

HUNTING THE WAPITI

BY
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NCCE, while on a hunt with John Willis, I spent a week in a vain effort to kill moose among the outlying mountains at the southern end of the Bitter Root range. Then, as we had no meat, we determined to try for elk.

We were camped with a wagon, as high among the foot-hills as wheels could go, but several hours' walk from the range of the game; for it was still early in the season, and they had not yet come down from the upper slopes. Accordingly we made a practice of leaving the wagon for two or three days at a time to hunt; returning to get a night's rest in the tent, preparatory to a fresh start. On these trips we carried neither blankets nor packs, as the walking was difficult and we had much ground to cover. Each merely put on his jacket with a loaf of frying-pan bread and a paper of salt stuffed into the pockets. We were cumbered with nothing save our rifles and cartridges.

On the morning in question we left camp at sunrise. For two or three hours we walked up-hill through a rather open growth of small pines and spruces, the traveling being easy. Then we came to the edge of a deep valley, a couple of miles across. Into this we scrambled, down a steep slide, where the forest had grown up among the immense boulder masses. Finally, in the afternoon, we left the valley and began to climb a steep gorge, down which a mountain torrent roared and foamed in a succession of cataracts.

Three hours' hard climbing brought us to another valley, but of an entirely different character. It was several miles long, but less than a mile broad. Save at the mouth, it was walled in completely by chains of high rock-peaks, their summits snow-capped; the forest extended a short distance up their sides. Hardly had we entered this valley before we caught a glimpse of a yearling elk walking rapidly along a game path some distance ahead. We followed as quickly as we could without making a noise, but after the first glimpse never saw it again; for it is astonishing how fast



The crash of the meeting antlers resounding through the valley.

an elk travels, with its ground-covering walk.

By the time the sun set we were sure the elk were toward the head of the valley. We utilized the short twilight in arranging our sleeping place for the night, choosing a thick grove of spruce beside a small mountain tarn, at the foot of a great cliff. As the first faint streak of dawn appeared in the dark sky my companion touched me lightly on the arm. The fire was nearly out; we felt numbed by the chill air. At once we sprang up, stretched our arms, shook ourselves, examined our rifles, swallowed a mouthful or two of bread, and walked off through the gloomy forest. At first we could scarcely see our way, but it grew rapidly lighter.

Then, as we trod noiselessly over the dense moss, and on the pine needles under the scattered trees, we heard a sharp clang and clatter up the valley ahead of us. In a little glade, a hundred and twenty-five yards from us, two bull elk were engaged in deadly combat, while two others were looking on. It was a splendid sight. The great beasts faced each other with lowered horns, the manes that covered their thick necks, and the hair on their shoulders, bristling and erect. Then they charged furiously, the crash of the meeting antlers resounding through the valley. The shock threw them both on their haunches; and locked horns

ly that of a vicious and brutal coward. He buffles her continually, and in times of danger his one thought is for sneaking off to secure his own safety. For all his noble looks he is a very unamiable beast, who behaves with brutal ferocity to the weak, and shows abject terror of the strong. According to his powers, he is guilty of rape, robbery, and even murder. I never felt the least compunction at shooting a bull, but I hate to shoot a cow, even when forced by necessity.

During the rut the bulls are very noisy; and their notes of amorous challenge are called "whistling" by the frontiersmen,—very inappropriately. They begin to whistle about ten days before they begin to run; and they have in addition an odd kind of bark, which is only heard occasionally.

Heard at a little distance, and in its proper place, the call of the wapiti is one of the grandest and most beautiful sounds in nature. Especially is this the case when several rivals are answering one another, on some frosty moonlight night in the mountains. Once, while in the mountains, I listened to a peculiarly grand chorus of this kind. We were traveling with



He plunged wildly forward.

pack ponies at the time, and our tent was pitched in a grove of yellow pine, by a brook in the bottom of a valley. On either hand rose the mountains, covered with spruce forest. It was in September, and the first snow had just fallen.

The day before we had walked long and hard; and during the night I slept the heavy sleep of the weary. Early in the morning, just as the east began to grow gray, I awoke; and as I did so, the sounds that smote on my ear, caused me to sit up and throw off the warm blankets. Bull elk were challenging among the mountains on both sides of the valley, a little way from us, their notes echoing like the calling of silver bugles. Groping about in the dark, I drew on my trousers, an extra pair of thick socks, and my moccasins, donned a warm jacket, found my fur cap and gloves, and stole out of the tent with my rifle. Two herds were approaching one another from opposite sides of the valley, a short distance above our camp; and the master bulls were roaring defiance as they mustered their harems.

I walked stealthily up the valley, until I felt that I was nearly between the two herds; and then stood motionless under a tall pine. I made up my mind, from the sound of the challenging, now very near me, that one bull on my right was advancing towards a rival on my left, who was answering every call. Soon the former approached so near that I could hear him crack the branches, and beat the bushes with his horns; and I slipped quietly from tree to tree, so as to meet him when he came out into the more open woodland. Day broke, and crimson gleams played across the snow-clad mountains beyond.

