

COPPER MOUNTAIN

Adventurous Days
Among the Eskimos

Set down by
John Halden

What Has Happened Before

Christopher Curwell, who is ordered a complete change of air and scene in a cold climate sets out with his sister and two brothers for a long holiday in Arctic Canada, Ole Oleson acting as guide.

Near the Great Bear Lake they meet a great herd of caribou.

CHAPTER 5 An Exciting Day

OLE wisely kept silent about what he had heard. Arctic wolves are unpleasant beasts for company on a hunt, but, with millions of fat caribou trotting by, this was a time for action, not apprehension. Ole wanted no trembling fingers on the triggers as he gave the order to shoot.

The caribou just passing were startled at the sound of the guns, and attempted to push their way into the almost solid masses of their kind away from the boys. But those behind pushed on as before, only making a slight detour round the few dead ones that the first round of shots had felled.

"Another!" cried Ole. More caribou dropped. This time a more serious stampede started away from the hunters.

The herd, however, was too big for news of the danger to go very far. Those behind, harried by wolves, were pushing forward, and kept for the most part well in the tracks of those before. So our party continued to shoot until Ole called "Enough!" and the rifles were lowered.

Tom threw himself on a soft bed of tundra moss and declared he felt he had earned his living for the day. "Do you think we've earned our dinner?" he asked.

Ole had been looking earnestly through his field-glasses in the direction from which the herd was coming. He lowered them now to speak with unexpected seriousness.

"The end of the herd is in sight, several miles away. They are being followed by huge packs of wolves, as usual, which live off the weak ones that fall behind. So if you want to keep any of the meat we've just been shooting, I'd advise you to forget all about your tiredness and work as you've never worked in your lives before getting this meat into one big heap where we've got a chance of defending it."

Tom and the rest were on their feet in an instant at Ole's words. He went on giving directions, while he cleared the sleds of their loads, assisted by the Eskimos and Timothy.

"We felled the caribou in about ten heaps of twenty-five or so each. What we've got to do is to bring them all here and stand guard over them till the wolves get by. Nell, you and Tom can stay here with your guns. Shoot any wolf that gets too nose, but I don't think they'll attack you; they're not ravenous with all this herd to feed on."

"Tim and I and the Eskimos will go out for the farther heaps. We'll take the sleds, but this tundra makes them not much use for heavy hauling. I do wish we had a little snow."

A worried expression crossed Ole's face. He was more afraid than he cared to admit of losing this supply of meat.

For the next hour everyone worked like mad getting in the animals that were to be food, garments, and fuel for the winter to come. Then the wolves were upon them, and the last few trips of the older men to the main heap were made with guns ready to shoot down any wolf that might look enviously at their burden. What was left of the smaller heaps, too, were soon covered with the snarling beasts, and many of them had to be shot before the others could be driven away. They

dragged these in, and had a great heap of grey and white pelts to show for their war on the marauders.

"You know," said Ole, thoughtfully looking at the dead wolves as the caribou herd disappeared in the distance, "you know, I don't think on the whole we did so badly by that herd of animals. We killed a few of their number, but also we saved the lives of a lot more. Look at that pile of grey brutes. There must be twenty of them there, and every one of them capable and willin' to pull down a dozen of caribou in the course of a season. If the caribou realised what we'd really done for them, they'd send back a delegation with a vote of thanks!"

Ole finished with a mock sigh on this note of insincere pessimism. He was in excellent spirits. He looked with exaggerated astonishment on the others who lay about on the tundra, fought mosquitoes, and gasped with fatigue.

"I say, we ought to call it a day," spoke up Tom decidedly. "Here, in the space of a few short hours, we've shot our entire winter's supply of meat, and vanquished an army of ravenous wolves."

"I wonder that they didn't attack us in a mass," said Ellen. "We could only have shot one at a time, and they could have finished us off in short order. I confess I was pretty frightened for awhile."

"I wasn't too happy about the situation myself," admitted Ole; "but we were lucky in having the wind blowing from them to us with considerable strength. That's how we smelled the caribou, remember. So the only thing that would tell the majority of the wolf pack that we had a heap of caribou out here on this side of the herd would be their eyesight, and all of them, except those next to us were intent on watching for some poor caribou to stagger on his legs so they could pull him down. That's how I figure it. The worst I thought might happen was that we might have to abandon our heap to them if they rushed us. They'd never attack a human with plenty of caribou about."

Ole had given orders in the Eskimo language to the natives, and they were busy over a fire preparing a meal of fresh caribou. Eight of the animals' heads were being slowly turned before the blaze. Ellen saw this meal with some consternation.

