

Five Years in the White Mountains - 1886

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FIVE YEARS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS VOL. 1
ELMER NELSON
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FIVE YEARS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS CHAP 1. CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

In the year 1886 my farther and mother and two brothers William and Ethan started for the White Mts we were intending to spending several years among the mountains our cabin was ten miles from any inhabitant it was situated amongst a grove of pines the cabin was made of logs. about five miles from where that we lived was a pond about one mile long by half a mile wide it was completely surrounded by woods the water was full of different kinds of fish the woods were full of game after we had been there a few weeks and so got settled we concluded to scale one of the high mountains near there it was a pleasant day the sky was clear for there was hardly a cloud in the sky we went about a mile before we got to the mountain there was not path so we cut [page break] our own we climbed over logs and stones and up slanting ledges after we had got halfway up we saw a ledge of to the right of us father said lets go and see it so we went out there there was a cave in it we went in and looked the cave over we thought that it was a hedgehog den most likely when we came out we crawled out of another passage it was quite a large cave in a few

minutes we got to the top of the mountain we look around a little while there was a ledge on one side of the mountain we went as near to it as we dared to we got some rotten stumps and threw all to pieces after we had spent an hour on the mountain we started home for a week or so after this we boys and papa were clearing the land and fitting a small patch of corn and potatoes and a few beans in a few weeks father started for the settlement for the rest of our goods and stock Will went with him and mother to so it left Ethan and I all alone but we were not afraid we expected that [page break] the folks would be gone nearly a week papa had thought it best for Ethan and I to chop wood a good deal and also to hoe the corn and potatoes father said he would let me take his gun and and [sic] go hunting once in a while we also had fish poles and hooks so that we could get fish if we wanted a variety the brooks was a hundred ft across perhaps or a little more there were large speckled trout of a very fine quality in it besides some bass. We didnt expect to have the hoe form the corn much for it was so soon after that the crop was planted but it was an early spring and very warm father, mother, and Will started the twenty ninth of April it was a pleasant day after they had gone Ethan [page break] and I went into the shed got our axes and came out to chop wood. Lets about day after to morrow make an exploring trip and follow the river up a piece and find out whether there is any pond up in be hind of that mountain said Ethan, all right said I and I will take fathers gun and see if we cant get some fresh meat, and I will take the ax along so if we want to make a raft added Ethan we chopped quite a while then we went in to get dinner we had hasty pudding for dinner after dinner we went down to the river to catch a few fish we had quite good luck we got five trout and two bass in half an hour we took them up to the house and dressed them and put them in a pan of water to wait till supper time when we would cook them for part of our meal.

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FIVE YEARS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS CHAP 2 DISCOVERY OF A LAKE

Get up Ethan time to get up called I the next morning after that I had got up and started the fire in the fire place for we want to get a lot of wood chopped to day so that we can go to morrow. I will be there in a minute said Ethan. He slept in the loft with me and Will also when he was at home in a little while he came down we had our breakfast and then went out chopping we cut down and cut up five trees and piled it up the next morning we got up early and ate our breakfast then I took fathers gun and Ethan took the ax and we started up the river we went along for an hour or two and had found nothing when all of a sudden some thing [page break] went crashing through the bushels near us I glanced around just in time to see a deer go bounding off through the wood it had got off so far that I couldnt shoot it so I let it go after we had gone a couple of hours longer we stopped and I looked a round for game after quite a search I shot a couple of squirrels when I got back Ethan had got a fire started and was cooking some fish he had caught didnt it take you a good while Bert to find any thing said Ethan, perhaps you did said I but I had to go the furthest after dinner we started on we had got near to a large basin in among the mountains we were in a hurry to get there and find out whether there

