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OLD

BARE-BACK

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Old Bare Back

OLD
BARE-BACK

AND OTHERS

By
HENRY ABBOT

NEW YORK
1917

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HENRY ABBOTT

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DEC 18 1917

No. 1

“STOP HER! stop her!! back up, Bige. I’ve caught the bottom of the lake.” Bige was sitting in the bow of the boat slowly rowing, while I, in the stern seat was holding a trolling rod and watching the reel spin and the thin copper wire rapidly paying out as the boat glided forward. Bige dropped both oars in the water and pushing back, promptly stopped the boat, but the reel continued to buzz and it was nearly empty of wire. Then I pressed hard with my thumb checking the rotation of the reel when a violent jerking informed me that something alive was trying to steal my six-inch shiner, which during the last fifteen minutes had been revolving with the hook at the lower end of the copper wire, thirty-five feet below the surface.

It was a warm morning early in July and we were fishing for lake trout. The water was too warm at this season to get them near the surface, so we had to fish deep in the cool water near the bottom where the trout were then living if we hoped to catch any. Copper wire is best for deep trolling because it sinks quickly without a heavy weight at the lower end and it cuts readily through the water without too great a strain on the rod.

I had out about fifty yards of wire and began to reel in as fast as possible without endangering the rod, the tip of which was now at a right angle with the butt. At this moment I heard directly overhead a succession of sharp cries "Kiel! Kiel! Kireel! Eil! Eil! Keil!" Looking up I saw a gull circling directly over the boat,

apparently in a great state of excitement, uttering her sharp cries every few seconds. She was also rapidly getting closer as she flew above us. Even as I looked, she made a quick sweep downward, struck Bige on the head and knocked his hat off into the water. At the same instant a great silver-sided body glistening in the morning sunshine rose above the surface away back of the boat, appearing to stand on its tail and shake its head violently; then it fell back with a resounding splash and disappeared under the water. I raised the tip of the rod, quickly took up the slack with the reel and found the fish still securely hooked, but he now headed for the bottom.

"There, Bige, is a regular old Socktamer."

"He's three sizes bigger than that,"

said Bige. "He's a Dodwalloping Sockdolliger."

Again I heard the sharp cries overhead. "Kiel! Kiel!" and put up my free arm just in time to receive a blow from the enraged bird and save my own hat.

"That gull has got it in for us, Bige. She thinks we want to steal her measly yellow goslings over by that big rock near the shore. Better pull out of this, but go slow and I will try to coax the trout along. I'm too busy now to try to negotiate peace terms with a belligerent gull and I can't fight a fish and a bird at the same time." So Bige gathered in his hat and we slowly worked our way out of the bay toward the middle of the lake, while the mother gull alighted on a dead pine stub directly over where her four darlings were

playing in the water, and the father gull stood on a rock at the entrance. Later we became well acquainted and very friendly with those gulls, as will appear in another chapter, but now and for the following twenty minutes we were kept occupied with the fish. We towed him about the lake trying to keep him always in motion, though he was inclined to sulk at the bottom. Twice he tried to climb out of the water, but in each case he was tipped over and did not get above the surface. Finally he was tired out, reeled up alongside and with the gaff lifted into the boat. He was a noble fish, a beauty, and we took him into camp.

Many of my friends and acquaintances fish all day and every day during their vacation period; when the weather is not too stormy. Starting

The Lake Trout

from the hotel early in the morning and returning to the same place late at night, they industriously, patiently and seriously work, with the obvious purpose of breaking all previous records both as to size and number of their catch.

But Bige and I live in the woods and do not return to the hotel for a week, sometimes for two or three weeks. We cannot, therefore, display our large catch to the admiring gaze of friends and acquaintances. Neither do we have the same opportunity to hang up our string of fish between two trees for the camera fiends to take snap shots at them. Therefore, when we have caught enough fish for food we stop fishing and play some other game.

