

CARIBOU-HUNTING.

To determine accurately the geographical distribution of an animal of such wandering habits as the caribou, or American reindeer (*Cervus tarandus*—Linn.; Rangifer Caribou—Audubon and Bachman), is extremely difficult. Every few years make a change. One year finds the species receding from haunts previously occupied and encroaching upon grounds hitherto unfrequented; and in some districts, from various causes, we find them exterminated.

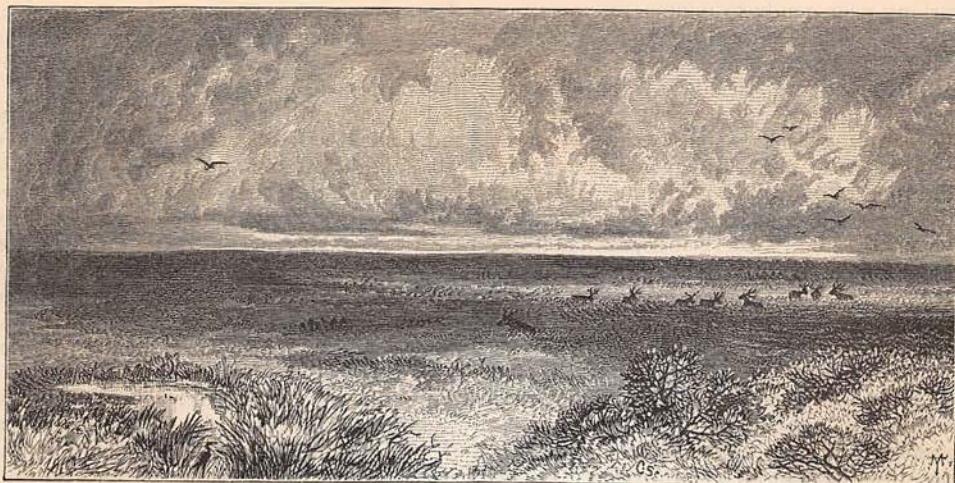
I may say, however, that the caribou largely inhabits Labrador and Newfoundland, still exists in considerable numbers in the province of New Brunswick, in the wilderness regions of the Restigouché, in the country watered by the upper southwest branch of the Miramichi, also on Cairns River—another branch of the Miramichi. He is also abundant at the headwaters of Green River, in the county of Madawaska. In Queens County, he is found at head of Grand Lake, Salmon River. In Kent County he is again met with on the Kishanaguak and Kishanaguaksis, also frequently on the Bathurst road, between Bathurst and Chatham. A few years ago the animals were quite numerous in Charlotte County, and are still occasionally met with. In the adjoining province of Nova Scotia their numbers are gradually decreasing, their strongholds at present being confined to the Cobequid Mountains and the uplands of Cape Breton. Going westward and south of the St. Lawrence, the caribou is again met with in Rimouski, his haunts extending southward along the borders of the state of Maine and the country south of the city of Quebec to New Hampshire. The moose is found with him all through this district, and also the Virginia deer in its southern part. North of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence, the caribou ranges all through the vast forest regions as far as the southern limits of Hudson's Bay, and is abundant in the north-west territories, as far as the McKenzie River, and is also found inhabiting the high lands of British Columbia.

In the state of Maine they are met with in tolerable abundance, and if the existing game-laws are strictly enforced, we may hope that their numbers will not be diminished. In the wilderness tracts of that state there are vast stretches of barrens, amply provided with the reindeer lichen

and interspersed with innumerable lakes and uplands, constituting a country admirably adapted to the habits of the caribou. It has been said that the caribou extends along the border west of Lake Superior to the Pacific, but as late as 1874 none were found along the border of Dakota and Montana. If the species reaches the wooded region at and west of the Rocky Mountains, its presence does not seem to be well attested. It is, however, said to occur in Washington Territory, but I may add that a competent authority doubts the existence of the caribou in the United States west of the Red River of the North. Within the last year, the presence of the caribou in Minnesota and Wisconsin has been authenticated.

The prevailing color of the caribou is a dark fawn inclining to gray, darkest at the tips of the hairs, on the sides, ears, face, and outside of the legs, and fading to almost pure white on the neck and throat. The under part of the body and tail is white, and a ring of white encircles the legs just above the hoof. Some specimens have a light spot on the shoulders, and a black patch on the mouth. It is not uncommon to find aged and full-grown animals adorned with a flowing mane, which adds greatly to the grace and beauty of their appearance. In midwinter, I have noticed departures from the above description, the coats of some animals inclining more to light gray, and in others one-half of the body was very light gray, and the other half much darker. In particular, I remember having killed a doe of extraordinary size and beauty of form, whose general color was an exceedingly rich dark brown, and entirely different from that of any other caribou in the herd.

The heads and antlers of the caribou present much diversity of form, and seldom are any two found alike. In the same herd I have seen heads very like that of a two-year-old colt, then again, others had pronounced Roman noses, the whole head appearing much longer. In some instances, the palmation extends throughout the horns, while in others, such as the Labrador caribou, it is often confined to the tines at the top of the horn, the main stem being nearly round. Again, we find in the caribou inhabiting Newfoundland, horns of very great size, perfect in palmation, and in many cases having both brow antlers developed.



CARIBOU BARRENS.

The construction of the caribou's hoof differs from that of any other animal of the deer tribe, and is wonderfully adapted to the services it is required to perform, and enables the animal to travel in deep snows, over frozen lakes and icy crusts, when the moose and deer are confined to their yards, and at the mercy of their foes. Toward the end of the season the frog begins to be absorbed, and in the month of December is entirely so,—at the same time the hoof expands and becomes concave, with sharp and very hard shell-like edges. A full-grown caribou stands nearly five feet at the shoulder, and weighs from four hundred to four hundred and fifty pounds.

