

The Sportsman Tourist.

IN MINNESOTA WILDS.

L—A Race With a Prairie Fire.

"Game of all kinds abounds here. Moose, elk, caribou, deer, black and brown bear, chickens, partridges, pintail grouse, rabbits, wolves, fox, skunk, martin, fisher, lynx, otter, mink, musk rats, wolverines, geese, ducks, crane, snipe and fish, bear, and elk come into my garden." Thus wrote the guide who was to take me into the wilderness of Northern Minnesota. Dear reader you have probably been written to just the same way, and you have probably been preyed upon just the same way. We are all wiser the next time.

However, the lure proved too much for me, and on Oct. 6 I started for this "game paradise" over the B. & O. R. R. to Chicago, thence to St. Paul via the W. C. R. R. and over the G. N. R. R. to my destination. In mentioning these railroads, I desire to extend my hearty thanks for the many courtesies shown me and my dogs, neither road making any charge for transporting my dogs and outfit from Philadelphia to Stephen, Minn. I found the train hands most kind and obliging, and especially were they good to my dogs. After leaving the train we had to stage it forty miles across the prairie in the face of a biting wind, the remains of a blizzard which had struck there the day before. It was a long, tedious ride, and I was only too glad when it ended. After leaving the railroad the country is level prairie for thirty miles, but as you go east it becomes broken into ridges and muskegs, and to one never having been in such a country it is a novelty in its way. One can almost lose himself by closing his eyes and turning around. The ridges all look alike, and all appear to run north-east and south-west, with a muskeg sandwiched in between. These muskegs are covered with tall grass and reeds with a bunch of willows thrown in here and there. In many places the reeds are so tall and thick that one can scarcely find his way through them. In the fall of the year the ground is soft and boggy, in places covered with water; in the spring-time they are veritable lakes. There seems to be only a crust of turf in some places and to break through that is to get into quicksands. The country is one massive spring bed to supply the lakes and rivers which abound there. You can dig in almost any place, and strike water at a depth of three feet, and in many places less than one foot. The ground is covered with tiny shells wherever you go, and from the formation of the country one would suppose it had been made during the glacial period. It is one of the most desolate-looking places it was ever my good fortune to visit. Game of all kinds was very scarce there, as the forest and prairie fires had preceded me and done its work most effectually. Apropos of prairie fires, were you ever caught in one? No? then your adventures have not been complete. Tongue or pen cannot describe it. We were camped two days' drive from the ranch, and about eighty-five miles from the railroad on a branch of the Rouseau River, in a big muskeg after ducks and geese. We had noticed the smoke in the distance for a day, and that night retired with some little misgivings that we might be compelled to fight fire before morning; however, we were not disturbed. The next day by noon the fires seemed to be starting in all directions, and we came to the conclusion that it would be safer to break camp and get off the muskeg; in the meantime the smoke from the fire we had noticed the past two days had become dense and black, and was approaching us rapidly. We had expected two gentlemen from Nebraska to join us in this camp, and so became anxious about them, as this particular muskeg is a most treacherous one.

It did not require long to get camp and outfit ready to pull out, and we started in earnest. The wind had freshened and was blowing a gale, and toward us. We had scarcely gone a mile when we noticed what we thought was a camp flying a signal from a pole. Thinking this was the signal of our friends to attract attention, we started for it. The fires were rapidly closing in on us from every quarter. We were completely hemmed in by fire and water. In driving from one was to drive into another. Imagine, if you can, a fire covering an area of twenty miles in semi-circular form on your right, and an impassable river on your left. We drove as rapidly as our horses could go through the thick jungle of grass reeds and willows. When we had gotten within a mile of the supposed camp, we found it to be a log shanty, and the signal was a tattered and torn Stars and Stripes. I don't think I ever revered the nation's flag so much as I did then. It proved a blessing to us, for had we gone in the direction we had first intended we would never have gotten out. About a mile and a half from this shanty to the right was another similar house situated in a small grove of poplars; this we concluded would be the safer of the two places should we be compelled to do battle with the flames.

It was a most fortunate thing for us that we went there, as we found later. Some plowing had been done on one side of the house, but the other three sides were almost unprotected. Going up to the shanty we found one poor, helpless old woman, crippled with the rheumatism so badly that she could scarcely stand; on inquiry we found that she and her daughter and little granddaughter lived there; the daughter and child were away at the river two miles distant fishing, but were expected home at six o'clock. She gladly welcomed our arrival, and invited us to pitch camp there. Promptly at six the daughter returned with her child, and an old man whom she introduced as her father-in-law, Mr. Ripenback, who lived in the shanty from whose roof floated the American flag. He insisted on us all going over to his place as "it was the best place to fight fire." "He had done some mowing and a little plowing during the summer, and it was safe," he said. We hitched the horses to the wagon, which was still partly loaded, and made up our minds that if the fire broke through the thicket about a mile back of the house we would pull out for the Ripenback ranch, thinking of course that would give us ample time to make it.

