

The Buck Coon of Shadow Lake

AN EPISODE
IN WOODS
AND WATER
EXPLOITS

By
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Author of *Poems of
Cats and Rods, Etc.*

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As soon as I heard that the ducks had begun to come in I packed my grip for Sowders, and sent Dib Sowders a telegram. That night I reached his farm, and the next night we were at camp. Everything was ready, feed for the live decoys, the boats overhauled and caulked, plenty of wood for the old-fashioned fire-place in the camp shanty, shells loaded, and general preparations complete for a ten-days' shoot. I had taken a 44-caliber old-style cap and ball revolver into the timber with me that fall, just because I was charmed with its phenomenal accuracy. It would throw a bullet exactly where you held it, and loaded with a pinch of powder only it did not jar nor throw up as so many revolvers do. I had a notion I would take a turn in the woods after fox-squirrels with it if the duck-shooting was so poor as to warrant it, or so good that it would get monotonous.

Early the next morning I skipped

to his place for a fish-net he'd forgotten, according to a note he left. Along about sundown he showed up, and I had the ducks done to a turn by that time and some corn-meal dodgers hot on the pan, and black coffee a-plenty.

After we had supper I showed Dib the coon, and he says: "He's a strappin' big fellow, ain't he? The biggest one I ever saw except that old buck coon on Shadow lake. And he was a giant. This lad ain't a rat alongside of him."

"Did you kill that one, Dib?"

"No; but he came pretty near killing me," was Dib's response.

"How was it, Dib?" says I. "There must be a story to that coon somewhere."

"Well," says Dib, "I reckon there was a sort of tale to it. It'll kill a little time, and I don't mind telling you about it."

"You recollect old man Parrott? The man I introduced you to down at the depot last fall. Heavy-set fellow, big brown eyes, nose hooked like a chicken-hawk's beak, all the time smiling. Well, old Wib is the boss coon hunter anywhere along these bottoms. At that time he had the most surprising coon-dog that'd ever hit these parts. He got him from Kaintucky, though the pup's daddy was from Georgia, original. This here dog, Leander, was about the purest strain of a dog that could be had. On his daddy's side, I mean. The bitch that dropped him, though, was half wolf and half bulldog; I heard old Wib say, and wasn't that a pizenous mixture?"

"But the old man he allowed it was just the cross he wanted. Purehound for the scent and following the trail, part wolf for cunning, and bull for hold-on. When that pup was only a few weeks old he came swimmin' after a skiff the old man and a fellow from Saint Looney was in, and the fellow

big limb that slanted across this here pond. I allowed I'd climb up and shake him down, and one of the boys gave me a hint and up I went. When I got out to where he was I couldn't jar him loose.

"But finally all of a sudden he clawed loose from the limb and down he went into the pond with about a bushel of bark and grape-vine and splinters around him, and the minute he lit Leander and some more of the dogs flew out to where he was. I squirms around on my perch, about 40 foot from the water, to get a look at the fight, and just as the buck coon and Leander has arranged to ketch holts, whack goes my limb and down I come before I could holler, 'Look out below.'"

"Well, the best thing me and the limb could do was to come ka-whallop right across old Leander and bury him down in the mud at the bottom of this shallow pond. Two of his ribs was stove in, and he was otherwise damaged, includin' breakin' his back. I reckon I might have kicked the coon in the face with one of my spare feet as I lit, but I ain't certain about that. Of course I was knocked senseless, and the boys run in and got me out on the bank and poured vinegar into me and finally brought me to again. Old Wib had left me cold as soon as he sensed how bad Leander was hurt, and at last I gets my bearings again, shakes myself and find I'm all right, no bones broke, and just jarred some. Leander and the water had busted the force of the fall, you see.

"I goes over to where the boys had built a fire and, say, I was plumb sorry for old Wib. This here Leander was layin' out on his belly and every once in awhile he'd let out a yelp. I says to the old man, 'I'm terrible sorry, Wib,' and he says, 'I don't blame you, Dib, it was that blasted limb.' He didn't cuss any, for old Wib was a church member. He says, 'What is to be happens. Put him out of his misery, boys. I can't do it.' So Dad Oliver swung an ax, and I don't reckon old Leander knowed what hit him.

"Put him in the sack," says Wib. "I'll give him a Christian burial, coffin and all. There's all that's left of the best hound that ever nosed a trail or h'listed a bristle. It was a mighty solemn thing to old Wib, lemme tell you. 'The Lord gives, and the Lord He takes away,' says the old man, 'blest be the name of the Lord.' Why they said around Slattown that he thought as much of that Leander dog as he did of his own wife and family, and he was a good husband and father, too."

