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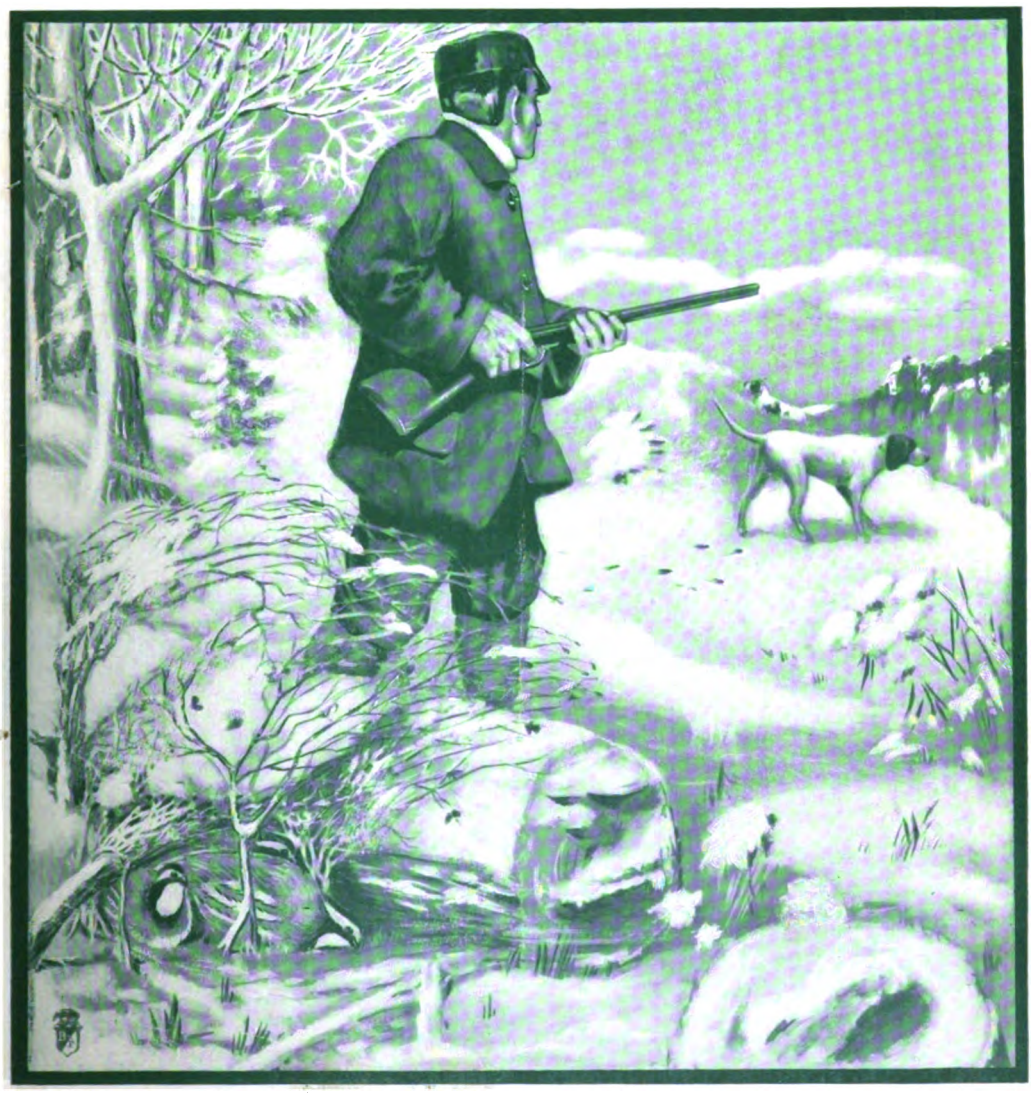

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BIRCHING IN THE BIG WOODS.

G. O. SHIELDS.

"The fir, the hemlock and the pine
Sang on the heights—and moss and vine
Made many a far, dim valley sweet
And shadowy, for the shy fawn's feet."

Nearly every reading sportsman knows something of the great lake region of Northern Wisconsin; but not all have yet had an opportunity of visiting or exploring it. Such as have not will no doubt be glad to learn still more of it. It has been my good fortune to make several pilgrimages to this charming region, but none were so full of interest or so fruitful of sport and adventure as one made in the autumn of 1890. I deem it a pleasant duty to brother sportsmen to narrate the principal events of this trip, to indicate the route taken, to describe some of the waters explored and to record some of the catches made.

It was early in October that I, with my guide, E. M. Clark, left the train at State Line station, with our birch bark canoe, our blankets and five days' rations loaded on a lumber wagon. We drove to Black Oak lake, four miles West. There we discharged our teamster and embarked for a cruise of 70 miles, through an unbroken wilderness.