The animal is very compact in form, possessed of great speed and endurance, and is a very Ishmaelite in its wandering habits; changing, as the pest of flies draws near, from the low-lying swamps and woods where its principal article of diet, the *Cladonia rangiferina*, or reindeer lichen, abounds, to the highest mountain fastnesses; then again as the cold nights give warning of the changing season, descending to the plains.

The rutting season begins early in the month of September, the antlers then have attained their full growth and the animals engage in fierce conflicts, similar to those indulged in by the moose, and frequently with as tragic an ending. The does bring forth one, and sometimes two, fawns in the month of May; and bucks, does, and the young, herd together in numbers varying from nine or ten individuals to several hundreds.

Horns are common to both sexes, but the horns of the bucks are seldom carried later than the month of December, while the does

carry theirs all winter, and use them to defend the fawns against the attacks of the bucks. Both sexes use their hoofs to clear away the snow in searching for mosses on the barrens. In their biennial migrations, they form well-defined tracks or paths, along which the herds travel in Indian file. I have often studied their habits on the extensive caribou barrens between New River and the head of Lake Utopia, in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. These barrens are about sixteen miles in extent, and marked with well-defined trails, over which the animals were constantly passing and re-passing, here and there spending a day where the lichens afforded good living, then away again on their never-ending wanderings.

A friend of mine, who visited Newfoundland on an exploring expedition, informs me that there the caribou holds almost exclusive domain over an unbroken wilderness of nearly thirty thousand square miles, in a country wonderfully adapted to his habits, and bountifully supplied with his favorite food—the reindeer lichen.

The caribou is possessed of much curiosity, and does not readily take alarm at what he sees. Where his haunts have been unmolested, he will unconcernedly trot up within range of the rifle. I am inclined to believe that a great deal of this apparent fearlessness is due to defective vision. If this is so, he is compensated by having a marvelous gift of scent, quite equal, if not superior, to that of the moose. And well for the caribou that he is thus gifted. The wolf follows the herds throughout all their wanderings. On the plains or on the hills, where the poor caribou retire to rear their young, he is constantly

lurking near, ready to pounce on any straggler, or—if in sufficient numbers—to boldly attack the herd.

The woodland caribou is very swift, and cunning in devices to escape his pursuers; his gait is a long swinging trot, which he performs with his head erect and scut up, and there is no animal of the deer tribe that affords better sport or more delicious food when captured. The wandering habits of the caribou make it very uncertain where one will fall in with him, even in his accustomed and well-known haunts. When once started, the chase is sure to be a long one, and its results doubtful,—in fact so much so that an old hunter seldom follows up a retreating herd, but resorts to strategy and tries to head them off, or at once proceeds by the shortest way to some other barren in hopes of finding them there.

It seems to be a mooted question, whether the barren-ground caribou (*R. Groenlandicus*) found inhabiting the Arctic regions and shores of Hudson's Bay, is another species, or only a variety of the woodland caribou. The barren-ground caribou is a much smaller animal, and seldom exceeds one hundred and fifty pounds weight, while large specimens of the woodland caribou weigh nearly five hundred pounds.

The caribou is very fond of the water, is a capital swimmer, and in jumping he is more than the equal of any other deer. His adventurous disposition, no doubt, in some degree influences the geographical distribution of the species. In the month of December, 1877, a caribou was discovered

floating out to sea on a cake of ice near Dalhousie, on the Restigouché River in New Brunswick, and was captured alive by some men who put off to him in a boat.

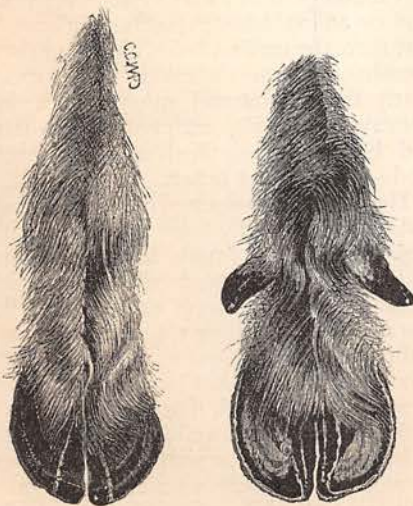
It is said that in very severe seasons, large numbers of caribou cross from Labrador to Newfoundland on the ice. His admirably constructed hoof, with its sharp, shell-like, cutting edges, enables him to cross the icy floes; when traveling in deep snow, its lateral expansion prevents him from sinking. The hoof figured in this paper is drawn from nature, and measures fourteen inches in circumference, five inches in diameter, and has a lateral spread of ten inches.

At one time the Indians were as great adepts at calling the woodland caribou, as they are in the present day in deluding the moose. My Indian friend Sebatis is the only Indian I know who can imitate the calls of the caribou, and he has for a long time given up this manner of hunting. He informs me that, from being so much hunted and molested in their haunts, the caribou have become much more timid and wary even during the rutting season, and also seem to be much more critical of the sounds produced by the birch-bark call, and consequently very seldom respond thereto.

The quiet gray color of the caribou is well adapted to conceal his presence from the hunter, and it requires an educated eye to pick out his form on the heathy barren, where everything assimilates to him in color, and were it not for occasional effects of light disclosing his position, the hunter might frequently pass within easy shot without seeing him. The Indians are so well aware of this, that they always approach a barren with extreme caution, always traveling down wind, and never disconcerted if game is not sighted at once. Nor is the case improved when one comes to hunt for them in the forest; there, the gray tree-trunks and tangled undergrowth make it extremely difficult to see them.

The caribou, whatever may be his need for haste, seldom bounds or gallops except for a few jumps when first he spies his enemy, and then only for an instant, for presently he drops into his accustomed trot, which carries him over the ground with great rapidity, and then no matter how old a hand the hunter may be, nothing but the admirable skill in ventry of his Indian guide will afford him the slightest chance of coming up with the game again.