Impossible to tell the length of our lake-trout or his weight in

pounds and ounces, but we dressed him and when his head and tail were cut off we found he just exactly fitted the pan of our baker. He was just big enough. If he had been an inch longer we could not have roasted him. So we stuffed him with flapjacks, covered him above and below with slices of bacon, bound the bacon in place with twine and roasted our fish before the camp fire.

After dinner we took a couple of axes and went over to Mud Pond. Found a boat which some days before we had carried across the trail, and in it crossed the pond and started cutting a new trail over the foot hills of Little Blue Mountain. We intended to hunt over in that country in the autumn and this trail would be useful in going to and returning from the hunt. I worked ahead, blaz-

The Trout Hog's Exhibit

ing the trees, keeping the proper course with a compass while Bige followed, cutting brush and clearing a path.

In this manner we worked along for about a half mile when we came upon an open space in the woods where some years before lumbermen had skidded logs. There was about an acre in the clearing now overgrown with briars and bushes. In the middle of this opening, standing upright on his hind legs, was a large black bear. He had his arms (forelegs) around a clump of raspberry bushes which he had squeezed together and was eating berries. Indeed, he bit off and chewed up together ripe berries, green berries, leaves and young shoots and was apparently enjoying the feast.

The bear had not noticed our ap-
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proach and we were able to get near enough to observe him closely. On his back were large patches of bare skin from which the fur had come out or had been rubbed off. This, it seems, was the molting season for bears, when the old fur is gradually scraped off on the trees and bushes. In late September or early October the new short fur will have grown in again, and the bear will then have a bright shiny coat in strong contrast to his present ragged hobo appearance. This fur continues to grow until in mid-Winter the hairs of it are from three to four inches long. Presently the bear had finished eating his bunch of bushes and berries and turned, looked us over carefully, dropped on all four feet, growled and walked off into the woods toward Mud Pond while we watched him as

long as he remained in view.

Then when Bruin was out of sight Bige said softly "Les set a trap and catch Old Bare-back." We sat down on a log and discussed ways and means. Bige had a bear trap, an ugly, murderous-looking steel machine that opened out as large in diameter as a dinner plate. It had saw tooth jaws that fitted together when closed and heavy steel springs that required two screw clamps to close them down for setting the trap. It also was secured to one end of a chain about six feet long, the other end of the chain was to be attached to a log which could be dragged a short distance or until the bear should tire of it and would sit down to await our arrival.

In discussing the matter we spoke in low tones so that the bear should

The Bear Trap

not overhear us in case he had stoped in the edge of the woods to listen. It was agreed that the skin would be worthless for a rug if taken now, so we decided to defer setting the trap until October, but we would begin at once to feed him and get him accustomed to the bear-pen in which we proposed to set the trap. It was important also to keep the bear in this part of the forest until October, and it seemed to be our job to see to it that it was good feeding ground so he would remain there.

So we dropped our trail-making for the time being and set to work building a bear pen. We cut a number of spruce logs twelve feet long and six inches in diameter, notched the ends for locked corners in the same manner as in constructing a log cabin. We selected a spot in the woods near the clearing where a group of spruce

trees could be utilized to brace up the sides of the pen, or rather the stall, as it was open on one side so that Old Bare-back could walk directly in and get the food we proposed to bring him twice every week.

On our way back to camp we found tracks made by Old Bare-Back in the soft clay on the shore of Mud Pond. On a close inspection we noticed that the middle toe on the left hind foot was missing. Only four toe marks appeared in the clay wherever this foot was placed, while all the other tracks showed five toe marks.