It was well along in the afternoon when we got afloat, and putting out a trolling spoon we paddled across the East end of the lake and Southward along the North shore, hoping to pick up some fish for supper, but we were unsuccessful. This lake was formerly well stocked with lake trout, but it has been so persistently fished summer and winter by sportsmen and market fishermen that it is pretty well fished out. It should be restocked and protected, and doubtless will be in the future. It is half a mile wide, nearly three miles long, and is one of the most beautiful lakes in this section of the country. The water is clear and transparent, revealing the smallest pebbles at a depth of 10 feet or more; the shores are gravelly or rocky with high bluffs rising from the water's edge, and these are heavily timbered with pine, hemlock, birch, hard maple and a few oaks. There are some beautiful sites on its shores for summer cottages or club houses, and if its waters were again well stocked with trout it would be a most delightful place to spend the summer.

We camped on the North shore, and while the guide cooked supper I took my rifle and walked back into the woods on an old logging road. In going a quarter of a mile I saw half a dozen deer tracks, and have no doubt I could have got a shot before dark if I had cared to wait for it, but I was not hunting, had no use for a deer and no room for one in our canoe.

There was an abundance of dry wood in the vicinity and we built a great log fire and sat by it until nearly midnight, all the time spinning yarns and exchanging reminiscences of former days and nights in the wilderness.

Clark is a good woodsman and in many respects a genial companion. His worst faults are a disposition to work his customers for all the money he can get out of them, and to boast rather loudly and frequently of his own exploits. With proper reformation in these directions, he would be one of the best guides in the lake country. He can go anywhere in the woods, trail or no trail, no matter whether he has ever been there before or not. Show him on the map a lake, a stream or a quarter section of land that you want to see, and no matter if it be 40 miles away, through a trackless wilderness, he will take you to it as unerringly as the homing pigeon finds its cote when released in a strange land. He has been on nearly every section of land in Northern Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan, and has explored many of the great forests, swamps and canebrakes of Missouri before coming here. He is, moreover,

a skillful hunter and a good rifle shot, and is full of reminiscences of his wild life. Like most men who have lived many years alone in the woods, he has a vivid imagination and carries a long bow which he delights in drawing at each opportunity.

One story that he told me ran thus: "I was out with some neighbors of mine in Missouri one day, Christmas. We scattered out and were traveling through the woods in a kind of skirmish line. We had gone a mile or so when I heard several shots and a lot of halloing on my left. I started in the direction of the noise and soon saw that my companions had a young black bear up a tree, and were shooting at him but were not hitting him very fast. Just then I heard a cracking in the bush and there came an old bear straight toward me. She was soon near me and I planted a bullet in her neck that proved fatal. At the crack of the gun a deer jumped up within 50 yards of me and ran for the swamp, but before he reached it I fired and broke both his shoulders. Then I started to join my friends again, and before I reached them I jumped a big buck. I shot at him and missed. He ran into a thicket and passed out of it near one of the other men, who fired and broke one of his forelegs. At the shot the deer turned and went quartering past me again like sheol beating tan bark. I could hear every jump he made, but couldn't get sight of him. Finally I saw an open grassy swale ahead that I knew he would cross. I started and ran toward it and got to the lower end just as he showed at the upper end 120 yards away. I turned and fired, and he went down in a heap with a broken neck.

"Then I started again for the tree where the cub was, and when I got there my friends were still shooting at the little bear; they were so wild with excitement they couldn't even hit the tree. One of them had finally wounded the cub in the hip, but that was all. I took a shot at him, broke his back, and he came tumbling to the ground. Then one of the other fellows ran to him, put the muzzle of his gun within a foot of his carcass and began pumping lead into him. I called to the fool to stop, that the bear was too dead to skin.

"'You bet he is. I've fixed him!' he said.

"'Yes,' I said; 'I killed him and you fixed him.'

"But there was no time to discuss it, and I started back to dress the other game. I hadn't gone two rods when I saw the fresh track of a big old bear in the soft ground. He had gone in a different direction from the one I had first killed, and I took after him on the run. Within half a mile I overhauled him just on the other side of a little hill. I think he had been waiting there and listening to the shooting. He was running like a race horse though when I saw him. I was just lucky enough to get in a snap shot as he disappeared among some big trees. My bullet caught him in the hind leg and he stopped a second or two to bawl and bite at it. I sprang forward, and just as he turned and started on his second run, I pumped in another slug that landed in his left flank, ranged forward into his right shoulder and turned him into dead meat.

