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## A STORY OF THE DEEP WOODS

By J. CROMPTON EDWARDS

My trips to the camps are always enjoyable. Twice a year I went up to take stock; and so far no heart thrilling experience had been mine, unless eighteen miles tramped over the roughest kind of cadge road, or streams crossed by means of log bridges could be classed among unusual occurrences. The log bridges were sign posts pointing back to the time when "all the world was young," as in places where it would be but young, a slender sapling flung across, we would resort to the youngsters' trick of straddling the bridge and bumping ourselves along in leap-frog fashion.

This trip, however, was to stand out above the others, and in the minds of three of us the autumn of nineteen hundred will ever hold an incident of burning interest.

We began our journey from the Landing one morning early in September—the superintendent of camps, his little daughter Mona, and myself. Mona, who by dint of coaxing and wheedling had gained her mother's consent to accompany us, looked like a delicate boy, arrayed in sweater, knickers and cap. She was a child to be proud of; even my old bachelor heart warmed and thawed when she was near.

The cadge road—the abomination of the trip—was passed by alternately riding on the supply cart and climbing around roots and rocks; this latter being an easier mode of progression than being bounced around almost as quickly and with as erratic a movement as a ping-pong ball is thrown from the racquet.

After that eighteen miles of torture, the night's rest was balm to our tingling nerves. Next day we entered upon the canoe voyage for the upper camps, and felt we could say with fervor, "I came from martyrdom unto this peace."

As our canoes moved with batlike swiftness over the waters that flowed away from them in curving, rounding ripples, instead of the deep cut one would notice in the wake of a sharp keeled boat, our Indian half-breed, who rejoiced in the distinguished name of Biggest among his own people, but whom we called Bob, a name which fitted well into the chinks of everyday life, dropped history bits of the early days.

"See that path lying along the hillside like a snake stretched out in the sun? It would be quite overgrown but for the good camping grounds near; it leads to an old Indian burying ground, where some of the first settlers desecrated our graves; dug them up for the treasures and relics that had been buried with our braves. Revenge and anger burned up in our people like fire cats and devouring prairie grass. We felt that these pale-faced strangers did not care for our sacred things, nor love our country with the same love we did. It had not been the land of their fathers. They coveted the land on which grew our giant trees; and where Umisk built his dam in the streams, there these pale-faces longed to put up their big whirling water wheels. So because of the fire in our bones and the voice whispering all the time, 'kill! kill!' we pursued and harassed them many moons. Was I alive then? O, no; my father heard the story from the old men, and he told it to me."

This in reply to Mona's question.

"Here is a famous feeding place for deer and moose. See how the reeds are eaten off, and the water-lilies are pulled about; lily roots are dainties to Mr. Moose. It would be unpleasant to meet one of those big fellows, for they begin to get uneasy this time of year, before they seek winter quarters, and care not to be interfered with. I shot my first moose hereabout." And Bob's eyes took on a reminiscent gaze. He was really more Indian than Scotch.

Again his monotone carried story and legend to our waiting ears—tales he had heard from his Indian grandsire.

"Twenty miles across from here, on two islands in the long lake, our forefathers fought a great battle; part of the stone barricade they raised up still stands on the north island. Who won, do you ask? Neither: the opposing sides fought and struggled until the third sun, when, lo! something awful came rising out of the water, and our warriors were all dead. What was it? I do not know; no one knows; but that

is the way the story came down to us. Last time I passed the spot, the sun shone warm on the grass-grown wall, and I wondered what the fearsome thing was that stilled the war-whoop on the lips of our braves, and choked the whisper of the arrows so they no longer carried the death message because the sinewy hands of their masters clutched the mould. The Great Spirit had sent his messenger into the war camp to proclaim himself the victor."

Bob's Scotch streak showed in moralizing and trying to find reasons for the dark and cloudy places on life's journey; baffled in this effort, as we all are at times, he gravely shook his head, relit his pipe and returned to the strong, long sweep of the paddle.