On the following morning after breakfast had been eaten, the dishes washed and camp put in order, Bige and I went down the lake to Sucker Bay and in about an hour we had caught fifteen suckers ranging in size from one to two pounds each. The sucker is not considered good

food for humans in summer time. Indeed he is not counted a game fish at any time, and is generally despised by all sportsmen. But suckers are highly esteemed by the bear family, especially if they have been dead long enough to be a little "high." Suckers have a bad habit of eating the spawn of more valuable fishes. A two-pound sucker will eat about a thousand trout eggs a day when he is feeling well. We had therefore no sentimental feelings of regret that it seemed to be necessary for us to catch a big string of suckers, so we took them over and placed them in Bare-back's stall.

We took with us a small tin pail and after depositing the bear bait we visited his berry patch and filled our pail with raspberries before returning to camp. We considered this an

equitable arrangement. Of course the bear was not consulted, but the mess of suckers we left him weighed more than the mess of berries we took away from him.

Arrived at camp just as the sun was dropping behind the mountains in the west, we took a fly rod and paddled across the lake to the mouth of Salmon River, where in the fading light we tried fly casting. In less than an hour we had caught six fine "square-tails." We ate our evening meal by lantern and firelight that night; but our bill-of-fare included brook trout and raspberry shortcake, flapjacks supplying the cake of that confection.

After a day of such activities in the open, a bed of balsam before a camp-fire is an insurance against insomnia. It is also a cure for many other ills, both real and imaginary. One can

always sleep the sleep of an infant. Also, one soon learns to go early to bed, so as to be ready to enjoy the best part of the next day, sunrise.

In the warmer days of summer, when the water is often low in the streams, the larger brook trout will run down stream into the lake and collect near the bottom in deep places, at spring holes or at the edge of a reef, so when the fly or the trolling line fails to bring the necessary supply of food to the camp table, resort must be had to other methods and the wily trout must be hunted in his lair. Preparing for such an emergency, Bige and I set out on the following morning with a piece of rope and a sounding line, selected a stone suitable for an anchor and cut a dry spruce stick for a buoy. We then climbed into our boat and went out to

take soundings. After a score or more of trials we found a spot of proper depth and likely bottom, so dropped our anchor stone overboard and made the float fast to the other end of the rope. Then we went back to our landing and lifted the minnow trap which had been baited with a chunk of bread and sunk in the shallow water. We got a good supply of minnows and proceeded to cut them into pieces about an inch long and scattered the chum around our buoy.

While we were busy with this job we heard in a high pitched key a weird, sorrowful, sobbing, distressful cry from the distant side of the lake. "Alloo-o-o-o Lil-lil-o-o-o." Bige immediately responded by a perfect imitation of the cry. Indeed the imitation was more perfect than the original. Again came the loon's cry of

distress, but this time nearer. Again and again was the conversation repeated while the loon approached. At a distance of about fifty yards she was swimming low with only her head out of water and eyeing our operations with apparent interest. Suddenly the head disappeared and after what seemed several minutes Bige said, "I believe the old submarine has gone down to steal our chum." Then he grabbed a water telescope which we had made of birch bark for examining the bottom of the lake, stuck the large end into the water and with his eyes at the smaller end plainly saw the loon at the bottom of the lake rapidly gobbling up the cut bait we had put down there for the trout. When she came to the surface again, she was on the opposite side of the boat and a long

way off with her periscope only visible.

The loon is poorly equipped for traveling on land and rarely goes far from the water except when flying. Her nest is always built close to the water's edge, but she can swim faster, dive quicker and stay under water longer than any other bird or beast. She also has the peculiar faculty of swallowing just enough water for ballast to keep her at the required depth; she also disgorges ballast when she swims on the surface. Generally, in the presence of danger or of suspicious characters like fishermen, she swims with only her head above water.

There can be no doubt that the general principles embodied in the modern submarine were taken from the loon. The loon has a large body

but she hides it under water and sticks her periscope above the surface to take observations until assured that the coast is clear of danger. So also with the submarine. The most wonderful modern inventions of man can generally be shown to have had their origin in the habits of birds, beasts, fishes, or the properties of some inanimate work of Nature.