In the meantime I climbed on top of the shanty to watch the progress of the fire. I shall never forget it. As far as the eye could see was one seething mass of flames, now running along the ground like an enormous

serpent, then suddenly leaping fifty feet in the air into all sorts of shapes and roaring like forty locomotives. I did not realize how fast it was traveling until a few minutes later. Almost before I had time to think it had broken through the thicket and was coming down on us like the wind. Jumping from the roof I gave the alarm, hurried the old man and his daughter-in-law and child off in advance, so that, if necessary, we could pick them up on the road, and rushed in to carry the old lady out and place her in the wagon. This required some little time, for the woman weighed about two hundred and twenty-five pounds and, as we were all light weights, it was a case of tug. By the time we had got her in and had started, the flames were within five hundred yards of us. Then began a race for life with all the odds in favor of the fire should the slightest mishap occur to us. We ran those horses as fast as they could go, yet the fire gained on us slowly, but perceptibly. When we had gone two-thirds of the distance we overhauled those we had sent on ahead and it was only a moment's delay to stop and toss in baby and mother; but when we tried to get the old man in that was different, he wouldn't budge, but insisted that we should go on, that he could take care of himself. He was carrying a grubbing hoe in each hand and a handbox on one arm, a more stubborn old fellow I never met. By the time we had argued with him a minute the fire was within fifty feet of us, and it began to look as though it might be all night with us. There was no alternative but to pull him out, which was done by grasping his right hand and throwing the hoe away and putting spurs to the horse. He was about played out when he reached the shanty, but had he remained on the prairie two minutes longer he never would have gotten out, as the fire was within twenty-five feet of us.

From that time until morning we fought fire with wet carpet and sacking, oftentimes having to stop and put out the fire on each other. One of the most remarkable things about it was that it burned entirely around the camp that we had vacated and did not touch it; and had we remained there we would have been perfectly safe.

Strange to say the natives in that country use more precaution to save their haystacks than their homes and families. It is a common occurrence to see the haystacks completely plowed around, with no plowing at all around the house. They will actually leave women and children in such houses to go to the fields to endeavor to save the hay. Racing with such a fire as this one was is not at all amusing. It was my first, and I trust my last one. It was the most sublime, yet most fiendish sight I ever witnessed. And after it, what a dismal, blackened, dreary waste of country. What there is in that country to attract a man from civilization I cannot see. For these two families I have spoken of had left comfortable homes and were well educated people, and had evidently moved in very good society in one of the largest cities in Wisconsin. This fire burned over an area of seventy miles. We could have back-burned, of course, and moved on to it, but in such a country that is a last resort. One hesitates to start a fire there as you never know where it will end, or how many helpless people it may destroy. A man who has once had such an experience will never forget it, and certainly it should remind him to never throw lighted matches around, or leave camp-fires to burn out. Even fire knocked from a pipe in the dry grass in that country will more than likely start a fire that might burn for days, and destroy much life and property.

Last summer a certain lawyer living not many miles from Argyle was hunting big game on a muskeg near the main road running to Jadin. He became tired waiting for the game to come to him, so thought he would drive it out by firing the muskeg, which he proceeded to do. He succeeded in escaping with his life, but had to fight for it. Many of the settlers lost everything they possessed, and barely saved themselves. That one fire must have burned over an area of seventy-five to one hundred miles.

It will not be healthy for this same attorney to hunt again in that locality, as among those who lost everything, are many low-caste Bohemians who swear they will kill him, if he is caught there. And can you blame them? It seems to me the only thing to deplore is that he escaped the fire he started.

We didn't waste any more time in the burned country, so early in the morning pulled out for the Manitoba line, where we camped on a branch of the Rouseau River, which I will endeavor to describe to you together with the sport to be had there. WARASH.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE RHINO'S PROMENADE.

ARUSA, GALLAS, Africa, Dec. 14, 1894.—Since my letter to the Forest and Stream on elephant shooting a year ago, I have spent most of my time in the best game country in Africa, where previous to my expedition the sound of a rifle had not been heard.

We camped one day by a sandy river-bed, where there were pools of water about a mile apart. Tracks of elephants, rhinos, zebras, and lions were to be seen at every step. I determined to have a try for the beasts over a water-hole, so I had a little zariba built on a high rock above the water. I took my boys, Karsha and Hersi, to keep watch during the night, while I made myself a comfortable bed with rugs. But there was not to be any sleep that night. The sun had scarcely set when we were on the alert. Yes; there were distinctly the sounds of a heavy beast approaching. Was it an elephant or a rhino?

Steadily the footsteps drew nearer, and then suddenly a huge animal ran down the bank on to the broad stretch of sand in front of the pool. It was a rhino, and I could distinctly make out whether he had good horns or not as the night was so bright and starry. He did not come to drink, but walked up and down within twenty yards of where I was, as though he had made a rendezvous there. Four zebras were the next to appear and several hyenas. The zebras tried to approach, but the rhino repeatedly drove them away.

