



## A HUNTER'S ELYSIUM.



NE hundred miles north of Toronto commences a network of lakes that extend over many hundred square miles northward, scattered in every direction through the dense forest that covers that picturesque locality.

Game and fish of almost every variety are here to be found, making one of the best retreats for enthusiastic sportsmen that can be found within a similar radius of the Atlantic sea-board of Northern America. True, the prairie chicken, the capricious salmon, and the timid trout, are wanting; but this deficiency is well supplied by the number and variety of other species of game well worthy the attention of both hunter and fisherman. Bear and deer are here numerous, roaming undisturbed in the retreats of their progenitors; while the clear, sparkling waters are well stocked with the voracious *muscanonge* and active impetuous

black bass. But he who is desirous of visiting this elysium in pursuit of game must be no feather-bed sportsman, no grumbler at imaginary troubles or shrinker of hard work; for, once he leaves the edge of civilization, no roof-tree will be found to greet the eye after a hard day's tramp, no luxurious downy couch on which to rest his wearied limbs, but, often unprotected, he must submit to the pelting of the pitiless storm. No; he must accept mother earth for his bed, his hunting blanket for his covering, the heavens for his canopy, and, if fortune should favour him with a touch of a north-easter, the leeward of his reversed canoe will give him such shelter as will enable him to keep dry perhaps thirty minutes longer.

Knowing what you have to be prepared for, provided you have the constitution and pluck, make a try, and I am certain on your return you will be in ecstasies with your trip, recalling with

pleasure the hardships you have gone through, and laughing at the little misadventures that chequered (like clouds portending a shower on a sunny day) the tenor of your path. We cannot have all play. Few go through the world without an occasional rub. "Variety is the spice of existence;" and without an odd *contretemps* we should become a very unimaginative, namby-pamby lot, unfit for wear and tear, bustle and excitement, that all must endure before their course is run.

From Toronto proceed to the village of Orillia, at the head of Lake Simcoe. At this pretty little place you will have no difficulty in procuring one of the Chippewa Indians from the village of Rama, on the other side of the lake, to undertake the duties of Palinurus for a moderate remuneration. All of these redskins may safely be trusted, and they will be found not only excellent hunters and trappers, but very obliging, as long as you keep them from the curse of their race, whisky. Of course, as soon as they leave civilization they cannot obtain their dire enemy, unless you should give it, or, what is equally culpable, leave it in their way. How I became acquainted with this region was strange and unlooked-for. Some years since, having business in Toronto, I was detained longer than I expected, and got both out of funds and out of elbows. Returning from the post-office much disappointed and disgusted at the dilatoriness of my friends, I entered a tavern to have a glass of ale, when I chanced to run against a former acquaintance who had turned hermit, having built a house on the edge of a lovely sheet of water embosomed in the forest several miles farther to the north than any of his neighbours. Soon my troubles were all before him, and he, with characteristic hospitality, offered me accommodation for an indefinite period. Next morning we were both *en route* for his solitary home, and never shall I forget the feel-

ings of pleasure and admiration that rose in my bosom when first I beheld this charming retreat, situated on a bluff washed by crystal water, and backed by the handsomest varieties of forest trees, making it look to my mind the beautiful of a hunter's home.

After being domesticated some weeks in this vicinity, from the beauty of an afternoon and coolness of the weather I was induced to shoulder my gun and start across country to Lake St. John, with the hopes of killing some ducks to add to the fare of our already sumptuous table. I had never visited this place before, and as I left the clearing, the last words of H— were: "Take care you do not get lost." With an amount of confidence, "usually denoting ignorance," I responded that I was too old to be guilty of such a green proceeding. With little trouble I found my destination. Game was abundant and tame, they being overcome with that languor which makes them perfectly indifferent, and which is so frequently the precursor of bad and stormy weather. In a little time my bag was heavy, too much so to be agreeable, and, considering that I had committed havoc enough, I determined to retrace my steps. Another and yet another duck would come in my way, and presented such fascinating shots that I could not resist, so that by the time I had returned to the place where I first struck the water I was completely loaded. Have any of my readers ever walked two or three miles with from eight to a dozen mallard ducks in the skirt of his shooting-coat? If so, they undoubtedly have vivid recollections of their weight. If still a tyro, I advise you to make a trial, as a new sensation will be experienced, particularly if the ground is soft and muddy. I had scarcely re-entered the sombre forest when my spaniel found some ruffed grouse, and treed them a short way off to the left. A brace of these delicate birds would be a most acceptable addition to a future



