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THE DOWNFALL OF BUNNY.

A Story of a Pet, by Harry L. Dillaway
Illustrated by Geo. A. King

REASONS WHY THE GUANANICHE IS PRINCE OF THE POOL. By COL. PHILIP A. READE, U. S. A.

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN SPORTSMEN

BIRCHING IN THE BIG WOODS.

G. O. SHIELDS.

II.

The next morning we took the camera, the rifle and the fishing rod and started out, with our hearts full of anticipations and our stomachs full of broiled trout, bent on enjoying several sorts of fun. And we had one kind that we didn't order. We had gone but a few hundred yards when a stiff wind came up from the Southwest. We were headed Northeast, so we ran before the wind for a mile or so, but it kept freshening up till it became a gale. The waves were white on top, and we were a little frightened, though neither cared to acknowledge it. Even Clark's dog, a beautiful and good-natured little water spaniel, which could outswim a black bass, seemed uneasy. He looked wistfully toward the land and then at us by turns. Probably his only fear was that we would be drowned, and that he would have to walk home, for he was mighty fond of riding. Clark and I would have been willing to have given our best gun had we been on dry ground during that storm, but we had to stick to the birch.

Finally we reached the point of an island, and I called to Clark to head her into the lee of it. He said it was dangerous to attempt to turn into the trough of the sea, but I told him it was more dangerous to try to ride it out. By this time we had cut the point of the island, and with a mighty sweep of the paddle Clark brought the canoe up and ran her through the worst of the surf, but the very last breaker we had to pass was too much for the frail little craft. The wave caught her amidships, raised her on to the foaming crest and turned her bottom side up, throwing the whole cargo into the freezing water. We were within 20 feet of the shore, but the water where we capsized was at least 20 feet deep.

The momentum with which the boat was moving sent her still farther into the lee after she turned over. Clark was lightly clothed, swam for the shore and succeeded in reaching it, but I was heavily clad, and had on hip rubber boots, so I could not swim 10 feet. I caught the gunwale of the canoe with one hand, as she went over, and when I came up I clung to the craft with the grip of a drowning man.

I called to Clark to look for a pole to throw to me. He glanced about him and said there was none in sight. The dog tried to climb on the upturned bottom of the boat, but I beat him off, and he turned and went ashore. I surveyed the situation rapidly. The lee shore was a mile away. If I should attempt to float there I would be dead before I reached half the distance. I was already nearly paralyzed with the cold and felt that I could scarcely live 30 minutes longer in the icy flood and the chilling wind. What should I do? Must I perish thus miserably within 20 feet of land? But it was now 40 feet. The canoe was slowly but surely drifting out, and would soon be again in the rough water and at the mercy of the high winds and the sweeping waves.

Finally I moved back to the stern of the canoe, got astride of her, pressed her down into the water, and crawled forward on her until the greater portion of my body was out of the water. Then I headed her to land and began paddling with my hands for life. It was a struggle between life and death. Weakened and half paralyzed, I could make but a few strokes at a time without stopping to catch my breath. The wind made the canoe dip back nearly as far as I had propelled myself, but I kept up the struggle, maintaining all the time my self-composure perfectly. I was mentally just as cool and methodical all through that dreadful scene as I am at this moment. I have been face to face with death a dozen times in my life, and have

learned not to fear anything until the fight is off. Then I always get scared stiff.

I saw my fishing line slipping across the bottom of the boat and knew that the rod and reel were at the bottom of the lake. When the spoon came in sight I caught it with one hand and set the hooks deeply into the birch bark.

All this time I beat in toward shore and the wind blew me back. Finally, by the exertion of greater strength and endurance than I supposed I possessed, I drove the bow of the boat near enough to land, so that Clark could reach it. He drew it up till my feet touched bottom, when I staggered to dry land and fell on the rocks much more dead than alive.

Clark drew the boat up, righted her, and as soon as I recovered a portion of my strength, I sprang in. My camera, strange to say, was floating a hundred yards down wind. I say strangely, for there was a large amount of brass on it; enough, I thought, to sink it. We gathered this and Clark's match box—which had in some way escaped from his trousers pocket, and was floating—and then, the wind having lulled, plied the paddles for all they could stand and ran with the speed of a tarpon for an old trapper's cabin on the main land, half a mile away.

Clark's conduct in this matter was that of an arrant coward, and I would have been justified in killing him as soon as I landed.

There were plenty of dry spruce poles lying all about the island, many of them within a few feet of him. He could easily have picked up one of these, waded in up to his waist and pushed the pole to me. But he refused to do it and stood there gazing at me like a graven image. I believe he inwardly hoped to see me drown.

When we got ashore I told him what I thought of him, in words that must burn in his memory yet, if he is still alive; and I am glad of this chance to put him on record as a coward and a sneak of the most contemptible character.

Thanks to good old Dick Landford—he had left the door of the shack unlocked, and a big box stove was in the cabin. We broke up a lot of dry cedar stakes, filled the stove, lighted them, and in 10 minutes the stove and pipe were red hot from one end to the other.

We took off our clothes, wrung the water out of them, hung them to the rafters to dry and toasted ourselves until we were quite comfortable.

But here another calamity befell us. While we were reveling in the glowing heat of the roaring stove the bark roof of the shanty took fire and flamed up like a straw stack. We caught up two tin pails and fairly flew to the lake, in the garb that Nature gave us, and then back with the water. Clark sprang on the roof and I handed him the water. He doused the fire and put it out. Then we sought the seclusion of the shack once more.

As we continued our laundry business we had time to count up the casualties of the wreck. My little 32-calibre rifle and Clark's axe and rubber coat were in the bottom of the lake, but we hoped to be able to fish them up. We rigged some grappling hooks by tying three large fish hooks to the end of a long tamarack pole, and after drying our clothes and eating our dinner, we went back, anchored on the scene of the disaster and fished for the lost property three or four hours, but not a vestige did we find of any of it.

The coat and axe were of no value, but the little rifle was almost as dear to me as my right hand. She had traveled thousands of miles with me, had killed many birds and animals and had made some wonderful shots—scratches, of course, but still wonderful. So far as I know she still lies there, rusting in the bottom of that cruel lake. Anyone who may retrieve her will win a big stake if he will notify me, so that I may come and get her, for if I ever hear of her being on dry land I will win her back if I have to pay out my last penny or fight a duel.

(To be continued.)