Timothy raised himself on one elbow to look.

"What's the idea, Ole?" he inquired. "I'm so hungry I could eat hair mattresses, but why your friends there should give us nothing but a lot of skulls I can't imagine."

Ole glanced towards the fire and laughed. He had been cutting up caribou hams for the dogs.

"I told them to get supper ready and they put on the fire, as a matter of course, the choicest part of the meat in their estimation. It really is the choicest, too, though I supposed you have to get used to the looks of it. I'll tell them to put on a few steaks."

He called out his order in the guttural Eskimo tongue, and the natives, showing their surprise at the white man's taste, obeyed.

CHAPTER 6

The Twins

NEXT morning there was a consultation round the breakfast fire.

"Sledging all this green meat to the camp we had planned at Great Bear Lake is hopeless," said Ole. "Sleds are pretty high useless on the tundra in summer, anyway. The dogs could pack about forty pounds apiece, and we men from fifty to a hundred and fifty. Meanwhile we'd have to leave the bulk of it behind."

"You think we'd better pitch

camp here then, do you?" asked Christopher.

"Temporarily, yes," answered Ole. "We've got a month of good sunshine yet. We'll sun-dry and smoke the venison, and get the skins ready for making into clothing."

"That last will be for Arnanyak and me to do, won't it?" said Ellen. Arnanyak was the Eskimo woman Ole had chosen to come along as seamstress.

"And most important, too," said Ole; "even more important than getting the meat, for if we run short of that in winter we can shoot seals. But caribou skins in August are just right for making into clothing. They are practically impenetrable to cold. I have left a freshly killed caribou wrapped in its skin in the snow with the thermometer way below zero, and come back next morning to find the flesh inside still warm. So you may imagine what fine clothes it makes."

There began busy days. The boys worked fifteen hours a day, cutting the meat from the bones, slicing it thin, and spreading it out in the sun to dry. The skins also were scraped clean of fat and pegged out.

"I wish," said Thomas suddenly one day, "we'd have a little excitement. It would have been more fun if we'd had to hunt our caribou separately. This is like working in the Chicago stockyards."

"Ungrateful boy!" said Timothy, but secretly he agreed. The good luck they had had so far was almost monotonous.

"Don't worry, you're not likely to have such luck as this again," said Ole. "I've never met anything like it in all my years in the Arctic, and only a few white men have ever seen such a herd of caribou as that we stumbled on. I wouldn't grumble at your good luck, though, it's likely to bring bad."

As if Ole had been a prophet, that very night something happened.

Everyone slept. The dogs had been tied several feet apart to keep them from fighting from sheer exuberance of spirits due to plentiful food and rest. The nights now had several hours of darkness, or rather of thick twilight, when the Sun went below the horizon. It was at the time of greatest dark that Timothy was awakened by the sound of barking and snarling outside the tent. He seized his gun and went out.

At first all he could see was the dog Anaktok straining at his rope, evidently trying to get at something. Then that something loomed up in the darkness. To Timothy's sleep-filled eyes it looked like some prehistoric monster, twice as tall as a man, and three times as broad. Its long white fangs gleamed and snapped at Anaktok, as it stood on

its hind legs and made great lunges at the dog.

Timothy raised his gun and fired. His aim was fortunate, and it needed no second shot. The great bear fell almost without a quiver.

"Good work, Tim," said a voice behind him, and the boy turned to see Ole. He had been wakened about the same time as Timothy and had come out, but, seeing his young friend's gun raised had not shot, leaving to Timothy the honour of his first bear.

Timothy and his friend hastened over to where the big beast lay.

The others had come running out at the sound of shooting. Tom was particularly impressed with the size of the beast.

"I say, I think you've saved our lives, old man," he said, and there was a tinge of awe in his tones.

Ole was examining the animal in the light of a faggot taken from the dying fire.

"Hate to destroy your illusions, sonny," he remarked, "but this is a Barren Ground grizzly, the most ferocious-looking beast on the continent. Look at those claws and teeth! But he's got the gentlest heart in the world. All he wants is to be left alone and in peace. He lives almost entirely on roots."

"Then what was he doing here?" asked Ellen.

"I can't imagine," answered Ole. "Unless he was just passing with the wind blowing the wrong direction. They're very dull of sight and hearing."

Just then there was a whining sound at Ellen's skirts, and she looked down with a startled cry. In the dim glow of the fire she saw a small bear cub, about three months old, that nuzzled against her boots, and then went over with a funny rolling gait to push its furry nose against its mother.

