

RABBITS AND FROGS' LEGS

How Two Prospectors and an Indian Guide Became a Committee of Ways and Means to Get Out of the Wilderness

By J. HARMON PATTERSON

HE who dares the wilderness challenges no mean foe. If properly armed and equipped he will find in it a generous friend. Its waters will supply him with fish, its forests with game, as well as fuel and materials for his hut. His canoe will glide gently over its lakes and streams, or his snowshoes can quickly pass over its winter wastes. But if unlearned, he be taken in its toils, no foe could be more bitter, more implacable or more frightful. Food is within his reach, but he cannot secure it, fire he could have, but he knows not how to make it, so he perishes miserably, mocked by the plenty all around him which his ignorance prevents him from enjoying. But the wilderness is a mother to him who knows her ways and whims. She will feed him and shelter him and bring him in safety by the paths known only to her children.

We had come northward on a prospecting trip from the Height of Land and embarked on the head waters of the mighty Mattagami. In the year 189— it was not so well known as now. The Porcupine gold fields had not set the pulses of prospectors throbbing the land over, and only a few of the more adventurous spirits had left their mark on its portages.

There were three of us in the party, Jack Morton, the irrepressible, who could see a joke in the sound of Gabriel's trumpet, expert canoeist and swimmer, small of body but great of soul, a companion who never became tiresome. Fred, our Indian guide, from somewhere down the Missinaibi, intelligent and faithful, never venturing an opinion unasked, a good cook and canoeist, one of the best of his class I have ever known.

PAST the old Hudson Bay Post at Mattagami and down the clear reaches of Kenogamisee we passed, but at Wawaitan portage we paused. The rock seemed favourable here for gold and for five days we prospected east and west. Some trace we found in the quartz, but not enough for us, so onward we went. Around the big bend—ah, if we had only known, just two miles eastward lay one of the richest gold fields on the continent. Why did not the Goddess of Fortune whisper the secret? Past Sandy Falls to the mouth of the Kamiskotia River. Here, again, we camp and examine the country around, but find nothing. So we go up the river to a lake of the same name. We find many indications of the presence of mineral in the broken hills around.

The lake itself is of great beauty, dotted with thickly wooded islands and surrounded by forest-clad shores of uneven height. An Indian family have a rude hut on one of the islands, living by hunting, trapping and fishing. From them we gained much information about the surrounding country.

After two weeks we gave it up and again took our way northward. The country was now a level plain. Nothing but clay banks in dreary monotony, with thick forests extended to the edge. At that night's camp we seriously debated going back, but against the advice of Fred we decided to go on. He confessed he did not know the river, but had been informed that no rock to any extent would be found for many miles.

Next morning early we set out. The river had now a good current and we made rapid progress. Just as we were about to camp we saw a ripple ahead, but did not expect any rapids. Too late we saw our mistake, and though we bent all our energies to making the shore, we did not succeed.

"We'll have to run it and take chances," shouted Fred.

We were near the left bank when the crash came. The next few minutes was a desperate struggle against the current and a mighty effort to avoid rocks.

A tree fallen in the river and still anchored by its roots proved my salvation, and I was able to pull Jack to the same refuge a moment later. He had a long cut in his head which was bleeding profusely.

AFTER a few minutes rest we crawled to the bank. A call from the shore further down announced the fact that our faithful guide was still in the land of the living. Our reunion was not a happy one. We looked at each other very soberly. Jack, for once, had no joke ready.

I remembered reading a verse somewhere about an old chap who "stood, fleet, army, treasure gone, alone and in despair." I don't know who he was or how he got out of the scrape, but I just felt sorry for him. I was sort of in the same boat.

Fred pulled out his match-safe, carefully blew off the water and opened it. He gave a sigh of relief as he saw that it was full. Jack and I did likewise. We had plenty of matches.

After we had anointed Jack's head with a generous quantity of balsam, his spirits returned.

