

A WOMAN IN CAMP.

BY MARY R. SHIPMAN ANDREWS.



HENRY.

A RAILROAD has come between me and my quiet little Adirondack lake. It is lost to me forever. It was there that I learned the charm of being "loose and free." There I have sat under the trees by a bark table while my own catch of trout sputtered over the birch logs. I have listened to the hour-bird's singing, and to the guide cheerfully swearing at the eatables, the puns, or at anything else that struck his fancy. I have gathered with the others around half a cord of blazing logs in the evening and listened while the guide told stories of his woodcraft. I have afterward laid my head with delicious sleepiness upon balsam boughs—not less aromatic for the green caterpillars and the mosquitoes that I knew were in them—and have gone off to dreamland to the sound of the crackling fire and the wind in the pine-trees. I have done these things and a thousand others as pleasant in the doing; and only those who know as I know the secrets that the forest tells to its friends can understand the homesickness I feel when I realize that a railroad has come between me and my lake forever.

What I write here is the obituary of a friend, and it ever shall linger when that life it records has become a vague memory. And I shall put my memories in print for the sake of those who do not know that any strong, healthy woman can camp and do her fair share of the hunting, fishing, and tramping, and ask no odds of the men.

Every year, about the first of August, my husband and I left the city. A

day's journey by rail and wagon brought us to "Number Four," a woods hotel where perhaps a hundred people spend the summer. After a night's sleep—sound sleep, with the delicious mountain air quieting every nerve—we put on our regimentals and started on a walk of eleven miles to the next station, Stillwater, over an ideally bad road. We might have gone in the wagon that carried our traps and provisions, but that was rather harder than walking.

At Stillwater we had a mid-day dinner, and then Henry, our guide, put our "duffle" into the boats and we were presently afloat. I generally took the first row—and when the oars dinned into the black water after a whole year of silence the first few strokes were electric.

We wound slowly up the narrow river, and when the eleven miles' row was finished and we turned into the small bay, overhung with pines, where the carry to Loon Lake begins, Henry had already taken the luggage and his boat across and was waiting for us on the bank, pipe in mouth. He dragged our boat away up the bank and sat on the bow, as one does on a horse's head to keep it quiet, while we gave a jump for the firm shore that landed us deep in the middle of the mud. But that was nothing; we had shaken off the dust of civilization, and might as well put on the mud of freedom now as later. We unloaded the boat and Henry went in front with it on his head, winding up the trail, like a big turtle. The forest was fresh and silent, and the vistas of tall pines, with their quiet, filtered light, seemed like a dim, cool cathedral.

We followed Henry over the trail—W—with all the things convenient to carry, like the fish-basket and the camera, and I with two or three paddles, a gun and a couple of rods, and perhaps an oar or two. These soon formed into a wheel of spokes, with my strained hands clutching the center, and insisted on catching on every root and twig I passed. In the woods a man always gives that sort of thing to a woman to carry—if

there is a woman. He says, "Here, you take the light things," and a woman is commonly foolish enough to take them. By the time we were across the carry my cap was over one eye and a lock of hair was in the other. I was clasping a gun to my heart, the blade of a paddle had got under one arm, and the handle of another was dragging on the ground. I was in such a temper that when the first streak of water showed through the trees and W— murmured ecstatically, "There's the little lake again!" I set my teeth and wished I could think of something cutting to say. But I only hurried out upon the marshy grass and saw the water lying brilliant in the sunlight, with trees coming down to its edge and deep borders of shade half-way around it.

We got the boats into the water cautiously, for there might be a deer behind any one of a dozen comers. Usually in paddling up to our camp we used to steal round those corners noiselessly and each time come suddenly upon nothing at all.

