

IN THE FUR COUNTRY

Trapping Sable and Fox, Beaver and Mink on a 90 Mile Line in the Northern Woods

By JULIAN T. BISHOP

(Julian Bishop, who has taken a leading part in the sports and activities of Pinehurst this last winter, has just returned from an expedition which netted over four hundred valuable furs and a large collection of big game heads.)

From the first faint glimmer of dawn to the last flicker of twilight constitute the working hours of the trapper of the Northern woods. And the pack that he carries, weighted with steel traps and its attendant bait, would discourage Santa Claus. And he had better be a man, for his going is hard. He travels in a wilderness of snow, made none the easier to navigate by a bending and breaking substratum of tangled balsam and submerged bushes.

It was in the fall of 1917 that I was initiated into this game of trapping the debutantes' furs in the endless solitudes above Lake St. John, five hundred miles North of Quebec. I am no story teller. And have neither the art nor inclination to make an Iliad out of a simple experience. My notion is that some of the details of the routine and lore of the trapper's life might prove interesting to the folks at home.

THE MASTER TRAPPER

I was piloted into this implacable wilderness by a man of iron—one of those tough and leathery specimens that has led the English race in the subjugation of every jungle and peak, barren plain or frozen bay from the South Pole to the Congo. For twenty-five years he had carried his invasions into the heart of an untamed country. Single handed each fall he plunged into the Northern Woods, and by dint of an inflexible will, an indestructible constitution, and an instinct of the woods, second only to that of a lynx, he would later immerge with a wealth of booty in furs—destined to make a sable setting for some pretty face, and a fortune for some clever dealer, snug by the fireside in a twentieth century sky-scraper.

It seems to be the thing in writing stories of sport, to dwell upon the temporary hardships and inconveniences experienced in all hunting trips, and it does seem surprising that men who have been brought up in the mild luxuries of our intensified civilization, should desire to lead such an uncomfortable existence, even for a short time each year. But the life led on a big game hunt, even at its hardest, is so much easier than the daily grind in the trap lines that comparison is ridiculous. Let us take for illustration a story which lately appeared in one of our sporting magazines, in which the author tells us most explicitly of the hardships and fatigue experienced by him and his partner in going in some twenty-six miles from steel over an old unused tote road. It was a harrowing tale, yet there was no snow on the ground

and neither man carried a pack or a tump line. And yet twenty-six miles a day through two feet of snow, with the thermometer anywhere from 20 to 40 below, with a pack of some 70 lbs., is all part of the day's work on the trap line, done with little comment, and under conditions far more severe than the sport so vigorously bewailed in the hunting story.

OUR LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS

We started early in September looking over promising country, studying the lay of the land, and noting as many signs of fur as was possible at a time when there was no snow on the ground. We finally decided upon a region extending almost in a straight line north, following the course of a good-sized river about 90 miles. Along this line at intervals of 30 miles or so, we constructed three 10 x 12 cabins, made of spruce logs, with one window and a door. Our furnishings consisted of a sheet-iron stove, one rudely constructed table, two blocks of wood as chairs, and a double bunk on which we made a very comfortable bed with the tops of balsam trees, spread over with caribou skins. For two full weeks we were lugging in provisions, traps, blankets and ammunition, all of which we took in by canoe, and stored in our main camp, which was somewhat larger and better than our three shelter camps. We figured that by going right along we would strike one of these shelter camps each night; when held up by snowstorms or extreme cold, we would have to put up a lean-to of logs and layout for the night.

The subject of obtaining sufficient bait for all the traps is one which has to be seriously considered and prepared for weeks in advance. Our chief bait of course was moose, caribou and bear meat, while hedge-hogs or porcupines made excellent bait for fisher. These small animals, whose fur is worth from \$20 to \$35 a skin, derive much pleasure and nourishment from killing porcupines. It is not an uncommon thing to catch a fisher in a trap and find his entire coat full of porcupine quills. Having killed our bait, we usually hung it up very near where we intended to set our traps. Our total number of traps set was about 400, ranging in size from the small No. 1, which is user for muskrat and ermine, to the large bear trap weighing forty odd pounds or more.

THE FIRST ERMINE

It was along about the 20th of October, when the ice was just beginning to form about around the lake shores, and



The Big Front Door

of the Hotel McAlpin opens at your approach. It admits you to an hotel where you will find every comfort, every luxury—and, above all, the earnest desire to welcome you.

Location and management make the McAlpin an ideal home for those who linger and those whose stay in New York is short.

The McAlpin has more than 1700 rooms. Its Mezzanine Restaurant and Terra Cotta Grill are famous. Rates moderate.

When you come to New York, make the McAlpin your home.

HOTEL McALPIN

L. M. BOOMER, Managing Director
Broadway at Thirty-Fourth Street
NEW YORK CITY

De MERITTE MILITARY SCHOOL JACKSON SPRINGS, N. C.

A Preparatory School for boys, which prepares boys to enter any College or Scientific School, West Point, Annapolis, or for Business.

The School is seven miles from Pinehurst. This gives the opportunity to study without interruption, yet to spend a week's end with parents there. The life is a simple life which develops health, character and mental activity.

The head-master has had long experience as teacher and principal of the leading preparatory schools in Boston, Mass.

EDWIN DeMERITTE, A. B., Head Master.

CAMP ALGONQUIN—the oldest existing boys' camp
Asquam Lake, N. H. In the foothills of the White Mountains. The camp for boys who love nature and a wholesome active outdoor life. 33rd year. For circulars, address

EDWIN DeMERITTE, A. B., Director.
Jackson Springs, North Carolina.