"Now," he said, "for an inventory. One knife, one box matches, one pipe, half a plug of tobacco, two buttons, three pieces of twine, one shoe lace (extra), and one comb," said Fred, going through his pockets.

"Hurrah!" said Tom. "You don't happen to have a tooth-brush? Now for mine, h-m—one knife, one pipe, and, oh ye gods! only a little piece of tobacco,

one handkerchief (recently washed), one box of matches, half full, one nice, long buck-skin string (stole that back at the lake), one dollar and sixty cents, all in good coin, one lead pencil, one fish hook (No, it's in my hat, wherever that is). I guess that's all I can contribute."

I produced another knife, a pipe, a plug of tobacco, some more string, a sun glass, a compass, another handkerchief, a note book and pencil, a map of the country and twenty-five dollars in cash.

This was the complete inventory of the outfit and equipment with which we were to make our way out of that desolation. What we needed most had gone to the bottom of the river. No doubt Tom and myself would have been glad to pool our useless \$26.50 and swap it for one good rifle, or even a furpost musket with enough ammunition to hit anything eatable. The woods were full of animals fit for man to eat. But with all our miserable salvage outfit in one heap, most of them were as safe from any attacks we could make as though they had been on the summits of the Rocky Mountains.

"No chance of anything coming ashore?" I asked Fred.

"Don't think so. Current swift and getting dark. We might get the canoe sometime and mend it, but we haven't time, must get back to Kamiskotia Lake

A NEW SERIAL

OUR new Serial, "The Sacrifice of Enid," which begins in this issue, is the work of an Englishwoman, Mrs. Harcourt-Rose, who has written a number of novels, was born in Australia, where her father was a senior officer at the Naval Station, afterwards lived in London, and is now living a literary life in the rural parts of England. This novel of love, conscience and contrary impulse is a strong study of English life and character. It is the narrative of a struggle between a girl's love for a man who is in gaol, and her conscience, which is finally overcome by her connivance with her employer to effect his escape. Conflicting emotions of this kind and the adventures to which they give rise are often described best by a woman.

In the strong realism of the story there is a suggestion of the masterful treatment which Thomas Hardy, the greatest living English novelist, gave to "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." The story abounds in bright, snappy dialogue, interesting descriptions, strong portrayals of character and of dramatic situations, and the legitimate use of climaxes. "The Sacrifice of Enid" is not mere literature. It is life—treated in a big, popular way, and with great simplicity.

as soon as possible, and it's over forty miles."

"And how many days and nights," I anxiously inquired, "might we expect to spend on the way?"

"Five, six, seven, maybe," was his reply. "Bush very thick, plenty underbrush and swamp. Maybe spend a lot of time hunting something to eat."

"And that reminds me," interrupted Jack, "that it's time for supper."

Fred grinned. "You'll be lucky if you get breakfast," he said, "but we get after it now. Make all the string into rabbit snares. Take out your shoelaces and make them up, too. Plenty rabbit round here."

JACK and I broke branches which we stuck into the ground, making a long but frail fence. Into the openings, which we left at likely looking places, Fred set the snares. Then we all fell to gathering wood for our fire, for as yet our clothes were very wet. The lack of an axe hampered us greatly. Fortunately the night was warm, so we hung most of our clothes about the fire and soon had them dry.

"We will now," Jack announced, "go into a committee of ways and means, of ways, to Kamiskotia; of means to live till we get over the ways, so to speak. Suggestions are now in order."

"This is no joke," I said, shortly. "My experience in this bush has been that you can't make much over a mile an hour. We might go two days without anything to eat. Three or four, perhaps, but by that time we could not travel. Fred, how does it look to you?"

"No chance to starve," was the reply. "Plenty rabbits, and we have string to make snares. Plenty frogs in backwaters, and maybe catch a porcupine, lots of roots if we don't get him. Plenty fish in little creeks. That one to the left full of speckled trout. Make wooden spear, catch plenty, maybe. Go slow catch plenty to eat, go fast and hungry."