The indifference or curiosity with regard



WOODLAND CARIBOU HOOFs.

to the noise of fire-arms exhibited by the caribou often stands the hunter in good stead, and affords him a chance for a second shot, should his first prove ineffectual; for it is not uncommon for a herd to stand stock-still on hearing the report of a gun, even when one of their number has fallen a victim thereto. The pause is but for an instant, and the hunter must be quick to take advantage of it, or his chance will be gone before he is aware of it, for, recovering quickly from the shock, or alarm, or whatever it may be, the herd dash off at a rattling pace through the thick timber.

A caribou, if not mortally wounded, will endeavor to keep up with the herd, and will travel a long way without giving out. If near the sea-coast, the wounded animal seeks it to die, and is often thus recovered by the hunter. In such cases, the skill of the Indian again comes in play, and he will follow the track of the wounded animal, readily picking it out from all the others, and seldom failing to run it down. The Indians say that the caribou likes to feed on seaweed, and goes to the coast in the spring and fall of the year for that purpose.

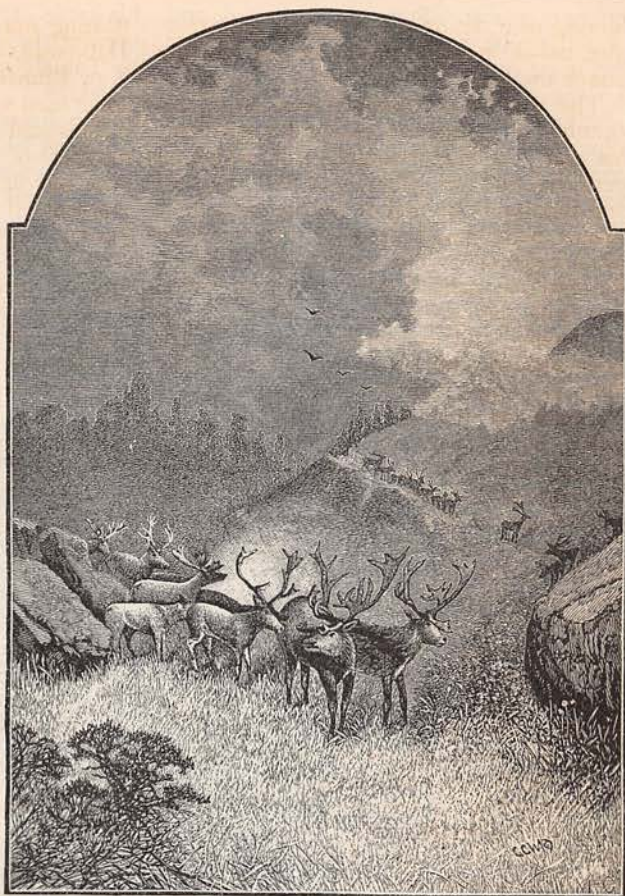
Once upon a time, not so long ago as when "little birds built their nests in old men's beards," but quite long enough to make one regret the days when caribou were plenty on all the barrens in Charlotte County, New Brunswick, the writer, in company with his Indian friend Sebatiss, and an old Indian named Tomah, traveled all day in pursuit of a herd of caribou, and, after losing much time lying in ambush behind a big boulder, were suddenly overtaken by night-fall, which, in the short November days, shuts down without warning.

"How far to camp, Sebatiss?" I inquired.

"Well, s'pose daylight, about five miles; but so dark now, you see makes it good deal further."

"Can you find the camp?"

"Find 'im camp? Sartin, but take good while, so dark, can't see nothin' 'tall, tum-



CARIBOU MIGRATING.

ble down good deal, you see, so many win'falls, then may be get in swamp besides."

Had daylight given us the opportunity of selecting a camping-place, we could not have found a spot better suited to our purpose than the grove of grand old firs and hemlocks that hemmed us in on every side and sheltered us with broad, spreading branches. In front we had a forest lake, on the outskirts of our stronghold a plentiful supply of hard wood stood ready for the ax which Tomah was just releasing from its cover of leather.

The darkness and silence of these old woods were appalling, and as I stood leaning on the old tree against which we had piled our rifles, I gladly welcomed the quick strokes of Tomah's ax, that was already dealing death-blows to the birches and maples.

Sebatiss had gone off in search of dry wood to start the fire. I had not heard him return, and was watching a curious object moving about in the gloom with something like the

actions of a bear. Presently it stopped, and seemed to be squatting on its haunches; then there came a curious, crackling sound, like the crunching of bones; then a faint light, gradually increasing in brightness and volume until the surroundings began to take form, and long shadows crept stealthily past me, and the object which I had mistaken for a bear arose upon his legs, and quietly observed:

"Pretty good fire by-em-by, when Tomah fetch dry hard wood;" then tramped off to assist Tomah in carrying in the fire-wood.

his kettle of birch-bark, and served in little cups of the same material deftly fashioned by Tomah, and held together by splints of wood.

The frosts of winter had not yet sealed the forest lakes, and the night was unusually mild,—so much so, indeed, that Sebatis predicted a sudden change ere long.

During lulls in the talk, I fancied that I heard the notes of a bird; but did not allude to it, as the sound might have been caused by steam escaping from one of the huge logs piled on the fire.



CARIBOU ATTACKED BY WOLF.

"Now, then, best cook supper first," said Sebatis; "then make 'im bough bed; too hungry now."

"All right, Sebatis; but how are you going to boil the water for the tea?"

"Well, sartin we don't have no kettle: have boil 'im water in birch-bark; make kin' of box, you see."

"I don't believe you can do it."

"You don't 'lieve it? Well, by t'unders, I show you pretty quick when Tomah fetch bark."

And show me he did; and better tea I never tasted than that brewed by Sebatis in

"Just so I told you," remarked Sebatis, as he arose to get a light for his pipe, "big snow-storm comin'."

"Why do you think so, Sebatis?"

"I hear 'im wa-be-pe singin' just now; that always sign storm comin'."

"Is wa-be-pe a bird?"