About the time the loon left us our old friend of two days before, the gull, appeared uttering her peculiar cries of complaint overhead. This time we discussed the matter with the gull and proposed a treaty of peace with her. In order to show our friendly feelings Bige tossed out one of our few remaining minnows which the gull caught the instant it hit the water. The other minnows followed one at a time, and were gobbled up

with no fumbling or lost motion. When we made the bird understand that we had given up our last fish she croaked a word of thanks and flew away. After that whenever we went fishing on the lake the gull appeared and requested to be fed, and we made it a point of honor to see that she had either some scraps from the camp table or something from the minnow trap.

One day a white-headed eagle appeared over the lake and sailed around very high in the air. The two parent gulls seemed very much agitated. They were evidently anxious for the safety of their young birds, for they immediately started in pursuit of the eagle. The eagle, though very much larger than the gull, and a fierce fighter, was so much slower in his movements that he was al-

ways at a disadvantage. The gulls flew above the eagle most of the time and would suddenly dart downward, whack him on the head and get away before he could swing into position to strike back. Many times around and around the lake the flying fight went on, and on several occasions the two gulls got in blows on the eagle's head or back in rapid succession and feathers floated away after each jab, but I failed to see a single blow land on a gull, though the eagle struck at them many times.

After about fifteen minutes of this zeppelin and aeroplane fight the eagle gave up the battle and sailed away over the mountain top, the gulls following him out of sight. When the gulls returned some time later, they sat on the limb of the

pine stub and polished up their feathers. Bige and I gave them three cheers and they responded "Kiel, kiel!"

Some weeks later we were witnesses of the first lesson in flying; saw the mother gull push the young ones off a big rock and compel them to use their wings. Then one day after the young birds could fly a little, they were brought around to where Bige and I were fishing and they were shown how to sail around overhead without a motion of the wings and how to sweep downward and grab a minnow when we threw it out on the water. They were apt pupils in this game and learned it very quickly.

Early one morning in mid-September we heard a great commotion among the gulls and ran down to

the shore of the lake to see what was wrong. There we saw the entire family of gulls, old and young, circling around the big pine stub and all shouting at each other, "Kiel, kiel, kiel." As we watched they all began climbing in corkscrew curves higher and higher until they were mere specks directly overhead, then they shot forward in single file toward the southeast. They were headed for the harbor of the big city near the ocean four hundred miles away, where the scavenger is loaded onto big scows, is towed down to the lower bay and is sanitarily (?) dumped just in time to float back on the incoming tide to furnish food for the gulls and hundreds of their fellows who grow fat and live happily together until the following spring, when they pair off and go back to the mountains to build

other nests.

On the third day after we had deposited food in Old Bare-back's stall, we went over the trail to Mud Pond with another batch of suckers. Arriving at the shore of the pond we discovered that our boat was missing, and though we looked in every improbable place it could not be found. Some days later we learned that a party of law-breaking night hunters from Blue Mountain Lake had "borrowed" the boat and had returned it to a spot about two miles away on the other side of the pond near the outlet. Just now it seemed to be necessary, in order that we keep our engagement with the bear, that we should walk along the shore and around the upper end of the pond to reach our destination. It was a long way, there was no trail and the

walking was not good. We were not feeling very pleasant about it, and Bige was saying things about what he would do to the fellows who stole our boat.

Life in the woods affords few discomforts that do not bring compensating advantages. In this case, had we not been obliged to walk we should surely have missed an opportunity of witnessing a "Movie" in real life that is seldom shown even to a professional woodsman, and one well worth the price of admission.

We were approaching a point of land that extended several rods out into the pond and terminated in a steep bank about twenty feet high. From the opposite side of this bank came sounds of a plunge and splash of water, followed immediately by two similar but less loud plunges.

