

# Lost in the Woods.



DEER hunting had come into season and I was sanguinely watching and waiting for a deer to darken the sights of my rifle. One November morning I was up at daylight, and by sunrise was five miles away from home, watching a famous runway, just where it came out of a swamp and skirted a hill that was covered with birches, thus earning for itself the name of "The Birch Tree Runway." North of the place stretched for fifty miles a tract of unknown and almost unexplored forest. To the east, the direction the dogs had been set out, the lake was three miles distant straight through the woods; to the south, the direction of home, it was two miles to a clearing, and for twenty miles to the west was nothing but dense swamps, broken only here and there by winter roads, where lumbermen had drawn out timber when the frost was severe enough to freeze the swamps, and the snow deep enough to cover the fallen logs. I had with me a young boy of thirteen, who had come to show me the way, as I had never been there before. He had a small single shot rifle, while I had a Winchester.

On the way to the runway I managed to take the head off a partridge, and after waiting a long time and hearing the dogs working to the north-east of us, I suggested that we should light a fire and roast the bird, as there was no fear of the quarry working south again. However, the boy informed me that if I would cross the ridge down into another swamp to the north I should find plenty of game. I had brought my dog on a chain, and loosing him I started off. We had hardly got into the swamp when the dog raised a partridge. I did not find him, but it was not long before another flew. I fired, but missed; following it up I got another crack at him, but missed again. A few hundred yards farther on two more flew up. I banged at one and missed once more; but at my shot a third, rose and I put a ball through his wing and the dog secured him.

When I left the runway I had changed rifles with the boy, and he had only four cartridges; so when I at last procured a bird I was out of ammunition, and consequently thought it time to return to camp.

I had wandered a little from the path after the game, and when I got back to it again, snow was falling fast. I don't know

how it was, but instead of returning south along the path I struck northwards. I had gone some distance when I heard a shot away behind me, which I knew to come from my Winchester, and a bullet came singing by, high up in the air. I turned to go back, but in the snowstorm I got off the path and was soon wandering aimlessly about the swamp. Several times I heard shouts, but too indistinctly to locate them. After an hour's wandering I came to the edge of the swamp and following this edge of it for mile after mile I came at last to a beaver meadow, where the hay had been taken off. Anyone who has not been in a similar position can not imagine the relief it was to me to find myself near some traces of civilization. After the utter aimlessness with which I had been tramping about, not knowing but that I had a fifty or twenty mile journey before me, not knowing the moment I might run into some animal of prey, defenceless, with my empty rifle, with the thought of having to spend the whole night out in a driving snowstorm, with comparatively light clothing on, and no means of obtaining a fire.

After all this you may form some faint conception of my feelings when I came once more in touch with man's handiwork.

I was, however, by no means out of the woods yet. I found the road leading away from the stack of hay, and soon was in another and larger meadow. Still following the old road, which was choked with logs and second growth of trees, and mud-holes, I came, after about three miles walking, to a road running across the one I had been following, and I was at a standstill, not knowing which way to go. My dog, however, was more sagacious than I, and as he turned to the left I followed him. Just after this he turned off the road to hunt, and all of a sudden started out a deer. Just my luck! He followed it for some distance, and then returned. Four miles more brought me out to where I could see a clearing ahead of me, and hastening on I found myself not a quarter of a mile from the place where I had gone in towards the runway early that morning. I stopped to rest and presently out popped the boy from the road I had just come. He was breathless with running, having come to hunt for me, and finding my tracks on the first road, had run all the way to catch up. I told him my wanderings and found that I had been travelling north-west, and if I had not struck that beaver meadow, should have come out somewhere between North Bay