"Yes, wa-be-pe little bird; got kin' of small little spots all over."

"Does it sing at night?"

"Always, sings best when moonlight, then he sing once every hour all night; s'pose he sing dark night; sign storm comin'."



BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU.

"Is he like any of the birds that were about the camp yesterday?"

"No, he don't 'long here 't all, only summer time; this time year most always gone away warm country somewheres; s'pose he don't go pretty quick, sartin get froze."

"S'pose all han's stop talkin', may be chance hear wa-be-pe again," said Tomah.

Taking up a position far enough away to get rid of the noise made by the fire, I waited patiently for wa-be-pe. After listening intently for a few moments, I heard four inexpressibly mournful bell-like notes, uttered with marked distinctness, and surprisingly like the first four notes of "Auld lang syne." On reflection I became impressed with the idea that the notes of this bird were exactly like the first notes of the song of the white-throated finch, and after consultation with Sebatis, I was convinced that I had placed the nocturnal songster correctly. At the first dawn of day, after tightening our belts a hole or two, by way of breakfast, as the Indians facetiously remarked, we started to pick up the trail of the caribou. During the night several inches of light snow had fallen, and the storm still continued.

"Which way, Sebatis?"

"Try back on big barren, then s'pose we don't find 'im fresh track, go right camp 'fore snow gets too deep; you see we don't have no snow-shoes, make it pretty hard walkin' by-em-by."

The storm was increasing every moment, and the light snow drifting rapidly before the rising wind, as tramping in Indian file we approached the confines of the big barren. The drift was so heavy on the barren that it was hard work to make headway against it, and I had just turned to regain my wind, when I heard Tomah ejaculate in Indian,—

"Megahlip! Chin-e-ga-bo!" (Caribou—be careful.)

The words were hardly spoken, when down the wind came a herd of caribou, trotting at a terrific pace, with head and scut up, and sending the snow in clouds on every side. I tried to get a shot, but was not quick enough. "Bang!" to right of me—"Bang!" to left of me, from the smoothbores of Sebatis and Tomah, and all is smoke and drifting snow, out of which I get a glimpse of a head or horns, then the full figure of a fast-trotting caribou, and last a noble buck wildly plunging in the flying *poudre*—a victim to the fire of the Indians.

"Come, Tomah, be quick help butcher caribou; no time lose gettin' camp, by-em-by, pretty hard chance get there storm so heavy you see," said Sebatis as he stripped off the caribou's hide.

In a few moments, the venison intended for the camp was cut, apportioned into loads, and the rest of the animal securely *cachéd*, to be brought in when wanted. Then we hastened to get off the barren and



CARIBOU FLOATING OUT TO SEA ON A CAKE OF ICE.

into the shelter of the woods, where we could draw a free breath unoppressed by the terrible drift.

As the storm promised to be very heavy, we lost no time in gaining the protection of our camp.

"Now then," said Sebatis, as he dropped his load on arriving at camp, "all han's get fire-wood ready, stan' big snow-storms, by t'unders, pretty lucky, we get 'im that caribou."

"Who kill 'im that caribou?" inquired Tomah, "two shots fired."

I had been dreading this for some time, but Sebatis cleverly evaded the question, and prevented the endless discussion sure to follow, by facetiously replying:

"Well, I guess bullet kill 'im, sartin."

Fortunately, in the hurry of skinning the caribou and cutting up the venison, they either forgot, or had not time to examine whether there was more than one bullet-hole in the skin, and as the latter, probably, would not be recovered until we were on the home trail, I flattered myself that the discussion would not be revived. However, in this I was mistaken, as will be seen in the sequel.

In appearance, no two men could differ more widely than my two henchmen. Sebatis stood six feet and two inches in his moccasins, had clear-cut features, and was possessed of infinite patience and good humor. Under severe provocation his temper was apt to be short, but it was over

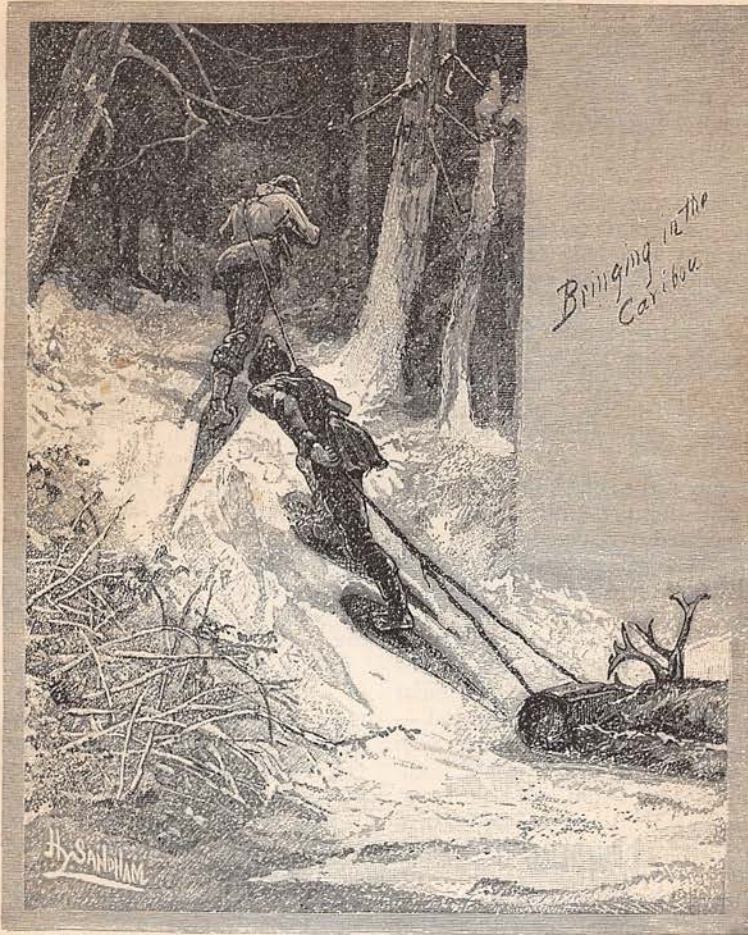
quickly, and he never sulked. Tomah was very short in stature, bow-legged, and had a countenance terrible to look upon, the fierce expression of his restless eyes indicating unmistakably his savage ancestry; and yet, withal, he was not an ill-tempered man, and the deep tragic tones in which he spoke, even when saying the most commonplace things, made some of his utterances irresistibly comical. His friendship for Sebatis was of long standing, and they got on very well together, except when a dispute arose about the shooting of a moose or caribou; my ingenuity was taxed, at such times, to prevent a fight. Soon their united efforts as ax-men, with my aid in carrying in, accumulated such a goodly pile of hard wood, as enabled us to laugh at the howling storm.