"While I was running up for this last shot I jumped a gang of turkeys. As it was raining, their feathers were wet and they couldn't fly very well. They treed in some big oaks, and I went back and killed two of them before they concluded to leave the country. Then I called to my friends to come and help skin the bear. I had killed the three bear, two deer and two turkeys with nine shots, and the whole business was done up in less than 30 minutes."

Clark also told me, that night, a great deal about the country we were to traverse in the next few days; of the many wild, unfrequented lakes and streams; of the grand fishing we were to have in these; of the portages through great forests and gloomy

swamps, and I went to sleep, at a late hour, with my mind full of vivid pictures of the mighty wilderness whose threshold we had already crossed.

We left our cosy camp on Black Oak lake at sunrise the morning of October 16, paddled along the North shore to the head of the lake, where we shouldered the little birch bark canoe and our packs, and made our first portage of a mile into Anderson's lake, another of the same character as the Black Oak water. It covers perhaps 40 acres, is clear, cold and deep, with surrounding hills that are densely timbered. In short, it is a perfect gem of azure in a setting of emerald.

A man named Anderson has located a homestead here, which includes the entire lake and all the land bordering on it.

He has built a house on the West shore, has stocked the lake with black bass, and if he isn't happy here now he never will be anywhere.

From Anderson's lake we portaged into another and larger one, a quarter of a mile West. It had no name, and we named it Mud lake. It is filthy looking, full of lily pads and skunk cabbage, and the shores are oozy and boggy. It is said to contain black bass, but on my word I wouldn't allow my reel to speak to a bass that would live in such water. We hurried over this lake and ran its outlet—which we named Bluegrass creek, because there is a great deal of grass on its shores—a distance of three miles, which landed us in another and better looking lake, also nameless. This we named Septette lake, because on one of its islands there are five large pine trees, growing from one common body. There are no other large trees on this land, so this cluster affords a conspicuous landmark visible from all parts of the lake.

From there we carried across a narrow ridge into another small lake. On the ridge grows a pine tree that has no branches save at one point about 70 feet from the ground. These spread out equally on all sides, and a dead snag sticks up from the center, the whole forming a perfect picture of an umbrella; so we called this smaller body Umbrella lake. From this water we ran down another creek a distance of a mile and a half. This stream runs directly along the State line, or rather the State line runs along the creek, for the creek was probably there first. Part of the time we were in Wisconsin and part of the time in Michigan. In fact, Clark and I were sometimes in different States at the same moment, for he sat in the stern of the canoe and I in the bow.

Another interesting thing about this creek at the time of our visit was that it was full of ciscos, which had evidently come up there to spawn. They were so thick that we could shake a stick at a thousand of them at once. How Clark managed to get the canoe through the audience without killing a lot of them I cannot understand, but I reckon some of them must have dived into the mud in order to let us pass. A cisco is a polite and accommodating sort of fish, and will do anything but climb a tree in order to give a canoe the right of way.

These are the same species of fish which grow in Lake Geneva and over which certain tenderfoot anglers make so much fuss. I know of an alleged sportsman in Chicago who charters a Pullman car every year to take him out to Geneva in June, where he pays three dollars a minute for board at the big hotel and charters a steamer to take him up to the cisco grounds. There he has a man servant place an upholstered chair in a rowboat, seat him in it, hold an umbrella over him, bait his hook, spit on it, and take off the three ciscos that he catches in the course of a day's fishing. At night he goes down to the hotel again, on the chartered steamer, and gets the agent of the Associated Press to telegraph all over the country—a half-rate message—that he caught 72 ciscos.

There are 30 or 40 of this sort of sportsmen in Chicago who go to Lake

Geneva every year when the ciscos run. Gosh all fish-hooks! If they would come up here when the June flies are ripe they could load a boat with ciscos and wouldn't have to lie about their play.

We paddled up another small thoroughfare that runs into this creek and a run of half a mile landed us in the South end of Thousand Island lake. This is the most beautiful of them all. I have scrambled over this Northern country from one end to the other, and have never seen a lake anywhere that could equal this one in natural splendor. It is four miles long, a mile wide, and for aught I know, a mile deep. The shores are the highest, and the most like young mountains of anything in the country. It has 17 islands, varying in size from two to 20 acres each, all heavily timbered, all high, bold, rocky and picturesque. The water is so clear that you might walk into it a considerable distance and not know it was there if you didn't get your feet wet.