Now, I thought, surely elephants were approaching, as I heard several heavy footsteps; but no, it was a family group of rhinos. On they came, now halting, now going forward a few steps, apparently without any object. Three were full grown, while the fourth appeared as small as a young donkey. It was amusing to see the little one's perfect behavior. It kept close to its mother's

heals the entire time, never looking to the right or to the left, but stopping when she stopped and advancing just as many paces as she did. The scene was most interesting. This spot, which in the daytime was one of the loneliest places in the world, now presented a most gay appearance. Rhinos, zebras, and hyenas were scattered all over the sand. The country about was very bushy, and I believe this large open space answered the purpose of one of our parks. The animals were there, not only to drink, but to see their friends. This sort of thing kept up all night. As soon as one lot of beasts had disappeared another came to take its place. I was so absorbed watching the love-making and fights of the animals that I did little shooting.

Only two drank from the pool, which I considered rather strange. My boys were constantly urging me to shoot, but I would not do so for a long time, knowing I had plenty of shooting before me. About midnight a rhino appeared that seemed to have better horns than usual. He stood for some time directly in front of me, and I succumbed to that desire for killing that does take possession of one at times. I put up my 577 express rifle and fired. Up went the sand in all directions, and there was such a snorting and puffing as only a rhino can make. The huge beast was as active as a thin pig, and after turning in many circles made his way up the opposite bank into the bushes. Here there was a crash, a few snorts, and we could hear that all was over with him. I went out with my boys, and found my rhino as dead as a stone. He had, as I had judged, a fine pair of horns.

The next animal I shot was a zebra. He had had a rendezvous here with his mate. The female first appeared, trotting straight up to the pool. She stopped, put up her ears, and waited like a statue for some minutes. Then there was a sound like a mule's bray, only more shrill, and out galloped a splendid stallion from the opposite direction. There was much crowding into the space of a couple of minutes for that fond husband, as he was to meet his doom almost before the sound of the wedding bells had died away. His mate trotted away, pleased as Punch, while he stooped to take a long drink. I needed meat, and here was the beast to take. I put a ball into his vertebræ that settled his career on the spot.

I did not shoot for some time after this, but toward morning there was such a splendid pair of rhino horns in front of my zariba that I let the owner have it in the neck. Off he dashed up the opposite hill, turned, ran amuck among the bushes, and finally fell down a bank twenty feet high. This tremendous shock was not enough, however. He disappeared around a curve on a run, and I was afraid I had lost him. The day broke, and I had not had a wink of sleep. Except for a short time after my shots there had not been an instant but what some beast could be seen from my zariba. I went out with my boys to track the rhino I had wounded. We found him half a mile off, dead. His front horn measured twenty-four inches around the curve.

My experience was not yet finished. On our way back to camp we started a rhino out of the bushes close to us. I fired quickly, and hit him too far back. Without a second's hesitation he charged us like a steam engine. We had just time to dodge behind bushes. He kept on a straight line for fifty yards, and stopped. He let me get quite close to him before I fired, and put an end to his sufferings. A. DONALDSON SMITH.

PIONEER LIFE IN MAINE.—II.

BY GEORGE SMITH.

In accordance with the suggestion of those who had listened many times to these stories of the dangers and privations of the pioneer settlers, the following account of the early settlement of the town of Freedom, Me., and pioneer life in that region, accompanied with a brief record of the years spent in the West, was written by the author at the age of eighty-one.—D. C. SMITH.

Departure for the West.

Before proceeding further, it is important that I should give a more detailed account of myself and my brothers connected with me; especially as my brother Joshua was the first, who entertained an idea of going to Ohio.

After contemplating the undertaking for a long time, he at last started on the enterprise in Sept. 1808. Having heard of mechanics being in good demand in the new State, and as all business was at a stand-still, an embargo having been laid on all commerce between England and the United States, as war was expected to take place between the two countries, he thought he should be more out of its reach; and, besides, he would be able to see more of the country, and give us all an early account of its facilities for a future residence of young men. With these impressions, he started on horse-back, at the time stated, and arrived in Ohio in twenty-five days. He went to work at his trade, in Zanesville, at \$1.00 a day. As he wrote us that business was good, we determined to follow him, as soon as possible; but times were so hard, and money so scarce, we must wait till we had the means to undertake the journey.

Then follows three years of harder times than ever. War being declared in June, 1812, many young men enlisted to go to Canada to fight the British. At last, a company was called for to go "Down East" to stop the smuggling on the line, and as there was nothing else to be done to get a dollar in money, I enlisted for one year, and was all the time on the frontier, from Eastport to Calais, where at last I was discharged, having served out my year fully. In the year 1813, my brother John, having married and settled in the town of Readfield, wanted me to work with him at the carpenter's trade; said he was going to Ohio in the fall, and as I had read Joshua's letters, I felt quite anxious to go on with him to see the new country. So I went to Readfield that summer, and made all preparations to start in September, at an early day, which we accomplished.

A Ghost Story.

My brother Stephen, a mate to me, was determined to go on to Ohio with us, so I went down one Sunday afternoon, from Readfield to Augusta, where he was at work, to inform him of the time of our intended start. As he was about ready, he concluded to go back with me that night. Some little business detained him, and I walked on, intending to wait for him at the Davis Hill Cemetery. The sun was down and the weather fine, and as I was soon to leave this part of the country, the thought