"Sartin I think, no chance hunt 'im, caribou to-morrow, always bad snow-shoein' when snow so light," said Sebatis, as he shook off the snow from his clothes and prepared to cook our dinner of fat caribou steaks.

"Sebatis, where are our little friends the birds? I haven't seen one since our return to camp."

"Well, you see, hide somewhere when storm so heavy. S'pose sunshine, then you see 'im comin' again: ah-mon-a-tuk (cross-bill), kich-e-ge-gelas (chickadee), ump-kanusis (moose-bird), an' ki-ha-neas (red-poll linnet)."

Sebatis had unbounded curiosity about



the manners and customs of other nations, and was diligent in seeking information. On one of my hunting excursions, I was accompanied by a friend who had recently returned from the East Indies, and in one of the talks over the camp-fire he related, whether in jest or earnest I know not, that it was a custom of one of the religious sects of India to place their aged and infirm people in casks supplied with a small quantity of food, and then to set them adrift. Sebatias listened eagerly until my friend finished his story, and then emphatically remarked:

"By t'unders! S'pose by-em-by when I get old man, somebody try put me in barrel, I make 'im pretty good fight first."

Long afterward, when it had all passed from my memory, Sebatias astonished me by remarking, with a quiet chuckle, on observing that my friend Colonel W. was pretty stiff after his first day's tramp in the woods:

"You see 'im? Gettin' pretty old. By-em-by somebody have put 'im in barrel."

Early next morning Tomah was absent, and I asked Sebatias where he was.

"Gone away somewhere 'bout daylight," he replied; "try find 'im sign caribou, may be."

At noon Tomah marched into camp, bringing with him, to my horror, the head and skin of the caribou slain the previous day.

"Who kill 'im this caribou? Only one ball-hole in skin!" he said, defiantly and in his deepest bass, as he deposited his spoils on the snow.

"I fire right on his head," said Sebatias, springing to his feet.

"Well, you miss him, sartin. Bullet strike 'im on ribs jus' where I fire," rejoined Tomah.

"Sartin you tell 'im big lie. I don't miss

'im 'tall," returned Sebatis, fiercely, as he unrolled the skin to examine for himself. His search disclosed but one bullet-hole, and that was on the side, just as Tomah stated.

After carefully examining the skin, I turned my attention to the head, and was about to give up in despair, when I observed that one of the tines had been completely carried away close to the main stem.

"Here's where your ball struck," I said to Sebatis, pointing out the recent fracture on the horn.

"Sartin, that's true," said Sebatis. "I know I didn't miss 'im 'tall."

"Always Sebatis come out pretty well. S'pose nobody else fire, sartin no caribou-steak breakfast this mornin'," growled Tomah.

In the afternoon the sun shone out bright and warm, and our pert little friends the birds shyly renewed our acquaintance. The tameness of these forest birds is ever a source of delight to me. It is quite common to see cross-bills, pine-finches, chickadees and red-polls all picking up crumbs together at one's feet, and often after a few days' acquaintance they become so familiar that they will accept food from the hand,—bread-crumbs, bits of raw meat, and even salt pork is readily accepted. In fact, nothing seems to come amiss to the little beauties, and they evidently enjoy the change from the dry cones and buds which form the staple of their winter diet.

It seems ungrateful to single out any one bird where all are so tame, but I think that I must give the palm in this respect to my

favorite—little black-cap. The naturalists give this little bird a dreadful character, and say of him that he smashes in the skulls of other little birds and eats their brains. I shall always consider it a vile slander, Audubon and all the rest of them to the contrary, notwithstanding. These charming little birds are seldom seen except in the depths of the forests; at rare intervals they come out to the clearings, but their homes are in the forest. In order to give an idea of the tameness of these birds I may mention that at this moment as I write a cedar-bird is begging to be taken on my finger and held up to my face so that he may indulge in his pet occupation of preening my mustache, and a red-poll linnet is industriously strewing the floor with my pencils and paper, and if scolded flies away uttering his plaintive call, "Sweet-Willie!"

At night as we sat over the camp-fire smoking our pipes, we heard a horrid screech in the forest.

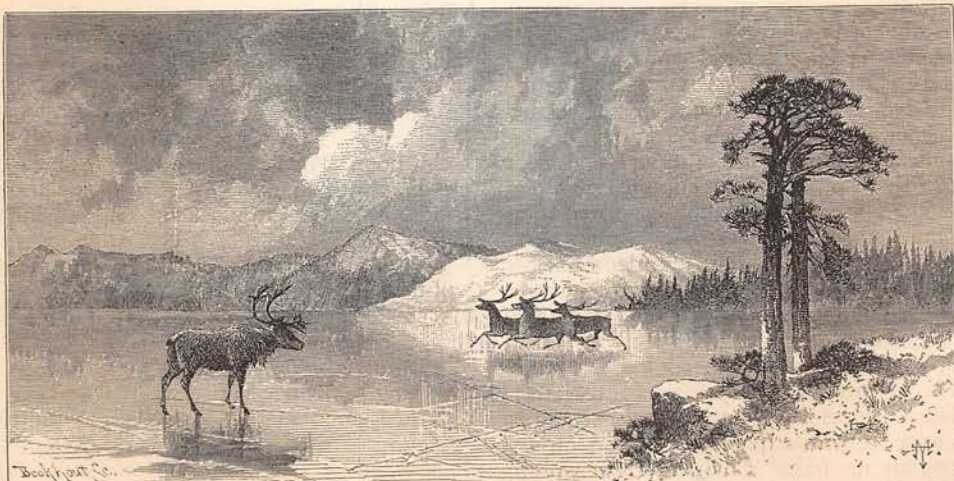
"Up-we-pe-se-kin (lynx) chasin' rabbits," said Tomah, in sepulchral tones, between the whiffs of his pipe.