This lake is fairly alive with lake trout, *Salmo namaycush,* and they are as gamy as any brook trout that ever wore spots. We went out after dinner to try them. I had an eight-ounce split bamboo bass rod, a No. 6 Kentucky reel, a No. 5 skinner spoon and 300 feet of No. 4 Kingfisher line. We hooked a small trout first, but thought he was about three feet long until we had a view of him. After the kill we ran along perhaps half a mile before getting another strike. Finally the boat stopped, and my rod doubled back as though I was anchored to the earth, but there was too much motion for that. Clark made a few strokes and set the canoe well out from shore, and I meantime was obliged to let my line run off. The fish was in no mood to follow us. When safe away from shore I stirred him up, and he did some of the most robust fighting I have ever had any part in. He seemed to prefer the profoundest depths of the lake and thither betook himself. Fortunately I had line enough to sound that part of the water, or he might have taken us with him. I longed to get a look at my game, and Clark urged me to "pull him up," so he could see him, but it would have taken a derrick to raise him at that stage of the game.

Whenever I disturbed him he would run straight away, but keeping all the time near the bottom. He ran under the boat twice, and I began to think he would wreck the rod in spite of me, but Clark kept the paddle in the water and would throw the bark hither and thither so as to clear the line in good time. The old *Salmo* ruled us with an iron will for half an hour before he showed any signs of weakening; but finally the strain began to tell on him and I gradually recovered a few yards of line. Still he kept up the dispute with the persistency of a tiger, and it was 45 minutes after he took the bait when we got him near enough to the surface to weigh him by sight.

"Gehos-os-afer!" said Clark when the fish showed himself, "he's a 20-pounder or I'm no judge of horse flesh."

"No, not quite that solid," said I; "but he's a weight carrier from the upper end of Bitter creek just the same."

We staid with the old cuss and finally persuaded him, with the gaff hook, to come in and take a ride in the canoe; but even then he was not dead nor sleeping, for he pounded the frail craft with the emphasis of a pile driver till Clark jolted the back of his head two or three times with a tamarack club. Then we paddled for camp and measured the prize. His height, when he stood on his head, was 33½ inches, and he measured 16 inches in circumference just below the third vest button. We had no scales with us, but estimated his weight at 12 to 13 pounds.

We camped that night on one of the islands. Near our tent was an old camp formerly used by a trapper and outlaw by the name of Kearns. He

had killed a man in the woods, and as there were no witnesses to the deed, he claimed he had done the shooting in self-defense, and thus escaped the gallows. He had come away out here and lived several months, apparently trying to hate himself to death, and he probably succeeded, though we saw nothing of his bones. It is to be hoped the world is rid of him in some way, for he threatened the lives of several other men, and is described as an ornery old cuss on general principles.

Each one of the islands in Thousand Island lake would make a lovely place for a summer cottage, as would many points on the mainland, and the time will come when cottages will be as numerous in and about this lake as they now are along the St. Lawrence river.

(To be Continued.)

THAT SETTER PUP.

W. F. Mattes, in Scranton, Pa., Truth.

My neighbor has a setter pup,
He yelps in the morn before I'm up!
  When he yaps a yap
  He breaks my nap.
Perhaps I ought to be up;
But it's not for a pup
  To teach me my duty;
  And, yet, he's a beauty.

This morning I wished for a gun of power,
Thro' which I could to a certainty shower
  Upon that pup
  From his toe-nails up,
Full a pound of powder and two of lead,
So I'd know he was, cocksure, all dead.
  But, he's certaintly cute
  And, say, he's a beaut.

Then, when my neighbor lifts the lid
And turns that pup loose with that kid,
  There's times galore—
  They race and roar—
Maybe I'm not half driven to madness,
Maybe it's more in enjoyment than sadness,
  That I part the screen
  And view that scene.

I get so mad at that pup dog
I'd like to smash him with a log-
    A-rithm.

  But, when I see him
  Cruising round,
Lithe, clean of limb, clear-eyed and sound,
Bounding like rubber, nose to ground,
  And I, with shaky nerves cooped-up;
  You aggravating pup!

Why can't you keep your tail down tight,
That flag of fields quite out of sight?
  You wiggling Crusoe,
  Why do you do-so?
Why do you bring back shocks of maize?
Why rudely recall autumn's haze
  And flights of prairie chickens,
  I'll lick you like the dickens
  When I catch you.

Oh, leaves of forests, sere and brown,
Oh, fields of stubble, far from town,
Oh, camps at the Rocky's timber line,
Oh, sights held on blacktails, drawn down
    fine,
  And rides and walks
  And trails and stalks;
Deep trodden tracks of the cinnamon bear,
Howling of wolves around my fire—
  You reminiscent pup,
  Shut up!

"There's a new young man calling on Miss Maude this evening," said the fox terrier, "and he seems real nice."

"Yes, I heard her say he was nice enough to eat," replied the bulldog on the lawn. "That's what I'm waiting for."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.