Then after an interval of a minute or less the same succession of sounds were repeated. We sneaked quietly and cautiously back into the woods and made a detour so as to approach in view of the opposite side of the high bank. Arrived behind a clump of bushes through which we peered we saw an otter toboggan-slide with an old mother otter and two half-grown cubs in the act of shooting down the steep bank and diving into the water at the bottom of the slide, then swimming ashore and scrambling up the bank uttering faint squeals of pleasure and immediately scooting down again. This was repeated again and again for several minutes when they became aware of our presence and disappeared under water, and we saw them no more.

There was a deep round-bottomed

furrow worn smooth in the clay on the side of the bank, and it was quite wet and slippery. A quantity of water soaked in the fur on the otter's body was carried up with each trip and kept the slide well lubricated. We noticed that in sliding the fore-legs of the animals were held close against their sides and these, as well as the hind legs, were pointed straight back. This position made the long slender body of the otter appear to be much longer than it really was. Who shall presume to deny that the inventor of the toboggan-slide stole his game from the otter, who has doubtless practiced it for many thousands of years? The principal difference being that whereas the otter slides on his own stomach the human animal must ride on one made of wood.

We found fresh bear tracks along the shore of the pond and in each case the imprint of the left hind foot showed but four toes. We also found that Bruin had been digging wild turnips in his garden patch. Arrived at the log cache we saw that the suckers were gone; the ground inside and around the stall was scratched and torn up, clearly the work of Old Bare-back. He had also put up his notice on a nearby spruce tree.

The black bear has a habit of marking trees in places that he frequents. Just why he does this we shall learn definitely some day when mind reading is extended from humans to wild animals; until then we shall speculate. A patch of bark of irregular shape but about twelve inches across had been torn from this

tree trunk about six feet above ground, and there were marks of the bear's teeth in the wood. He doubtless stood on his hind legs and stretched himself to his utmost height in making those tooth marks in the wood of the tree.

Translated from bear language into the United States tongue that notice would read—

WARNING

I am a big black bear. I can reach up to here. This patch of woods belongs to me. I will lick any bear that trespasses on my preserves. Any suckers that may be left here are mine. I will kill any other animal that touches them. Whoof! Gr-gr-r-grow!!

(Signed)

*BARE-BACK
his X mark*

The black bear has four canine tusks, two on the upper and two on the lower jaw. These project usually from an inch to an inch and a half beyond the face of the other teeth and are ugly-looking weapons that, on occasion, might be very effective. A close examination of the notice of warning showed deep grooves across the fibre of the wood. Most of these tooth marks were V-shaped, but a few were flat-bottomed and appeared

as if made by a carpenter's chisel about a quarter of an inch wide. Bige said "I thought the old brute had been caught in a trap, now I am sure of it. He broke one of his tusks biting on the steel trap and he lost one toe pulling his foot out of its jaws."

Each time we brought suckers to Bare-back, he ate them and took a fresh bite out of the spruce tree, though we did not meet him. During the summer we destroyed enough suckers to save the lives of many millions of unhatched trout and thus contributed to the conservation of game and food fishes.

On a Saturday we returned to Deerland Lodge to prepare for an exploring trip up in the Santononi country, and it became necessary to suspend the feeding operations for a couple of weeks. We expected to

make a long hike in a country where traveling was difficult. We had a tent to carry as well as provisions and extra blankets for the cold nights in the higher altitude, so we took George with us. George could not only help in carrying packs but he was an experienced woodsman and was familiar with the Santanoni mountains and foot hills. We made a start on Monday morning. Oaky took us in his motor boat about twelve miles down the lake, towing our guide boat astern. After a row of a mile and a half we took to the woods headed for Round Pond. An hour's tramp brought us in sight of the pond. Skirting its northern shore, two and a half miles more took us to Deer Pond where we met the Newcomb Tote Road which leads to a string of lumber camps distributed

over the northern slopes of Santanoni Mountains.