"You see," said Sebatis, in explanation of Tomah's remark, "when up-we-pe-se-kin make noise like that, scar' 'im rabbit so bad he jump right out sight in deep snow, then you see up-we-pe-se-kin dig him out an' have pretty good supper."

Just as I was turning out next morning, Sebatis walked into camp, and said:

"Sartin caribou very hungry this mornin'; I find plenty places where he eat 'im off old men's beards, close up."

The "old men's beards" referred to by



CARIBOU CROSSING A FROZEN LAKE.



"MEGAHLIP! CHIN-E-GA-BO."

Sebatis is the long, trailing moss which hangs from the trees and bushes, and is a favorite food of the caribou.

"What kind of snow-shoeing to-day, Sebatis?"

"Just right; sun pack'im down snow good deal; very good chance snow-shoein' now."

Tomah had breakfast ready, and in a few moments moccasins and snow-shoes were the order of the day.

"Which way, Sebatis?"

"Try 'im big barren again."

"Sartin, best go little barren first," said Tomah; "s'pose we don't find 'im caribou, then try 'im big barren."

"May be Tomah right," said Sebatis; "little barren nearest,—only 'bout two miles,—an' very good ground fin' caribou."

Just enough snow had fallen to make good snow-shoeing; in fact, we could have got on without snow-shoes, but for the drifts and swampy parts of the barrens, over which the broad snow-shoes bore us safely. Fortunately for our comfort, the high wind that prevailed prevented the snow lodging in the spreading boughs of the coniferous trees, and we escaped the smothering often experienced from avalanches of snow immediately after a snow-storm. These avalanches are one of the most disagreeable things encountered in the forest in winter. Sometimes, as the hunter tries to force his way under the pendent boughs of a large fir-tree, the accumulated snow will be discharged upon his head, getting down his neck if

his hood is not up, wetting the locks and barrels of his gun, and piling up on his snow-shoes in such a manner as to hold him prisoner for the time; and often, in trying to work clear, he gets his snow-shoes tangled and takes a header into the snow, and his misery is complete. Moreover, the chances are ten to one that, while he is helplessly floundering in the snow, he hears the sharp crack of his comrade's rifle, who has stolen a march on him and is up with the game; and then good-bye to any sport that day, for even if he could get his gun dry and serviceable again, his nerves are so unstrung that he could not hit the side of a house, much less the swift caribou.

On our way to the barren we saw several fresh tracks of caribou, but had not discovered their beds, as the Indians term the depressions in the snow made by the caribou when lying down to rest. After inspecting indications of that kind, the Indian can form a correct opinion of the time elapsed since the beds were occupied, and is guided thereby in his decision as to whether it is wise to follow up the tracks leading therefrom.

Silent as mutes, we tramped along in Indian file; but if the Indians did not use their tongues, their eyes were not idle, and the slightest caribou sign was instantly discovered and examined. We had nearly reached the barren, without finding any fresh tracks, and I was getting a little impatient, and sorry that we had not gone to the big

barren, as first suggested by Sebatis, as it was in that direction he saw the places where the caribou had cropped off the "old men's beards."



FOREST BIRDS.

"Little barren handy now," said Sebatis with his usual abruptness.

"Where is Tomah?" I inquired, having just discovered the absence of that worthy.

"Where's Tomah, sure enough?" echoed Sebatis. "I don't miss him myself only just now."

He had vanished like a "spirit of eld," and as where he had gone, or on what errand was past finding out, we made our way quietly to the edge of the barren without him.

Long and earnestly Sebatis scanned the barren with his searching gaze; then ventured out a few paces, stopped suddenly, and beckoned me to him.

"Hist, don't make noise," he whispered. "Caribou somewhere on this barren; you see 'im track just 'longside big rock, then little ways 'head you see 'im tracks go everywhere; must be nine, may be ten caribou go that way."

"Are they fresh tracks?"

"We look by-em-by; find out which way wind first. By t'unders we got wrong end barren."

"What do you mean?"

"Wind blow straight down barren; s'pose we try hunt 'im caribou, sartin he smell us."

"Well, what had we better do?"

"Best hide 'im somewheres on barren."

"There's a clump of firs nearly in the middle of the barren, I should think that a good place."

"We go try 'im; you see caribou movin' all time; may be by-em-by comin' back on his tracks, then very good chance."

The barren was about three miles long and over one mile wide, sprinkled with groups of fir-trees, and the usual supply of alders, bowlders, and old dead tree-trunks. Lurking about in our place of concealment was tedious in the extreme, and I was about to beguile the time with a smoke, but remembered in time the terrible rating old Tomah got from Sebatis when smoking, for we were in ambush behind the big bowlder.

Just then we heard the boom of a gun.

"By t'unders that's old Tomah sartin, so cunnin' you see, just like fox; he find out wind wrong way then he go round on woods, an' come out other end barren."

"Do you think he has turned the caribou back this way?"

"Sartin, that just reason he go round woods, so cunnin' you see, that old Tomah."

We now moved out of our shelter a little so as to command a better view of the barren.

"Do you see any caribou, Sebatis?"

"No, don't see nothin' 't all."