was a lake or pond there Ethan was a little in advance of me as he came up on a knoll [knoll] he stopped looked ahead and then turned around quick and hollered oh Bert, Bert, come quick you never saw any thing as pretty as this before in you life. Why said I what is it? oh its a great lake surrounded all a round by woods. [page break] I hurried up there and sure enough there was a lake about four miles long by a bout three wide at the [thor?] further side the mountains towered up in to the sky lets make a raft and go out on it said Ethan yes said I but we can not stop long for we aught to be going home now. So I cut up a tree that had fallen and with some spikes that I had taken I fastened them together then we got on and with a flattened stick we paddled down the river towards home we got home at about six for a couple of days went by after this with out anything happening worth relating then one morning I took the gun and went out to get some fresh meat I went down the river a piece as I was [page break] walking along and looking ahead I saw a deer drinking out of the river I stopped and thought how was I going to get near enough to shoot it I had heard it said that you could get nearer to an animal if you came up to leeward of him than you could if you came to windward of him so I started I got up with in eighteen rods of him when I saw him begin to sniff the air so I up and fired the deer sprang into the air and then bounded a way I hurried up and looked at the ground where it was standing after looking carefully I discovered several drops of blood so I followed the track of the deer at every step I could see blood so I knew that the deer must fall pretty soon I went about twenty rods when I saw the deer laying on his die kicking I dashed forward and dispatched him with my hunting knife then I skinned him and took some of the choisest meat and went home Ethan was quietly waiting for me.

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FIVE YEARS IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS CHAP. 3. THE EXCURSION TO THE WAKE

The next morning Ethan and I went out to where I shot the deer to see if we could get some more venison for breakfast but we found that it had been eaten by some wild animal. dont you believe that it was a wild cat said Ethan. Perhaps so or perhaps it was a bear but we havent heard any thing yet around here said I. we then went back to the house and caught some fish for break fast. But just think Burt father and mother expect to be at home to morrow said Ethen. Yes and then we will go up to the lake and spend a day or two. We chopped some wood during the day the next day we were up early and worked long towards night we saw the folks coming so we ran down to meet them they had our four cows and a pair of steers and two [page break] calves and three sheep we knew that we should have to build a larger barn after they came across the bridge mother called out. How have you got a long here al alone. We have had a fine time said I and oh Will we have discovered a large lake about six miles a bove here its the course of the river I guess. Hurrah then we will go up there your birthday said Will. My birth day was the next day. Father have you got the boat. said I. yes I have I put it on the bottom of the wagon and put the rest of the things on top. answered he. Hurrah then said Ethan wont we have a lot of fun on the river. Yes and on the lake two said I. We put the stock up in the barn

and unloaded the goods and put them up. We got up early the next morning and ate our breakfast, when I got up I found a rifle seting near me I found out that father gave it to me after breakfast we took what things we wanted and went down and got into the boat and started up river I didnt for get to take my rifle we went a long steadily till about the middle of the forenoon when we stopped [page break] and look around some on shore father shot a partridge and I shot a rabbet then we got into the boat and started on in a bout an hour we reached the lake they all were very much surprised we went over on to the western shore and made a camp the shore was sandy here and the woods rather open after that we had pitched our tent and got a fire startd Ethan went out in the boat to catch some fish father went back he couldnt get to see if he couldnt get a squirrel or a rabbet for we were very hungry and expected to eat a lot while they were gone Will and I went about a quarter of a mile then we went back in to the woods as we were walking along suddenly we heard the tramp a feet behing [behind] snapping the dead twigs we jumped and look around and to our amazement and horror we saw three moose [page break] and about four deer headed at full run at us I cocked my rifle and fired at the foremost moose he partly dropped and then dashed on Will and I ran to a crocked tree and climbed up it we had just barely got up out of the way when they came up. In the scramble I lost my rifle so Will and I sat down on a limb up out of their reach and waited after half an hour the moose moved a way a little ways when that they were not looking Will and I sliped out of the tree I picked up my gun and we slid away we went back to camp father had got there by that time and so he and I went back but they had gone but we found the one I had shot at dead we took it back to camp and skinned it Ethan had not had good luck fishing he had caught a couple of lake trout and that was all after dinner we all went out for a boat ride on the lake and as it was calm and clear we had a very fine time we stayed there a few hours longer when we went home.