Our path now led for about four miles through a section that had been burned over during the previous autumn. A forest fire leaves in its wake a scene of complete desolation most depressing to one who is fond of the woods. Thousands of blackened half-burned tree trunks lie criss-crossed in every conceivable position, while here and there still standing, naked, bare of limbs and dead, pointing in mute protest to high heaven, are the charred remains of once noble pine or spruce trees. As far as the eye can reach in every direction no green thing appears to relieve the utter blackness. Not a sound is heard except our own footsteps. One involuntarily speaks, when speech is necessary, in a

The Burned Forest

hushed tone of voice, as in the presence of the dead. There are no birds and no other living creature is met in this entire burned district.

It has been the writer's privilege to see three large cities immediately after very destructive and historic fires had occurred; viz:- Chicago, Baltimore and San Francisco. In neither case was the sense of depression caused by the vision of ruin comparable with that produced by walking through a burned forest. The burned cities were rebuilt in a few years more expensively, and were then more beautiful than before. It will take a hundred and fifty years to restore the burned forest.

About mid-day we passed out of the burned section and into the cool shade of the big woods. We made a fire, cooked and ate our lunch of

bacon, eggs and coffee, on the shore of Moose Creek.

An hour after luncheon as we were quietly following the path in Indian file, Bige who was in the lead called out in a hoarse whisper, "Sufferin' Mike! will you look at that deer?" "Hist, Bige," said George, "the old lady is saying her prayers." A large yellow birch tree had fallen during a storm a few days before. The splint-ered stump still held its trunk about eighteen inches above the ground. Close to this tree trunk was kneeling, with her head under the tree, a large doe. The attitude was that of worshipful devotion and her head was bowed, not only to but under the altar. We stood, rigid and motionless as three statues (a little lop-sided for monuments by reason of our packs) at a respectful distance

of about fifty feet and with hats removed, awaited the conclusion of the ceremony.

Presently the deer gracefully resumed an upright position and reversing her head without turning the body, stood looking back directly over her tail with an expression of complete amazement. In this position the deer also froze into a statue and the tableau was held motionless for an incredible period of time, until the ludicrous aspect of the situation so overcame three members of the group that an explosion of laughter broke up the show and the doe bounded away through the trees. An examination proved that the deer had been eating mushrooms which were growing under the trunk of the fallen birch and was obliged to get down on her knees in order to reach them.

In the middle of the afternoon a shower came up quite suddenly. Our ponchos were used to keep the blankets and grub dry and we stood under a tree to await the passing of the shower. But the storm did not abate, it rather increased and soon the tree was wet through and so were we. Then we resumed our tramp while the rain poured down in bucketfuls; the water running down our legs filled our shoes and we slosh-sloshed for an hour or more, when we arrived at an abandoned lumber shanty on the shore of Cold River. This was not a good time to set up a tent so we turned into the shanty. There was a broken-down stove, two of the legs were gone so we got some stones, propped it up, fastened the smoke pipe together and soon had a fire where we could dry our clothes and

cook supper. We climbed a ladder to the loft where were rows of bunks filled with hay. These we examined closely and found that although the lumber jacks had not slept in them for several years they were still occupied. So we spread our blankets on the long dining table and soon were sleeping the sleep of the tired. Twice during the night George got down from his perch to use a club on some porcupines that had climbed through a sashless window and were trying to steal our grub.

The weather was clear on the following morning, and after the sun had dried off the wet bushes we continued our march up the river about five miles when we came to a clearing where had stood another log shanty used by the lumbermen but which had been burned a few years

before. Here Bige set up the tent while George picked wild strawberries and I went fishing. The river was swollen by the rain of yesterday and the water too high for the fish to bite, but in a brook that emptied into the river at this clearing I had good luck and returned in an hour with a fine string of brook trout to find that Bige had camp in perfect order and George had two quarts of strawberries. Within a half hour we were sitting down to a lunch the like of which cannot be had in any hotel, restaurant or club of my acquaintance, and I have visited several of each in my wanderings.

