

sprawling into a brittle, pointed tangle of dead limbs sticking up from the trunk of a fallen tree.

Having delivered this most effective blow, the ram stepped back a pace or two, mincing on his slender feet, and prepared to repeat it. The lynx was struggling frantically among the branches, which stuck into him and tore his fine fur. Just in time to escape the second assault he got free,—but he got free not for fight but for flight. One tremendous, wildly contorted leap landed him on the other side of the dead tree; and, thoroughly cowed, he scurried away down the hillside.

The ram at once turned his attention to the ewe and her antagonist. But the second lynx, who had not found his task so simple as he had expected it to be, had no stomach left for one more difficult. The ewe was bleeding about the head, and would, of course, if she had been left to fight it out, have been worsted in a very short time. But the enemy had felt the weight of her blows upon his ribs, and had learned his lesson. For just a fraction of a second he turned, and defied the ram with a screeching snarl. But when that horned, black, battering head pitched forward at him he bounded aside like a furry gray ball and clambered to the top of the rock. Here he crouched for some moments, snarling viciously, his tufted ears set back against his neck, and his stump of a tail twitching with rage, while the ram minced to and fro beneath him, stamping defiance with his dainty hoofs. All at once the big cat doubled upon itself, slipped down the other side of the rock, and went gliding

away through the stumps and hillocks like a gray shadow; and the ram, perhaps to conceal his elation, fell to grazing as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. The ewe, on the other hand, seeing the danger so well past, took no thought of her torn face, but



"Here he crouched for some minutes, snarling viciously."

set herself to comfort and reassure the trembling lamb.

After this, through the slow, bright hours while the bright sun swung hotly over Ringwaak, the ram and his little family were undisturbed. An eagle, wheeling, wheeling, wheeling in

the depths of the blue, looked down and noted the lamb. But he had no thought of attacking so well guarded a prey. The eagle had a wider outlook than others of the wild kindred, and he knew from of old many matters which the lynxes of Ringwaak had never learned till that day.

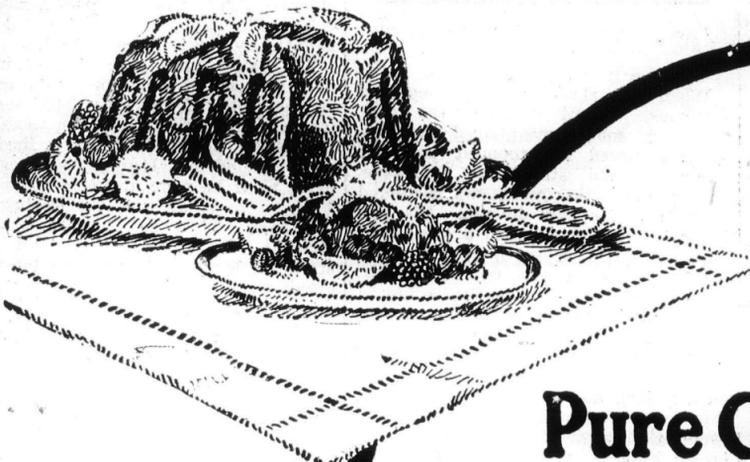
There were other visitors that came and glanced at the little family during the quiet content of their cud-chewing. A weasel ran restlessly over a hillock and peered down upon them with hard, bright eyes. The big ram with his black face and huge, curling horns, was a novel phenomenon, and the weasel disappeared behind the hillock, only to appear again much nearer, around a clump of weeds. His curiosity was mingled with malicious contempt, till the ram chanced to rise and shake his head. Then the weasel saw the rope that wriggled from the ram's neck, was it some new and terrible kind of snake? The weasel respected snakes when they were large and active; so he forgot his curiosity and slipped away from the dangerous neighborhood.

The alarm of the weasel, however, was nothing to that of the woodmice. While the ram was lying down they came out of their secret holes and played about securely, seeming to realize that the big animal's presence was a safeguard to them. But when he moved, and they saw the rope trail sinuously behind him through the scanty grass, they were almost paralyzed with panic. Such a snake as that would require all the woodmice on Ringwaak to assuage his appetite. They fairly fell backwards into their burrows, where they crouched quiver-

ing in the darkest recesses, not daring to show their noses again for hours.

Neither weasel nor woodmice, nor the chickadees which came to eye him saucily, seemed to the big ram worth a moment's attention. But when a porcupine, his quills rattling and bristling till he looked as big around as a half-straight and swift, as if it had been bushel basket, strolled aimlessly by, the ram was interested and rose to his feet. The little, deep-set, eyes of the porcupine passed over him with supremest indifference, and their owner began to gnaw at the bark of a hemlock sapling which grew at one side of the rock. To this gnawing he devoted his whole attention, with an eagerness that would have led one to think he was hungry,—as, indeed he was, not having had a full meal for nearly half an hour. The porcupine, of nature's children, is the best provided for, having the food he loves lying about him at all seasons. Yet he is forever eating, as if famine were in ambush for him just over the next hillock.

Seeing the high indifference of this small, bristling stranger, the ram stepped up and was just about to sniff at him inquiringly. Had he done so the result would have been disastrous. He would have got a slap in the face from the porcupine's active and armed tail; and his face would have straightway been transformed into a sort of anguished pincushion, stuck full of piercing, finely barbed quills. He would have paid dear for his ignorance of woodcraft—perhaps with the loss of one eye, or even with starvation from a quill working through into his gullet. But fortunately for him the ewe un-



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