"Me for the tortoise act," said Jack. "I'm so hungry now that—"

A faint squeal came from the woods behind us. Fred simply vanished. In a few minutes he returned carrying a rabbit still kicking. One of the snares had made good.

"Rabbits pretty dry now," Fred remarked. "If I roast him not much to eat. Cover him with clay and put him in coals, he come out juicy and tender. Take hour and a half, maybe."

"Um," said Jack, smacking his lips, "that juicy, tender stuff sounds good to me. We can wait."

While the rabbit was cooking, we rustled some boughs and ferns for a bed, though we could not do much in the dark.

At last lunch was ready. In front of the fire lay a ball of clay. Fred broke it open, tender, juicy, the meat certainly was. Our only complaint was the smallness of the quantity.

"Well say," remarked Jack, when the last morsel had disappeared, "are you sure that was a rabbit and not a squirrel?"

We made up a good fire, curled up close together and were soon fast asleep. The first streaks of dawn were stealing over the trees when I awoke, very stiff and cold. The others were soon up and with one accord we hurried over to the snares. Three rabbits rewarded our efforts.

We made a fire and heated three flat stones. These we covered with large leaves, on which we placed the meat, over which we spread more leaves, then slanted them towards the fire. As the leaves shrivelled and caught fire they were replaced by more.

FRED explained that all this was necessary, as there was absolutely no fat on the rabbits at this time of the year, and to toast them before the fire made them dry and hard. At length he pronounced them done, and each drew out his stone and fell to in earnest, as we were very hungry.

"I'm sure," remarked Jack, when we had finished, "that this rabbit is much larger than the one I tasted last night. I really believe I could live on three rabbits a day."

"You'll be lucky if you get them," I replied. "Now we must get along."

"Oh, for my hat," sighed Jack, "and the fish-hook in the band."

We tied our handkerchiefs over our heads. Fred had none. We lit our pipes and set out. At first the walking was not bad, but we soon came to tangled underbrush, which made progress very slow. About noon we came to a large stream which we had to cross. We walked up the shore, as the stream came from the south. After about a mile of good walking we came to a jam of driftwood, on which we crossed. At the other side there was a back-water covered by lily leaves and alive with frogs. We each cut a good rod, took off our boots and socks and went to work. We only took the hindquarters. When we counted the spoil we had nineteen.

"Just two more," I remarked, "will make seven each."

I put them into my handkerchief and we made our way across to the river.

While we got the fire ready, Fred cut two stout saplings. These he split with his knife nearly down, then into the split he carefully placed the toes of the frogs, dividing them between the two sticks. The open ends were tied tight. Forked sticks were driven into the ground at each end of the saplings. Two rows of frog's legs hung beside the fire.

"Now, that is clever," I said to Fred. "I was just thinking what a long time it would require toasting them three at a time."

We certainly enjoyed our dinner, but of course the lack of salt was the chief drawback. The sun was low in the west when we decided to call it a day, having made about ten miles. We had not travelled single file, but each took a separate course, hoping to see a porcupine, or something else which we could kill. Fred, who had a pocket full of stones, secured a red squirrel. He had also a half a dozen frogs. I had seven or eight, but most of them very small. Jack had three and a big appetite.

By the appearance of things the supper would be a light one. We were preparing to set all the rabbit snares we could muster when I happened to go down to the shore of the small creek which joined the river at this point. In the shallow water I saw a large number of small fish, ranging in length from two to eight inches, and we at once proceeded with a plan to catch them. We first constructed a rough dam across the creek, leaving an open space in the centre. We then took Fred's sweater, tying knots in the arms and a string about the neck. Next, by the aid of two sticks, one on each side, the lower end of the sweater was kept open like the mouth of a bag. This was placed in the space left in the dam, and while Fred and I held it in position, Jack, by means of much splashing, drove the fish down towards us. Seeing the dark opening of our trap, they flocked

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