After an early breakfast on the following morning, with George for guide, we tramped about four miles back into the hills through a very interesting stretch of forest to

visit "The Mud Baths." We found in a basin in the center of a swamp a circular pool of soft mud about the consistency of thin mortar and about thirty yards in diameter. Approaching cautiously we saw in the center of the pool and apparently floating on the surface of the mud the horns, ears and part of the head of a large buck deer. The eyes and nose were visible, but the rest of the head and the entire body of the animal was out of sight.

We advanced to the edge of the swamp, close to the mud pool, but there was no movement of the horns. "Do you suppose he is dead, George, or is he just stalled in the mud so he can't get out? Suppose we get some spruce poles and pry him loose?" For answer, George threw a stone at the head. The mud splashed up in

the exposed face but nothing else happened. Then we all took a hand at throwing stones and sticks. After several failures a stone hit one of the horns, when with a mighty heave the shoulders appeared, then the hind quarters came above the surface. The deer had been lying down but was now standing in mud about three feet deep. He struggled forward with some difficulty toward the opposite shore, urged onward by some more stones, the soft mud streaming down his sides and legs. Stopping on shore, he turned, gave us a sad, reproachful stare, then ambled off into the woods, scraping mud off on the bushes at every step. We had disturbed the old boy in the act of taking the treatment which Nature had provided for his bodily ailments, and he was reluctant to leave before he had completed

the dose.

It was a hot morning, the mud was cold (we later learned that there was a spring in the bottom of the pool); doubtless it felt comfortable and did in reality reduce the temperature of his feverish body and would, in time, with repeated applications restore the deer to perfect health. We were sorry now that we had driven him out.

We examined the place thoroughly, walked entirely around the pool and in the woods at the edge of the swamp. A little brook ran away from it at the lower edge, and the water was cold. There were literally hundreds of deer trails leading into the pool from every direction. They radiated from the center like spokes of a wheel, and everywhere the bushes and paths were smeared with drip-

ping mud. Judging from appearances this health resort was very popular and had a large clientele. It is possible and quite probable that other animals visit this mud spring on occasion, but we saw only deer tracks.

We returned now to Strawberry Camp and on succeeding days visited Bradley Pond, Duck Hole, Mountain Pond, Lumber Dam, Natural Dam, The Big Eddy, Latham Pond and Boulder Brook. Our tent was moved several times during the twelve days' outing. We saw many interesting things, caught as many trout as we could use and enjoyed every minute of the time.

When we arrived at Deerland Lodge on a Saturday, we learned that on the previous Wednesday night one of Mr. Brown's flock of eight sheep which he kept to mow the grass on

the glof links had been killed, and several dogs were under suspicion. On the following night another sheep was dead and badly mutilated. On Friday night the fence around the pig-pen up by the woods had been broken down and one of the half-grown pigs had been carried away. Also bear tracks were found near the brook that ran through the field where the hogs were confined.

Bige and I hurried up to the hog-pen to examine those tracks. Our suspicions were speedily confirmed. There was the indisputable evidence. The tracks of one hind foot showed only four toe marks. Old Bare-back was surely the guilty party and he must be punished, but, first, we must feed him with more suckers to keep him away from the pigs.

One day at the village store, the

proprietor, Judge S., said he had some smoked halibut that was too ancient to be used by the villagers and suggested that Bige and I offer it to our bear; so we loaded the stuff into the boat and took it over to Bare-back. He smelled it from afar and came running, compelling us to hurry away for fear of being treated as trespassers.

Early in September a fire started in the Pine Brook section and burned for many days, filling the forest around with dense smoke. Old Bare-back became alarmed, left his reservation and moved over into the next township. He never came back and Bige's bear trap was never set in the place constructed for it.