I was looking intently, and fancied that I saw the form of a caribou disappearing behind a bunch of alders. Sebatis saw him at the same moment, and several others that I failed to detect.

"By t'unders!" he whispered, "you see 'im, one, two, five caribou, just goin' behin' bushes up there; good chance now, s'pose don't make 'im noise."

The good chance was so long in coming that I was well-nigh in despair. Sebatis had crossed to another clump of bushes, and being rid of him I was just about to resort to my pipe when I heard the peculiar and unmistakable castanet sound caused by the split hoof of the caribou striking together as he recovered in his stride, and looking out on the barren I saw five caribou, trotting full speed, almost abreast of me and not over forty yards distant. They raised such clouds of snow that I could only see their heads and occasionally their shoulders, but as it was my only chance I fired at the second caribou in the herd, and unfortunately only wounded him. He tried to keep up with the herd, but they soon distanced him and I was hurrying on in pursuit when "bang!" goes Sebatis's gun from behind some bushes and down goes my caribou.

"I wounded that caribou, Sebatis; there were four others ahead of him."

"Sartin that's too bad. I don't see 'im 'tall, only this one. You see I been look other side bushes, and when I hear gun I run this way; then I see caribou kin' of limpin', you see, an' I think may be get away, so best shoot 'im more."

"Who kill 'im that caribou? Two guns fire, on'y one caribou dead," said a voice over my shoulder in tones that could be none other than those of Tomah.

"Two bullets kill 'im that caribou sartin this time," said Sebatis, pointing to two bullet-holes in the body of the poor caribou.

"Where have you been, Tomah? We thought you were lost."

"No, not lost. When I fin' out wind wrong way then I go in woods an' come out head barren; turn 'im caribou."

"Did you get a shot at them?"

"Sartin, I kill 'im caribou."

"How many did you see?"

"'Bout t'irteen. Five come this way, rest gone away somewhere, may be big barren. Sartin plenty caribou big barren to-morrow."

"Why do you say to-morrow?"

"'Cause caribou all travelin' to-day. I see 'im tracks go everywhere, an' plenty sign bite 'im moss, besides."

We *cached* the caribou killed by Sebatis and I, then tramped to the head of the barren and performed a like office for the one killed by Tomah,—a two-year-old buck,—then to camp as it was too late in the day to try the big barren.

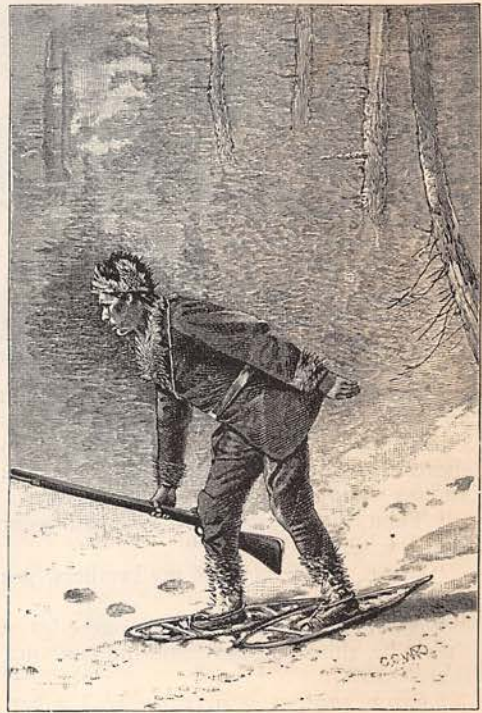
"Now," said Sebatis, after dinner and the invariable pipes, "Tomah an' me go hunt 'im wood an' bark, make 'im tobaugan, then we haul 'im caribou camp. Keep 'im safe, you see."

During the night there was a fall of snow which made the snow-shoeing heavy. However, we determined to try the big barren; and a weary day we had of it, tramping over the soft snow, which accumulated on the front of the snow-shoe and required quite an effort to throw it off. All traces of the old tracks were obliterated, and we did not see a fresh track that day, although we searched the greater part of the barren, being careful to disturb the snow as little as possible, as a snow-shoe trail is almost certain to frighten off a herd of caribou.

After patient watching and manifold observations obtained by climbing trees, the Indians at length, in despair, gave up hunting and took to their pipes. Although as much disappointed as they were, I well knew that it would be futile to urge them on to

hunt, until they recovered their spirits. Like two graven images they sat puffing away at their pipes, and to all appearance might have continued so doing until the crack of doom, but for an opportune crash as of breaking branches, followed by a resounding fall that came from the forest, a little to the right of our position; and although they were well aware of the cause of the noise—a lodged tree suddenly released by the branches giving way, and letting it fall to the ground—it had the effect of waking them up and loosening their tongues.

"Sundown come pretty quick now; best go camp," said Sebatis.



"SEH-TA-GA-BO!"

"Best go camp," echoed Tomah.

And go to camp we did in double-quick time, arriving just as darkness was closing in.

There were several changes of weather during the night, first a drizzling rain, then a sharp frost, followed by more snow.

"Better luck to-day," said Sebatis. "I dreamin' last night, see 'im plenty caribou."

"John very good han' dreamin'; I like see 'im fin' caribou first, then I 'lieve him," said Tomah.

"Why does Tomah call you John?" I asked Sebatis.

"Well, you see, I got t'ree—four—names, John Baptist Joseph, that's my name."

"Dreamin' so hard he forgot his name," said Tomah, "he got 'nother name 'sides, Saint John Baptist Joseph, that's his name."

"Sartin, that's true," said Sebatis; "now, I 'member, I tell you all 'bout it—used to

or eighteen inches, and no matter how familiar one may be with it, every fresh experience excites the same apprehension.

I had just been let down in that way, when my attention was attracted by Sebatis, and he beckoned me to where he and Tomah were examining something.