Dib paused and snaked a live coal out of the fireplace with the end of a shovel, and deftly shunted it into the bowl of his pipe with a segment of hickory chip. Then he puffed reflectively.

"What became of the buck coon, Dib?" was my query. Dib stretched his massive legs out so as to get the full blaze of the logs on them and said: "Oh! that pesky critter? Why, he just naturally got away durin' the excitement."

THEY "PASSED THE BUTTER."

Brakeman's Happy Inspiration Met with Deserved Success.

"When I was connected with a certain western railway," says a prominent official of an eastern line, "we had in our employ a brakeman who, for special service rendered to the road, was granted a month's vacation. 'He decided to spend his time in a trip over the Rockies. We furnished him with passes.

"He went to Denver, and there met a number of his friends at work on one of the Colorado roads. They gave him a good time, and when he went away made him a present of a mountain goat."

Evidently our brakeman was at a loss to get the animal home with him, as the express charges were very heavy at that time. Finally, however, hitting upon a happy expedient, he made out a shipping tag and tied it to the horns of the goat. Then he presented the beast to the office of the stock car line.

"Well, that tag created no end of amusement, but it served to accomplish the end of the brakeman. It was inscribed as follows:

"Please Pass the Butter. Thomas J. Meechin, Brakeman, S. S. & T. Ry."—Harper's Weekly.

About Babies.

"Babies are 'creatures of habit.' Half the trouble of child-rearing is caused by allowing them to become creatures of bad habits instead of good ones. You deserve a gold medal, my dear young lady, for your management of Marjorie."

"Well, her papa deserves one, too!" cried Marjorie's mother proudly. "He had every bit as much to do with her management as I had."

"No, I had to do with the theory, you with the practice."

"Well," said the doctor, "both theory and practice are needed for the successful management of children. You have combined both, and the consequence is you are rearing a fine child, and I most heartily congratulate you on the way you have reared Marjorie during her first and her second year."—Illustrated Sunday Magazine.

AN INTERESTING CHEMICAL EXPERIMENT

Any Child Can Do It—The Result is Almost Like Magic—Useful, Too.

Anything in the nature of a chemical experiment is always interesting and usually educative. Here is a simple experiment which any child can perform and which is instructive in a very practical way: Get a bit of White Lead about the size of a pea, a piece of charcoal, a common candle in a candlestick, and a blow-pipe. Scoop out a little hollow in the charcoal to hold the White Lead, then light the candle, take the charcoal and lead in one hand and the blow-pipe in the other, with the large end of the blow-pipe between the lips; blow the flame of the candle steadily against the bit of White Lead on the charcoal and if the White Lead is pure it will presently resolve itself into little shining globules of metallic lead, under the intense heat of the blow-pipe, leaving no residue.

If, however, the White Lead is adulterated in the slightest degree, it will not wholly change into lead. So, it will be seen, that this experiment is not only an entertaining chemical demonstration, but also of practical use in the home. White Lead is the most important ingredient of paint. It should be bought pure and unadulterated and mixed with pure linseed oil. That is the best paint. The above easy experiment enables anyone to know whether the paint is the kind which will wear or not.

The National Lead Company guarantee that white lead taken from a package bearing their "Dutch Boy Painter" trade-mark will prove absolutely pure under the blow-pipe test; and to encourage people to make the test and prove the purity of paint before using it, they will send free a blow-pipe and a valuable booklet on paint to anyone writing them asking for Test Equipment. Address National Lead Company, Woodbridge Building, New York City.

Too Risky.

"Where is old Postmaster Daniel?" asked the drummer.

"Resigned last week," drawled the loafer in the Beacon Ridge post office.

"What caused the old man to resign?"

"Why, he read in the paper that the Florida people were shipping live alligators through the mail. Said he could stand queen bees, but when it came to live alligators he drew the line, because he had never learned to be a circus trainer, be gosh."

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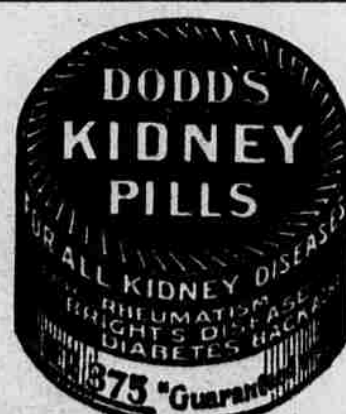
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