One day in the following January, Bige and Bill on their snowshoes were following their trapping line to

gather in the fur from animals caught in their string of fifty or sixty traps. They had gone up "East Inlet Holler" had crossed the divide near the peak of Burnt Mountain, followed down Falls Brook Valley and were headed for Salmon Pond and Tongue Mountain. They had the skins of a fox, a fisher, two marten and three minks, and had completed about one half of their round trip when they came upon bear tracks in the snow. This was strange and most unusual. As a rule the black bear goes into his den with the first snow fall in the autumn and remains there sleeping until the snow has melted in the following spring.

Both Bige and Bill were curious and in order to learn what had wakened and driven the bear out of his bed in mid-winter they followed up

his back track and soon found that his hole under the roots of a big pine tree had filled with water during a thaw and rain storm of the day before. Bruin had been literally "drowned out."

After some discussion it was agreed that Bige should take the skins, complete the circuit of the trapping line and return home, while Bill hunted bear. This would be easy, as it was only necessary to follow the bear track in the snow to his new den. They both felt certain he would "hole up" again as soon as he found a suitable place. Bill followed the zig-zag bear trail many miles, giving little heed to direction. This would indeed have been difficult, as the bear had many times stopped to scratch away the snow and examine some spot to find it not suitable, and then

start away on a new tack.

Late in the afternoon Bill came up to Bruin's new home. It was under the upturned roots of a big spruce tree. The tree in falling had lodged in the fork of a birch and was held at an angle of about forty five degrees. The mass of roots and earth torn up thus formed a sloping roof over the spot where the bear had dug a hole about six feet deep. The snow in the woods was deep and the ground under it is rarely ever frozen during the coldest winters, so it was easy for the bear to dig even in January.

The bear had scraped away the snow and gathered up an armful of leaves and moss which he was carrying into his hole when Bill came up. He displayed some very human characteristics and felt ugly and dis-

agreeable for having been wakened in the middle of his nap. He showed his teeth and growled savagely as he faced Bill and backed up in the mouth of his den. At a distance of fifty feet Bill put a bullet in the center of his forehead and the bear's troubles were soon over, but Bill's troubles were just beginning. He was a long way from home and lost in the woods. It was near night and he had a dead bear weighing possibly four hundred pounds on his hands.

It would be difficult to skin the bear after the carcass was frozen, and it was now growing very cold so that job must be done before dark. It was hurriedly accomplished, the skin rolled up and put in a safe place and Bill, consulting his compass, started toward the west. He had gone about two miles, crossing a ridge,

and in the valley beyond on the bank of a brook he came upon a lumber shanty. This he reached with some difficulty as it was now quite dark. Here he built a fire and spent the night. He did not sleep as he had no blankets and it was necessary to keep the fire going while the mercury dropped down far below the zero mark.

Bill reached home by a devious route about noon on the following day. After resting one night, Bige and Bill went back to retrieve the bear skin. They took with them a pocket lunch, expecting to return before night, but there had been a light fall of snow and Bill's tracks were obliterated so they hunted all day without finding the spot where the bear was killed. They did, however, just at night find the shanty where Bill had

spent a night. Here they both remained another night, and on the following morning reached the scene of the tragedy.

They brought out with them not only the skin but about fifty pounds of bear fat. Bear tallow has many and varied uses in an Adirondack household. Its curative properties cover as wide a range of applications as does goose grease in a New England farmhouse. Besides, it is the best material in the world to make one's shoes waterproof in the melting sloshy snow of springtime.

The bearskin in the course of time found its way to the shop of a Sixth Avenue furrier and it now occupies a position of honor in front of the fireplace in my living room, and on a cold winter's night my slippered feet rest in its soft fur while I read the

evening news and the wood-fire crackles. The head remains a part of the rug and in its lower jaw, on the right side, the canine tooth is broken diagonally across and is only half as long as the others. Also, the middle toe on the left hind foot is missing.

Old Bare-back's back is no longer bare. He is now wearing his mid-winter coat and his fur is four inches long.

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