

In a Sanctuary



Speckled Trout for Breakfast.



A Holiday in the wild.

of Wild Life

By FRANK MORRIS

TO HAVE tramped the English Lake District with its bare heaths and hills and open roads is no small pleasure in a man's life, but nothing to the thrill of entering for the first time a region of unbroken forest such as lies north of us in the Province of Ontario; and what if you found the two together, a network of a thousand lakes lying in the heart of the forest? That is Algonquin Park; take flight on the wings of fancy to such a place, and settle on a certain wooded island of one of its lakes; you will be with me in spirit and the better able to share what I wish to communicate, the impression of five or six weeks at a stretch spent under canvas there every summer for nearly a decade.

Almost the first thing we noticed about camping in Algonquin was how quickly our tent and its inmates, catching tone and colour of the woods, seemed to melt into the wild life about them. This is a feeling that can never come to the hotel guest, even in the midst of ideal surroundings.

"To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through us ran;"

Wild Creatures Admit Humans

We were a part of all we saw, and it thrilled us with delight, the dawning knowledge that even the wild creatures themselves had admitted us into the goodly fellowship of wood folk.

The loons that had their home on the narrow reach of water beyond our bay would come floating in to feed within a boat's length of the shore; the big mink that lived among the

driftwood took up his daily fishing post on the butt of the floating pine log. Even a pair of beaver, time and again at sundown, swam over from the little cove on the opposite shore to enjoy their evening repast among our lily pads. The very deer resumed their wonted paths, moving right by our tent; often in the night or at dawn we would hear their footfall as they passed down to drink their fill at the bay; occasionally one would snuff uneasily as he caught the tainted air. Even in broad daylight they would come browsing to the edge of the clearing, and once, on emerging from our tent, we saw beyond the moss-grown giant log of pine, two does and a fawn quietly cropping the leaves from a little clump of hazel.

Greeting Old Friends

It was a great delight to stand perfectly still and watch the deer; they would often look full at you in a prolonged stare and then turn to feed again, from time to time raising the head or turning it somewhat sharply to see that you weren't trying to take advantage of them. You might even speak to a companion, and if you used level tones and didn't raise the voice excitedly, they showed no alarm. It would almost seem as if the sense impressions of eye and ear allowed the creatures to think for themselves in independent judgment; but once they scent you, reason goes overboard, and they stamp and blow in blind panic; like Falstaff, they become cowards on instinct. Their sense of smell is an age-long heritage that has both preserved the race and made it what it is; years, even generations, of protection in a forest sanctuary will not appreciably modify this guiding principle of the animal's life.

Our second season revealed a fresh charm; it taught us the delight of greeting old friends, in flower and insect, bird and beast, about the camp, the island, and the lake. Paddle with what speed we might to open camp, our eager spirits would be round the corner ahead of us; and, once on the island, we could hardly wait to stretch the canvas and unpack, before making some favorite round, perhaps of ferns and flowers, perhaps down the western bay to watch the waxwings hawk after insects, or up the Madawaska to hear the Olive-sided Flycatchers and see the deer come down at dusk from the woods.

We were soon so used to sleeping under canvas that instead of sitting up tensely listening to every little rustling sound, we lay secure; it became even a luxury at the night to keep awake for the call of the owls under the August moon; sometimes the sonorous note of the Horned Owl; oftener, the twice repeated four-fold cry of the Barred Owl. Hardly ever did it fail of an answering call from afar; gradually the birds would draw closer together; when, as often, they met in the forest canopy over our heads, it was wonderful to hear the deep gurgling tones of soft endearment, like the crooning of doves or brooding rooks, but fuller, more guttural and far more melodious.

Mink vs. Muskrat

In our second season we built a cedar float for a wharf. This raft-like object in the little bay somewhat alarmed our guests the beaver—but not for long, and it was accepted by the bolder spirits the very day after its completion. I happened to be out