One year the result was different. We had taken two guides up with us, and I was in the boat with the second one, Tom Martin, who used to divide his time impartially between swearing and singing hymns. I wonder the mixture didn't give him moral indigestion. Coming up the river Tom had given me a shot at a deer. I scorned my fort-four Winchester, took W—'s fancy rifle, put up the Vernier sight, as if I were at Creedmoor, set the hair trigger and fired. My game went off with easy jumps, and his tail, the certain index of a deer's safety, well up in the air. I was disgusted. All the comforting remarks that the three men made about strange guns did not comfort me at all. When you miss a deer you can always find a reason why you could not possibly have hit him, but the fact remains larger than any reason—you missed him.

An hour after my failure we got into the boats on the lake and, stealing noiselessly as usual around one of those many comers, came upon another deer, standing in a patch of grass—a blaze of red in the low sunlight. My heart was in my mouth, and it was with the resolve of desperation that I raised my gun—my own gun this time—to my shoulder. I hit him. And every morning, as long as that venison lasted, when we sat down

to the breakfast-table Henry would take the hissing gridiron off the fire and say, "Well, I swanee! it's right good now to have meat in camp straight off, ain't it?" Then I would have a modest feeling that though it might be a great thing to be the father of your country, that could not be compared in the least to killing a deer before you reach camp.



MY PRIZE.

I have missed many deer, and have killed six. One of them, the first, was a good shot. The bullet went two hundred yards and struck a jumping buck exactly in his heart. This is the only shot at live game I have reason to be proud of, but it is nothing compared to the shots I haven't made. Here is one story: One Sunday morning, when ham and bacon were beginning to lose their charm, W— and I happened to discuss whether it would be right to shoot a deer on Sunday. W—, who is not a really sinful man, thought that under the circumstances it would, but my virtue was of a sterner type, and I said, "No; no matter how much we need it, I would not do it." I came of a ministerial race, and I felt "*noblesse oblige*." That

afternoon I lay in my hammock, reading and wondering why W—— and the guide did not come across from the other camp, when there was a soft grating of a boat against the landing, a muffled rushing up the little trail, and W——gasped out, "Get your gun—quick—a deer!" I didn't even open my mouth. I took my Winchester and was in the bow of the boat in a jiffy, with the rifle across my knee and holding the trigger back carefully so that there would be no "click" as I put it at full-cock. I was out in the middle of the lake and in full sight of the usual patch of yellowish red that moved along the shore before I even remembered that it was Sunday. Then it was too late to retreat. How Henry made the little shell of a boat fly across the water with his great pull on the paddle that meant six feet each time, yet never stirred the bow sidewise two inches! The big deer had his eye on us as we came nearer, and was a little nervous. But it was pleasant to wade along the sandy bank; and the salt grass there was tender and the lily-pads fresh and juicy, so he assured himself that large dark spots on the water were not uncommon, and munched away. The *Dixie* flew on, and when we got within a hundred yards or so I put my gun up slowly. Out of the disengaged corner of one eye I soon saw the paddle go out flat on the water to steady the boat, and then Henry whispered, "Fire." I fired, and the deer threw up his head and looked at me, astonished. Then I fired again, and he seemed to be anxious and a trifle insulted, but still stood. I fired a third time, and then he concluded that he could not encourage any more such shooting, and off he went. I saw his tail waving like a flag as he melted into the bushes—they never appear to go into the woods of their own accord, but the "brush," as the guides call it, seems to absorb them. But I did not think of that abstract truth just then. "Fired clean over," said Henry, and turned the boat about; and silently and dejectedly we went back to camp. I was undoubtedly glad the deer had got away, for the moral effect on me of killing a deer just at first is always as if I had committed murder, but I don't think I have ever been more ashamed of myself. I picked a quarrel with W—— and felt better,

but I was sore all summer about those three disgraceful shots.

Once we went off for a five days' exploring trip where there were no trails. We had to compass straight through the woods and take the walking as it came, hills and valleys, marshes and witch-hopple. I objected to the witchhopple most. My one skirt of denim was proof against everything else and I could walk exactly as freely as the men, for it wouldn't tear and it wouldn't catch, but the witchhopple twisted about its folds and troubled me. We walked from eight in the morning till five in the afternoon each day, without stopping to eat.