"A baby bear!" cried Ellen, running over to pick it up.

It allowed itself to be fondled with no concern, and gazed about curiously with its bright, near-sighted eyes.

"I say!" exclaimed Timothy seriously. "If I'd known that I'd have tried to scare the bear away before shooting."

"No, you did right," returned Ole. "These bears will fight ferociously if they must, though they avoid it if they can. I reckon now the reason for her being here may be that the cub got away from her and came down here to look at the sleeping dogs. The baby's got no sense, and she might have killed a dog or two if she thought it needed protection."

"We can keep it for a pet, can't we?" asked Tom eagerly.

"Don't see why not, unless it gets to be a nuisance when it's bigger. What do you think, Christopher?" returned Ole.

The elder brother had been examining their catch with interest. "Yes, indeed," he said. "I wonder if we could possibly get it back to civilisation?"

"Ray!" Tom's shrill voice announced his satisfaction at this news. Then he approached his brother. "Rightly he belongs to you, Tim; but—"

"You can have him, Tom," returned Timothy. "I'm rather sick about having killed his mother. Promise to take good care of him. What will you call him?"

Before Tom could answer, Ole, who had been taking observations of the wind and sky, spoke.

"Snow coming," he announced. "I shouldn't wonder if we're in for the first blizzard of the year. Wish we'd got a sod house up. This tent may blow away. We'll have to do some hustling."

Just then another ball of fur rolled clumsily in out of the darkness beyond the fire. Ole picked it up and exhibited it.

"The bear had twin cubs." That settled the question of names. "Tweedledum and Tweedledee!" proclaimed Thomas. "The comical kubs!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Five-Minute Story

Helping Master

SQUIB the fox-terrier lay in the verandah of his master's bungalow, mounting guard.

There were all sorts of strange things for an English dog to bark at—flights of screaming parrakeets, squirrels, and monkeys climbing about the banyan trees. With his ears at half-cock and his nose dropped between his two front paws, Squib lay jealously watching over his master's house and goods, even down to the poultry.

Ever since that memorable day in his puppyhood in England, when he had killed the red farmyard cock, and had been whipped for the deed, and put to sit for two days in the stable with the horrid fluffy body of the dead rooster hanging from his neck, Squib had learned that it was neither manners nor morals for the house-dog to attack hens. They were creatures to be protected, rather.

All at once, in the undergrowth of the woods around, something moved supplely, like a streak of yellow sunlight, dappled with shadowy black roses.

It rustled, and came forth, sitting down to wash blunt ears and whiskered jaws with a paddy paw.

Bristling all over, Squib came to attention. Whatever was the animal? He had never seen its like before.

Just at that moment the stranger opened its mouth, disclosing a pink curling tongue and two rows of big sharp teeth.

"Miaow!" was its unexpected remark, uttered in a peevish and piping voice.

That settled the question for Squib. The monster was only a cat, after master's chickens too.

Like a cork from a ginger-beer bottle he exploded, and shot forward, barking at his very top note.

The great panther backed, growling savagely, and leaped away with long bounds into the jungle, while Squib, brave as if an army were supporting him, gave chase.

Captain Long, his master, was roused from his nap by the commotion. Seizing his rifle, he hurried out, but it was no use. Hunted and hunter were far away in the forest by then; but master guessed what had happened when he saw the panther's big footprints, and Squib's little ones tracking him in the dust.

Did he praise his little dog when he returned twenty minutes later, expecting pats and flattery for his display of courage and watchfulness?

No; all Captain Long said was:

"Oh, Squib, Squib! Here have I been sitting up for eight nights in a tree, trying to shoot a panther, and never a panther was to be seen! And now, when a large and beautiful skin walks up to my bungalow door in broad daylight, and just offers itself to me, a cheeky little fox-terrier at once gives chase, and sends it flying!"

MY MAGAZINE

Edited by Arthur Mee

The June number of the C.N.'s monthly companion is now on sale everywhere. It deals in an entertaining manner with a wealth of topics and the titles that follow are but a few taken at random from the June number.

The Lost Dome of Kent
A Tale of the Way the Flying-Men Go

More Light in the Dark Sudan
The Flag on One of the World's Highways

The Six Men of the Green Valley
And the Wonderful Thing They Are Doing

Little-Shoes and His Lost Ship
Caligula's Galley in the Bed of a Lake

Village Boy and Master Builder
John Rennie and His Bridges

100 Public Men of Our Time
Portraits of Leaders in Many Branches of Life

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