

Boys and Girls.

(We are glad to publish from month to month contributions by boys and girls provided they are worthy. Remember this magazine is for everybody in the home. If you do not see what you want ask for it.)

The Trapper Trapped.

By Frederick E. Scotford

AS I stretched luxuriously upon a bed of pine needles beside the dancing flames of a generous camp fire, and gazed at the flickering shadows upon the weird roof of pine boughs far above, there came quivering through the still night air the hair-raising scream of a panther.

"John, did you ever trap one of those cowards?" I asked.

My guide, leaning against the bole of a nearby tree, nodded affirmatively.

"Yes, I caught one once, but I don't favor trapping overmuch," he drawled after an interval. "It's not right to make God's creatures suffer as they do pinched up in a trap."

He rolled back his right sleeve and called my attention to an ugly scar which ran red and livid, across his wrist.

"That's a mark I got from my first and only trapping experience with a panther." He paused long enough to throw more wood on the fire and continued:

"During the winter of '88 when I was camp-hunter for the 'Diamond S' outfit up in the Flambeau country I had a little experience with the big cats which forever cured me of my contempt for them, and taught me that possibly the Leather Stocking Tales were not so far-fetched, after all.

"I had over a hundred men to keep supplied with meat that winter, and as a bear or a deer made no more than a meal or two at the most, my job was no sinecure.

"Twenty-six dollars a month, with ammunition and 'keep' seemed unlikely to make me a captain of finance, and as all sorts of fur-bearing animals abounded in that region, I combined business with pleasure and did a little trapping on the side.

"Early November that year was warm and clear and the fallen leaves lay so dry and thick in the mixed hardwood and hemlock timber, that stalking game was entirely out of the question. However, I had studied the region with this very contingency in view, and as I had a regular round of 'crossings' and 'runways' to watch I managed to get plenty of meat.

"One morning I shot and hung up a big deer intending to bring a horse and fetch it as soon as it was needed for food.

"As a protection from prowling beasts, I made a gambrel stick and slid the buck up along a pole which was leaning against a tree that had broken over about seven feet above the ground, thus raising the animal clear of the earth, and I knew that nothing except a cat or a bear was at all likely to touch it.

"A couple of days later I was hunting in the same neighborhood again, and just at the first grey of dawn climbed upon a big rock not far from where the deer was hanging.

"On either side of me was a dense cedar swamp and along the ridge was a much used runway leading to more open country.

"The big-game hunter who 'hunts the hunt of sit still', as the Indians say, does not expect to see his game standing as the pictures show him, posed against a contrasting background. On the contrary his eyes are open for any lifting, shifting light or shadow which betrays movement; he watches for any curious bit of color, anything out of the ordinary which attracts either sight or hearing is worth investigating.

"If he is a practiced woodsman his eye catches the faintest unusual movement within rifle range, but he never shoots until he knows what has caused that movement.

"Just as the first horizontal rays of

the sun came flickering through the tree trunks, I saw a flicker of yellow off to the left beyond where my deer was hung.

"Again and again it was repeated. "Beyond question there was something alive over there among the trees and underbrush, but what?

"Without relaxing my scrutiny of the rest of the landscape, I kept that tell-tale movement well in sight.

"A family jar between two squirrels drew my amused attention for a moment, and I looked back again just in time to see a magnificent panther stretch herself and walk out of sight along a log just beyond the point I had been watching.

"The twenty-five dollar bounty which my moment of inattention had cost me rankled in my thoughts and I determined to be more careful in future.

"After a few minutes I was surprised to see the shifting of light again in the same old place. Now I believed it to be the panther, but unable to distinguish what part of the beast was in sight, and not knowing for a certainty that it was a great cat, I would not risk a shot.

"If the ground had been covered with snow or even if the leaves had been wet, I could have slipped down from the rock and stalked the animal, but under the conditions I could do nothing but sit still and wait.

"In about ten minutes the panther walked into sight again and upreared beside a tree to sharpen its claws, after the manner of cat kind.

"I had estimated the distance at two hundred yards, and had raised the sights of my rifle accordingly.

"Steadily as a rock I raised the gun until the bead centred low on the ugly head and fired.

"With a leap the cat disappeared in the underbrush and I knew that I had missed. I was disappointed, for I felt that I had aimed carefully, and had fully expected to see the beast drop dead at the shot, but I slid down from my lofty perch and walked along the ridge with a woodsman's curiosity to see how it had happened.

"Before I had proceeded two rods, I knew that I had overshot my mark. The oblique rays of the rising sun, and my elevated stand had caused me to over-estimate the distance, instead of two hundred yards it was barely a hundred paces.

"I was disgusted at my own stupidity.

"Imagine my feelings when I arrived at the spot and found that the log was the one against which my deer was hanging, and that for fully half an hour I had been watching the panther while it made a generous meal from the haunches of my game.

"The bullet had entered the tree four inches higher than I had calculated, and had merely grazed the cat's head as a drop of blood and a few scattered hairs testified.

"I knew the habits of the beast well enough to be sure that it would return within a night or two, and planned my revenge accordingly.

"I had a couple of strong wolf traps in camp, and I carefully set them near the deer in such a manner that it was extremely unlikely that any animal would come close enough to make a meal without being caught.

"Two days later I was near at hand and visited my traps.

The deer had slipped down the pole and lay on the ground, beside and partly across a fallen tree in a little clump of brush. I could see nothing unusual. Evidently the panther had been too sharp for me.

"Placing my rifle against a nearby log, and carefully avoiding a trap which I knew to be close at hand, I stooped to raise the deer.

"With a snarl of rage a trapped panther which had lain concealed behind the log and the body of the deer, sprung from hiding and struck at me

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