Each of the men—my brother was with us, too—carried a pack, as light as we could make it, and I had the gun and two rods. Sometimes we followed a "runway" or deer's path for a distance, and then it was mostly easy going; but when we got into a spruce thicket or an old "slashing"—the track of a hurricane—no one but people who have been in such places can imagine how bad it was. Once we found such a one and a marsh combined, and it took us two hours to go that half-mile.

We camped at night near some brook. Once we were too tired to cut balsam boughs to lie on, so we wrapped ourselves in our blankets and lay down on the bare ground. I thought I had chosen a smooth spot, but before morning I felt sure I was lying on the largest tree in the forest. I had a raging headache that night, for I had carried the gun first on one shoulder and then on the other till it seemed as if it had cut in on both sides half-way, and as if my head must tumble off. And I was so lame that when I went over the last few logs I had to lift my foot across with my hands. But the next night I was less tired than W——, and the third night less than my brother, who is very strong. After that we were all about equally toughened.

I waded a trout brook for the first time on that trip. I went off alone up the brook, and finally came to a pool where the fish were jumping well. I stood more than knee-deep in the water, and in three-quarters of an hour I took twenty-two trout, besides a great many tiny ones that I threw back. They were genuine savages and liked bright colors, for the fly that took almost every one was a Scarlet Ibis.

We all remember that trip with pleasure. We got tired and sometimes cross, but it was charming to pitch our tent, like Arabs, at night, by the side of a stream. We would go off to fish leaving the guide to chop wood and start the dinner—or supper—and then we would come back and sit about the camp-fire while the trout that had been swimming a few minutes before cooked over it. Finally we would go to sleep on the freshly-cut balsam, with the sound of running water all night long, like a gentle rain, just outside the tent. The enthusiasm of childhood seemed to come back, with all the charm and glow of adventure that a child finds in a story, with the added power of a grown person to realize the piquancy of the pleasure.

It was a very lazy life if we chose to have it so, for on our own lake we could kill all the trout and deer we could possibly eat. There was fly-fishing to be had within a five-minutes' paddle of our landing, and a deep hole as well, where with bait one could always take two or three trout of a pound or two each. Our camp, a bark shanty twelve feet square with an open front, and a tent, was on a beautiful island in the middle of the lake, and the guide's and

the dining-camp were a quarter of a mile across the water on the main land. We rowed over to our meals, and in three days all weathers became the same to us—it was merely a question of rubber coats or no rubber coats.

I should like to tell a dozen stories more—how I “floated” a panther that followed our boat around the edge of the lake; how I have been off alone with a gun and a compass still-hunting; how, many a night, I have “floated” for deer and spent hours sitting motionless in the bow of a canoe, with ears alert to catch the mysterious night sounds, and eyes strained to follow the dim patch of light that moved silently along the shore, thrown by the “jack” just in front of me. There are a hundred other things like this that seem to me well worth doing, and that I think not many women have done, but that any of them might, and would do, if they knew the pleasure of it. For there is a charm and an attraction about the life that my stumbling pen cannot catch. As Miss Alcott says of love-making, so with the witchcraft of the woods—for people who have not known it, any description seems overdrawn, and for people who have, it is quite beyond description.



J U N E .

The wheel, o'er which the waters plashed,
is stilled.

The sun set long ago; the frog's hoarse drum
Gives place to laggard beetle's drowsy hum.
The humid air with ling'ring scents is filled.
Now gleam the flick'ring lights of watchful flies,
Fitfully 'mong the trees that whisper sweet
Nothings for the soft night-winds to repeat.

The stars look down, drowsily-blinking eyes
That say "Good-night." Only the stream
brawls on,
Through dusky fields, where cattle lie at rest,
Chewing the lazy cud,—now laves the stone
Foundations of the bridge; then, at its best,
Leaps swiftly on, anxious but to be free,
And bring relief to thirsty vale and lea.

Frederic Courbière.