At last, just as the sun flamed red above the hill-tops, I heard the roar of the wapiti's challenge not fifty yards away; and I cocked and half raised my rifle, and stood motionless. In a moment more, the belt of spruces in front of me swayed and opened, and the lordly bull stepped out. He bore his massive antlers aloft; the snow lay thick on his mane; he snuffed the air and stamped on the ground as he walked. As I drew a bead, the motion caught his eye; and instantly his bearing of haughty and warlike self-confidence changed to one of alarm. My bullet smote through his shoulder-blades, and he plunged wildly forward, and fell full length on the blood-stained snow.

Nothing can be finer than a wapiti bull's carriage when excited or alarmed; he then seems the embodiment of strength and stately grace. But at ordinary times his looks are less attractive, as he walks with his neck level with his body and his head outstretched, his horns lying almost on his shoulders. The favorite gait of the wapiti is the trot, which is very fast, and which they can keep up for countless miles; when suddenly and greatly alarmed, they break into an awkward gallop, which is faster, but which speedily tires them.



First Silver Wedding.
The first silver wedding dates back to the time of Hugues Capet. The servants, says Home Chat, belonging to him had grown gray in his service, a man and a woman, and what could he do as a reward? Calling the woman, he said: "Your service is great, greater than the man's, whose service is great enough, for the woman always finds work harder than a man, and therefore I will give you a reward. At your age I know of none better than a dowry and a husband. The dowry is here—this farm from this time forth belongs to you. If this man, who has worked with you five and twenty years, is willing to marry you, then the husband is ready."
"Your majesty," said the old peasant, "how is it possible that we should marry, having already silver hairs?"
"Then it shall be a silver wedding." And the king gave the couple silver enough to keep them in plenty.
This soon became known all over France and raised such enthusiasm that it became a fashion after twenty-five years of married life to celebrate a silver wedding.

The Treasury Vaults.
The first question the average visitor to the United States treasury building asks is, "Couldn't burglars tunnel under the vaults and rob the government?" Well, that is not likely. An armed guard sits beside the vaults. Every twenty minutes he is required to ring an alarm just to show that he is awake. An armed patrol makes the rounds hourly. Secret service men in plain clothes, with concealed weapons, keep watch and ward outside and inside the building. As to tunneling, the officials hold that if a man by any possibility should manage to bore underneath a vault the heavy metal would crush him to a jelly, thus administering a lasting gold cure. Even if the tunnel burglar could get away with his life he could not get away with much gold. Ten thousand dollars in double eagles weighs thirty-eight pounds. Forty million dollars in gold certificates of the \$10,000 denomination weighs eleven and a half pounds. Even burglars prefer the gold certificates to the real thing.—Buffalo Times.

Journalistic Reverages.
The curious boycott of the press in the Berlin parliament had a precedent in the mother of parliaments, the British house of commons. A writer in Harper's Weekly recalls that the person involved was no less a celebrity than the late Daniel O'Connell. He condemned the inaccuracy of the parliamentary reports, but he forgot to make allowance for acoustic difficulties and the buzz of intervening conversation. He charged the reporters with the malicious suppression of his speeches, and the gallery then refused to report him at all. Dan stormed and thundered in vain, even moving that the ringleaders be brought to the bar of the house. Finally he apologized, and all was well. Lord Lytton in 1871 fell foul of the press in the same way, and the late Lord Montagu had his name omitted from London newspaper reports for two years because he said something the reporters did not like.

A Misplaced Pin.
"I was in an uptown tea room where the scenery is all out of proportion to the amount served you," said a New York clubman. "I was dallying with some ice cream when my spoon struck a common, everyday pin in the bottom of the frozen stuff. I gave a little wave, and a waiter slipped to my side. 'See, a pin in this ice cream,' I said. 'Why, I might have swallowed that.' He took the glass and disappeared. When he returned he reminded me of an undertaker, he was that solemn. 'That pin has lost a man his job, sir,' he said. 'Well, I replied, 'I am sorry for that, but it might have cost me my life, when you come to think of it.' 'Yes, sir,' said the waiter meekly. Then, 'Eats here just most their ice cream and don't chew it.'—New York Times.

Growth of Pity.
No one formerly looked on with any pity or even horror at punishments which are now found too dreadful for description. Men were broken on the wheel, were burned at the stake, were racked, were cut up alive. No one seems to have felt any pity for their agonies. Men were put into noisome prisons, where, with bad air and insufficient food, they died unnoticed and unpitied. It is very different now. Human hearts are more tender.

She Voted.
"What was the topic of debate in our club today?" asked one member of the feminine society.
"The topic of debate," was the response. "Why—er—let me see—I can't remember what the topic was. But I voted on either the positive or negative side of the question. I forget which."
—Washington Star.

The Problem Solved.
Newed—My wife has a habit of taking money from my pockets when I'm asleep. Oldwed—Mine used to do that, too, but she doesn't any more. Newed—How do you prevent it? Oldwed—I spend every cent I have before I go home.—Chicago News.

An Exception.
"Ah, kind friend," said the minister. "It is deeds, not words, that count."
"Oh, I don't know," replied the woman. "Did you ever send a telegram?"
—Detroit Free Press.

Cheering.
Aspirant—You have heard my voice, professor. Now please tell me candidly what branch of vocalism it is best adapted for. Professor—Well—cheering!

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