A hush, seemingly from far up in mid air, spread and settled down at the close of Bob's silhouettes of the misty bygone days. The September sun—warm, clinging, insulating as a draught of old wine—melted our marrow with gentle touch, inviting us to enter the Lotus-eater's land. This was no time for moralizing, even over the woes of our forefathers. They had lived out their lives, fought the good fight, and now had gone, both victor and vanquished, to their reward—their bodies resting in the dust of this kindly, queer old earth. Enough for us, the living, to gaze up and away up, while the voice of late insects and lingering bird called woefully: "O rest ye, brother mariners, and do not wander more." Each moment added a deeper vision of the woods, a more glowing and lovable picture for remembrance. Each scrap of cloud, each twig and gorgeous leaf outlined against the blue, gently entreated us to stay.

For miles our water road had flowed through woods, vast and solemn. The trees stood shoulder to shoulder down to the water's edge, some showing roots gnarled and twisted creeping out from the bank down into the water, reminding one of huge water snakes. Beautiful giants they were, destined in a few seasons at most to yield up their lives and be carried down the swift current of the river, or rock lazily in some of its little bays, and finally to fill the insatiable maw of the big mill, emerging after the grinding and pressing machines had done their work, as the finished product—paper.

When the sun shone level through the tree branches we reached our most difficult task at the two-mile portage. Here the water tore over hidden rocks, or foamed and dashed around those granite hearted keepers of the river bed, yet forced at last by the insistent water to yield themselves up grain by grain. From the bank we watched the men turn the canoe noses and plunge down this frantic hurly-burly, then leaving the shore we penetrated further in the woods, the character of which had changed to a thick underbrush and second growth. Our guide, Dunc McNeill, an expert forest ranger, who had been breaking the way for us through the tangle of giant bracken and brush that stuck to our clothes and wound about our legs, suddenly made a detour after a flock of ruffled grouse that had whirred up with a rocket-like sound impossible for any sportsman to resist. Dunc belonged to the bush as surely as any wild animal. He reminded me of a moose—bunchy shoulders, spindling legs with the same awkward shuffle when in the open, but he had earned the enviable reputation of being able to walk through bush carrying a canoe as jauntily as an ordinary man could

walk a road. We were progressing rather slowly, hoping every minute to see him shamble into view, when a shot rang out, and something possessed of seventy times seven devils, blood dripping from its flank, crashed through the brush directly toward us.

"Good God! Save my girl!" It was Grayson's voice, piercing, horrified. Mona, her face bleached grey with fear but the bravery growing out of a desperate strait showing in her eyes, clutched my hand and together we stumbled along, our feet dragging as though weighted with chain and iron. With black fear knocking at my heart telling me there was no tree among the slender white birch and poplar large enough to provide us with a refuge, I suffered the pangs of hell. On plunged the horned peril, nearer, nearer, making straight for us. A shot screamed through the air, but because of the dread gripping his heart, Grayson's bullet flew wide, serving only to add to the demon's fury.

Death in this form is horrible. Bushmen would rather meet any other wild thing than a mad bull moose; quiet if unmolested, a raging spirit of fury when at bay. The sharp front hoofs cut into bone and muscle wherever they strike; then the huge antlers press and grind the helpless victim into the earth until he is a pulpy bloody mass. This would be our fate unless we could make a tree in the next instant, for the monster still buried itself

savagely toward us; Grayson's shot having failed to draw its attention.

"Mona, girl, be brave. Throw your arms up and hang on." I commanded, giving her a mighty upward swing, feeling her weight no more burdensome than a fluffy young bird. By good luck she grasped the branch, and I leaped aside at the instant the thing made a rush; the slender tree quivered its length and swayed as the huge head struck it, and, O heaven, be merciful! the impact had loosened Mona's hold; she was hanging by one arm, she would drop in a moment, for the thing of evil had drawn back to make a second assault.

The inevitable loomed with sickening clearness before my eyes; when two shots simultaneously hurtled by, with a screaming whiz, one entering the body, the second breaking the foreleg of the mighty creature, and as he plunged heavily forward, poor little Mona dropped from the tree, limp and fainting.

Dunc McNeill's share in the exciting episode was soon told. He had overthrown the grouse near a thicket, had fired into the covey, when out rushed the moose, wounded just enough to make him dangerous, and away in our direction. McNeill followed, fear like a stinging storm of hail urging him on over the logs and through detaining underbrush, arriving just in time to drive one of the shots home that had finished the career of this monarch of the woods.



HAULING THE GAME HOME.