

# ROD AND GUN IN CANADA



DEVOTED  
TO  
THE  
FISHING  
GAME AND  
FOREST  
INTERESTS  
OF  
CANADA.

One Dollar Per Annum.

MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1901.

Single Copies Ten Cents.

## A TRIP TO MATACHUAN.

By C. C. Farr.

"When the red gods call." Thus spake Kipling, and to those of poetic temperament is probably made manifest what he meant by it. I, with my prosaic soul, interpret it to mean blood. I hate blood, and slaughtering to me is an abomination, therefore my prosaic soul would rise up in judgment against the implication, and would urge him to find some better phrase to express the longing which all men feel for that communion with nature, which to my mind can best be found in the primeval forest. Whatever it may be, the fit of restlessness, of which he was so evidently aware, came over me, and abandoning my duties, the daily worries for the daily bread, I set forth to hold that communion with nature, and, as a fitting setting for such a quest, I chose as my companions nature's own children, a family of untutored savages, whose ways, though familiar of old to me, were part of nature herself.

My wife, who in her affinities out-Herod's Herod, accompanied me, and we made Matachuan the objective point of our journey.

The Indian family to which we attached ourselves was that of Meechell Batist, chief of the Matachuan Indians. With him were his wife, his sister, of doubtful age, and just now unattached, his daughter Soosan, just sixteen, his son Noowi, aged twelve, and little Harry, barely four.

The last received his name from the fact that Harry Woods, now residing at Temagamingue, in charge of the Hudson Bay Company's post there, arrived at the home of the Batist's one stormy day in December, a few hours after Harry's birth.

It is the custom amongst Indians to give a child the name of the first living thing that comes to the wigwam, or even in sight of it, after a child is born.

Sometimes it is a fox, a beaver, or a bear. I have known an Indian called "Mess-es-ack," "Deerfly," or "Bulldog," simply because a big "bulldog" came buzzing into the camp a few minutes after his birth.

The priests, however, fight against this system of nomenclature as being heathenish and unholy. They insist that no name shall be given a child unless it is that of a saint.

The consequence is that the original custom of naming is rapidly becoming obsolete, and we have now nothing but Cyrils, Jean Baptistes, Pierres, etc., *ad nauseam*.

In addition to the Meechell family there were Basil Peecheekie (Buffalo) and his wife, the latter three times his age, and known amongst the irreverent as "The Bald-headed Eagle," but active withal, and a faithful slave to Basil.

When we arrived at Sharpe Lake, the first thing that Moowi, being a boy, felt called upon to do was to start up a wasps' nest, and then came running into our midst as we sat at our meal with a dozen wasps circling around his hat. A white boy would have been soundly rated, perhaps licked, but all his parents did was to laugh and protect themselves from the wasps.

We distributed ourselves and our impedimenta into the two canoes which Meechell had provided for us, and then paddled away for the next portage, on the other side of which we intended camping for the night. Basil constituted himself our knight of the bedchamber. He put up our tent, called the sweet-smelling bracken, and spread our blankets in a neat and inviting fashion. My wife objected in that they were laid crosswise, so that I had partly to undo all this beautiful work; but I assured her that it must have been done in compliment to herself, as I was long and thin.

The Bald-headed Eagle acted as cook, and we found the old lady remarkably clean (for an Indian) and very conscientious. She would not touch any of our delicacies unless bidden, and would cheerfully eat her bread and grease while we fed on ham, eggs, and other delicacies (in the bush), had we allowed her so to do.

Our presence put no restraint on these Indians; we had known them many years, so they laughed and chatted amongst themselves, and with us (for their language is no sealed book to me), practically accepting us as of the family.

These relations established, the journey was delightful, and just what we wanted.

After we had again eaten (Indians never go hungry long if they can help it), I saw the old woman gathering a plant having a white flower, and carefully stowing it away with her other treasures. I asked her what she did with it; she said that it was a good medicine for weak lungs, and that it was somewhat rare. Unfortunately, my botanical lore is too defective to give a scientific description of it, but I marked it well and the place where it was growing, so that at some future time I can investigate it. Next morning, at break of day, I was awakened by the report of a gun, and when I turned out somewhat later, I saw an object with a large head sizzling in a frying-pan. It was an owl which Meechell had shot. I asked what kind of owl it was. One said "kook-kook-koo-hoo," another said it was "mo-hom-osi," and the old woman swore that it was neither, but that it was "was-a-kon-ayei," a smaller owl than "mo-hom-osi" (the big-horned owl), and larger than "kook-kook-koo-hoo" (the mottled white owl), and then they all agreed that she was right. I saw the wings of it afterwards, and they were