's power and superiority over the brute creation.

the sofa as if he had struck her. He turned his eyes away from the white, stricken misery of her face, feeling unutterably guilty. There was a moment of silence, broken only by the ticking of the little Empire clock. Suddenly she gripped his arm with her slim, jewelled fingers.

"I understand how it has come about," she said quickly, brokenly. "You have said to yourself, the woman I love is married and her son is my friend. I must forget her; sooner or later I must marry—I will do so now! That is so, is it not, my friend? And when you heard of my husband's death, you told yourself it was too late, that you were in honour bound. But was there not a previous debt to me? Have not I the first claim upon your love?"

Her voice sank to a whisper; it was a moment of agony to both: to her—for, as she waited in tortured suspense for his reply, the conviction was borne in upon her that even if he yielded, her victory would be a barren one, that his heart had escaped her for ever; to him—for his nature was kindly, and the sight of her suffering—the knowledge that he was the cause, cut him to the quick.

"For God's sake, Denise, forgive me, and try not to think me an utter brute," he exclaimed in hoarse, strained tones, his grey eyes misty with emotion, "when I say it cannot be!"

"You love this girl?" she asked with a sudden fierceness.

"More than life itself!" he answered solemnly.

"But you loved me first!" she insisted. "Was that love so poor a thing that it could die in a day? True, I sent you from me—as an honest woman, I could do no other; but now I am free—free! I have the prior right, and I cannot, will not, give you up!"

(To be continued.)

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