Schenck

dinner; so, without hesitation, I struck off the path to cultivate their more intimate acquaintance. Advancing upon them unwarily, the covey flushed, but flew only a short distance. I thought my chances so remarkably good that I made another try, but again the watchfulness of my feathered friends foiled me. With a malediction on my lips I turned to retrace my steps, but for my life could not tell in which direction my route lay. To be lost! Pooh! pooh! what nonsense! I was not still a schoolboy, and had been too long cut loose from my mother's apron-strings. The whole thing appeared too absurd and ridiculous. Off I went, as I thought, straight back to the place I had left; I must cross my own path in a few minutes—only a few steps farther! I am certainly close now! And thus arguing and consoling, I proceeded. By degrees it began to dawn upon me, though much against my inclination, that I was "certain sure out of my reckoning." The more convinced I became of the uncertainty of my position, the more I became excited; at first I walked faster, talked to myself, and tried, though I fear very indifferently, to treat the whole affair as an admirable joke. But soon my countenance became elongated, and a very gloomy expression usurped the place of my previous smile. For change, I shouted, with the hope that some one might hear me—a very improbable thing—except, perchance, some solitary aborigine should be out in attendance on his bear or other traps. At last I became fairly desperate and broke into a headlong run; the race was too fast to keep up, and, fairly blown, wearied and exhausted, I sat down on a trunk of a fallen tree. The depression I felt will never be forgotten. The terrible loneliness, the perfect solitude and monotony, with the certainty of having to pass the night *al fresco*, made my frame of mind anything but enviable. The mosquitoes, which previously I had scarcely noticed, now put in a claim for

attention, for my wretched plight seemed to give them confidence, and they attacked me front, rear, and flanks in columns. It was useless to attempt to drive them off; their perseverance would have been most commendable if engaged in a better cause. Night was rapidly approaching, and the giant shadows had become indistinct in their outline, mingling together in one dark gloom. Distant rumbling of thunder portended a coming storm, reminding me that I had better make all snug, for a dirty night was at hand. I soon found a prostrate monarch of the forest, under whose side I expected to find comparative shelter; in a short space I had gathered sufficient inflammable matter to make a fire, determining to sacrifice one of my ducks to the implacable tormentor, hunger. Out of the few matches I had four missed or would not light. But two more remained. With what care and anxiety did I try the others! Alas! the head of No. 5 flew off, and but one remained to save me from Erebus and the incursions of some erratic midnight prowler. With the utmost care I undertook the trying ordeal of squeezing myself into a corner, sheltering my hands with my cap and sacrificing a portion of the last letter from my lady-love for tinder. Success rewarded me, and soon the surroundings were brought out in relief by the brilliant glow, reminding me of the deep contrast of light and shadow in one of the much-admired pictures by Rembrandt. The rain was not long delayed, and, after a few premonitory drops, came down as if the flood-gates of heaven had been opened, accompanied by the loudest thunder and most dazzling lightning. There is nothing more powerfully impresses man with the omnipotent power of the Creator, or with his own utter insignificance, than being placed alone, unprotected from the warring elements, listening to the dismemberment of limbs from the parent tree-trunks by the fury of the blast or the scathing

power of the electric fluid. All my efforts to keep a good fire were futile—sleep was out of the question; while the incessant attacks of the mosquitoes made me restless and irritable. No sick man or storm-tossed mariner ever more ardently longed for break of day. The night appeared endless, and doubts of whether the sun had not been delayed in his course, or taken his departure to gladden with his rays the inhabitants of other planets, intruded themselves. At last, faint lines of light glimmered in the east, foretelling the departure of darkness, and with greater satisfaction than I ever previously experienced, I rose from my wet and uncomfortable resting-place. To seek my last route was my first endeavour, and for more than an hour I wandered without success. At last, when almost yielding to despair, I struck the margin of the lake I had been shooting on the evening before; and what a beautiful entralling scene lay before me!

The placid water only rippled where the wild duck sported or the voracious fish pursued to the surface their destined prey; while the shadow of each tree

that grew near the margin was so distinctly reflected that the minutest limb or twig could be traced with perfect precision. I stood entranced, and so great was my admiration that nothing could have induced me to destroy the harmony of the picture by destroying the life, or disturbing the retreat, of the beautiful creatures which formed its prominent features. To the left were several deer and fawns, knee-deep, feeding upon the tender succulent leaves of the water-lily, the youngsters occasionally chasing one another in sport, and unknowingly practising and developing those muscles which Nature intends to be their protection in the hour of danger; their beautiful graceful mothers frequently raising their eyes from their morning repast with maternal solicitude for their progeny's safety. What sportsman could witness such a scene without feelings of the greatest pleasure? and, in my opinion, unless hunger could be pleaded, he would be unworthy of the name who could desecrate the loveliness and peacefulness of the view by wantonly shedding blood.



## T REED BY A GRIZZLY.

SEIZED my rifle, and started out to find my mustang, for I was rather afraid that he might have tumbled into the river during the night. Groping my way to the right of the camp, I followed the courses of crags or the few open spots where a long, dank grass grew in profusion, and in half an hour reached a rock which gave me a good view some distance up the river. I waited there until the light was strong enough to enable one to note objects distinctly, and when that time came I saw the horses huddled together on a

sort of cape that jutted a considerable way out into the stream.

On approaching them I saw that they were trembling with fright, and on looking for the cause of it I beheld a large object crouching on the ground about sixty yards away, and on gazing at it intently for a short time I concluded that it was either a bear or a cougar, and that it was feasting on something. Taking deliberate aim at it, I fired, and when the report died away I could hear the gruff "huf, huf," of a grizzly; but ere I could load a second time it had disappeared behind a mass of crags.

The shot had alarmed the camp and brought out the armed warriors rushing