A SHOT FROM TOMAH.

be my name just same Tomah tell, well, you see, that pretty long name, then make 'im shorter, call 'im Saint Baptist, then make 'im shorter 'gain, call 'im Sebatis, s'pose, make 'im any shorter, by-em-by, name all gone."

"Then, your surname—I mean your family name—is Joseph?"

"Sartin, my father, all my brothers, got same name, Joseph."

"Now, Sebatis got fix 'im his name 'gain, s'pose he show us where find 'im caribou," said Tomah.

"Sartin, snow most over, we go big barren 'gain."

The snow was greatly in our favor, as just enough had fallen to enable us to walk noiselessly on the crust.

A very strange sensation is often experienced by the hunter as he walks unconcernedly on his way, after the formation of a crust; at first he hears a peculiar creaking sound, and fancies that the snow is moving under him, then the creaking becomes louder, and is accompanied by a muffled, rumbling noise, and suddenly the snow under and around him sinks, and he fears that he is about to fall into an abyss. The snow in reality seldom settles over one foot

"Eight caribou all sleep here last night," he said, pointing to a number of depressions in the snow.

"How long since they started, Sebatis?"

"Start only little while, you see tracks so fresh. Always good time hunt 'im when first started, 'cause bite 'im moss an' feedin', then he don't go fast 'tall."

"Best take 'im off snow-shoes an' walk in caribou tracks," said Tomah.

"Sartin that best, then don't make no noise," said Sebatis.

This mode of traveling is anything but agreeable, but as the snow was not very deep it was greatly preferable to what I have often experienced on other occasions, when one would sink half-way to the knees at every step, and woe betide him if he made a false step!

"Caribou stop here feedin' little while," said Sebatis, pointing to some newly cropped "old men's beard."

"Caribou go two ways," said Tomah, who was a little in advance.

The herd had separated, three caribou going toward the big barren and five off in another direction. As it promised a better chance for game I imitated the tactics of the

caribou and divided our party, taking Sebatis with me on the track of the five and sending Tomah off after the others.

Plodding along in the foot-holes of the caribou was very leg-tiring, but Sebatis kept on at a trot until brought to a stand by some very fresh sign.

"Caribou bite 'im moss here only 'bout t'ree minutes ago; must be handy somewhere, best put 'im on snow-shoes again, may be have run pretty quick by-em-by."

After putting on his snow-shoes, Sebatis struck out in a direction nearly parallel to the caribou trail, and we set off at a very much quicker gait.

We were just descending a slight declivity when Sebatis waved his hand to me, exclaiming at the same time;

"Seh-ta-ga-bo!" (Keep back.)

At the word I dropped in my tracks and awaited further orders. Twice he raised his gun as if to fire, then lowered the muzzle and beckoned me to him.

"What is it all about? Do you see the caribou?" I whispered.

"Sartin, see 'im all five walkin' in woods just little ways 'head. You look same way I point, by-em-by you see 'im."

We had just entered a glade of fir-trees, and between the tree-trunks I caught a glimpse of what I supposed to be a lake, but did not discover any caribou.

"Hist! there goes caribou, there goes 'nother one—two—t'ree more, you see 'im? Quick, fire!"

Bang! goes my rifle at an indistinct form moving past the tree-trunks some thirty yards distant.

"You kill 'im, sartin," Sebatis whispered. "I see 'im give big jump, then he don't move 'tall."

"Are the other's gone?"

"No, scared pretty bad; stan' listenin' somewheres. By t'unders!—look, you see 'im caribou move on small bushes right on lake—fire!"

"Blaze away, Sebatis. I don't see them, and they will be off sure if you wait for me."

Bang! goes his smooth-bore with a roar that made me as deaf as an adder for the moment.

"Did you kill him?"

"May be so. Not sure, you see, so much smoke."

We hastened to the spot and found my caribou—a large buck—lying dead in his tracks. A little further on, Sebatis found a bloody trail leading down to the lake, and about one hundred yards from the shore, we saw the other caribou—a fine doe—

vainly struggling to regain her feet on our approach.

At the sight, I vowed that I would break my gun and never hunt again, until—

"Here, Sebatis, take my rifle, and finish your work quickly."

"How far is it to the camp?"

"Little mor'n four miles. I go get tobaugan, an' bring some dinner. S'pose you stop here?"

"Yes. Be as quick as you can."

"Sartin, I go pretty quick. You see snow-in' again. By-em-by heavy storm, may be."

True to his promise, Sebatis returned inside of a couple of hours. With appetites born of the woods, we dispatched our lunch. Then to work to get our game to camp. The angry gusts of wind southing through the lofty branches of the fir-trees, and driving the fast-falling snow into clouds of impalpable *poudre*, warned us to hasten our packing.

"Ready, now, no time spare. By-em-by storm so heavy, hard chance find 'im camp," said Sebatis. He had fastened one end of a serviceable rope of withes to the tobaugan, passed part of it over his shoulder and gave me the other end to pass over mine, and away we tramped.

These sudden winter storms possess the magic power of investing the hunter with an indefinable terror. In a very short time all land-marks are obliterated and the air filled with a blinding *poudre*. Now and then the snow settles under him with a crash, and he feels as if there was nothing real or substantial around him. The bewildering, drifting *poudre* is everywhere, and he is blinded and buffeted by it in such a manner as calls for the instant exertion of all his courage to carry him safely through.

"By t'unders! Never so glad get camp all my life. So tired, you see storm so heavy," said Sebatis, as we rested before the camp-fire after our fearful four-mile tramp from the lake.

The click of approaching snow-shoes announced the return of Tomah.

"Who kill 'im that cari—"

Just then he saw that there were two dead caribou, and, without another syllable, he shook the snow from his clothes and sat down by the fire.

NOTE.—The author's thanks are due to Dr. Elliott Coues, U. S. A., for information regarding the geographical distribution of the caribou in the United States, and to Professor S. F. Baird of the Smithsonian Institute for a photograph of the barren-ground caribou.