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Five Years In The White Mountains CHAP. 4. TRAPPING, HUNTING AND FARMING

Weeks went by with out much happening we went up to the lake once or twice but about the last of June something happened worth relating one morning when we got up we found that some thing had ate some of our corn and vegetables and by the tracks that showed in the soft dirt we concluded that it was a bears we had a couple of bear traps so we set one bated with corn the next morning we found the corn eaten but the bear had been sly enough to pick the corn shoots off carefully for two or three mornings he picked it off in the same way but not getting hurt he wasnt so careful and one morning when Will and I looked at the rap we found the old bear in it Will was a little ahead of me he hurried up I called out him not to get to near and he kept of at what he thought was a safe distance but all of a sudden the bear give a lunge and [page break] hit Will a blow on the side of the head it knocked Will over but it also knocked Will out of the bears reach Will rolled quickly over the bear tried to get hold of him but he couldnt I had got most there by this time and when Will

rolled away from the bear I fired it wounded the bear some he jumped and lunged around for a while then it calmed down some then I put a bullet in to him and killed it then we took it out of the trap and then Will went to the house and called father he came and we dragged the bear home he was rather lean so we did not eat much we found the old bear of his meat but we had his skin it was a very large bear and father thought that it was a wonder that the trap held him the bears didnt trouble us again for some nor any thing else we hoed the corn and potatoes every week or two so as to be sure we had a good crop the pasture where we put our cows and steers besides our horse was a bout half a mile from where we lived it was a [page break] place where there had been a tire and the land around it had been so swampy that it hadnt burn there then the deer had fed there and kept the small trees from growing we fenced it off and turned our stock in there was about ten acres in the spot about the first of July father went down to the village ten miles below here when he came back he brought with him several bunches of fire crackers so that we could have some fun the fourth of July we liked it very much we were begining to have some new potatoes now. Hurrah shouted Ethen to day is forth of July papa where are the fire cracker he said in one breathe dont be in a rush about the fire crackers said father you want to wait a little while before you fire them so we waited till after breakfast before we fired any father had got six bunches two bunches a piece we played that each one of us were a different nation and we fired the fire crackers at each [page break] other we had wooden pistols that we put them in part of the time one would drive the other then it would change and the other drive we hid behind trees most of the time once we saw a deer and Ethan fired a fire cracker at it and it wheeled around and run for all it was worth it rained some in the afternoon so we stayed in the house we dug our potatoes and cut our corn in the fall our crops came off finely Will and I bought our selves two traps and set them for otter in the river for several mornings we did not find any thing but one morning we found our trap sprung and the leg of an otter in it we thought that it had been either broken or that [t]he otter had knawed his leg off so as to get a way we set our trap again and in a few days we found an otter in it we pulled the otter out and killed him and then skinned him and stretched the skin on a board it was now a bout the first of October we took our cattle down in to the settlement and let the different people keep them for the milk till spring we kept our pair of steers and our horse father brought back a load of hay and he got more after wards.

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Five Years In The White Mountains
CHAP. 5. Beachnutting and blueberrring

Blueberries were ripe and we knew that there was a good meny of them up on the shore of the lake so one day we got ready and went up we had a fine boat ride across the lake we took a day that was clear and warm in picking the berries we came across a place where that it looked as though some thing had picked off some of them father thought that perhaps a bear had taken some of them we hoped that the bear had stayed around but we didnt see any thing of it a long about the middle of

the after noon as I was picking blueberries I saw a deer down by the side of the lake getting some water I took my rifle and started down towards him I kept behind the trees till I got with in ten rods of it then I up and fired it gave one or two springs forward and fell with a splash in to the water I hurried up to get the deer but it made out [page break] to swim far enough so that I couldnt get it I turned and started to go back and get the boat just then Will and Ethan came running up to know what I shot at they said that they didnt know but that I had shot a bear and that the bear had pushed me into the lake we went around and got the boat and went up to where the deer was it had sank but the water was not very deep so we got it out easily we pick twenty eight quarts that day and got some good venison the skin we sold down to the settlement mother can[n]ed blueberries for winter we went up to the lake several times after blueberries and sold them down at the village we thought that we were making something up here in the mountains Will and I have set our traps for rabbets down in the woods rabbets are worth more here than otter as we can get more of them we can sell them for about forty cents a piece one day when we went to look at our traps we found a rabbet in one of them it was a rather of a cold day and my fingers were cold a little the rabbet was moving around so that I couldnt shoot [page break] it so I picked up a stick and tried to hit it but my fingers were so cold that I couldnt hit hard so Will took the stick and hit he hit so hard that it smashed the rabbets skull we set up the trap again and took the rabbet home and kept it a day or two when Ethen and Will went to the village an the boat and carried it down when beach nuts got ripe and the first frost came we went out beach nutting we had lots of fun watching the little squirrels pick them till they got a mouthful when they would run into their holes and leave them and then come out to get another mouthful once we saw a rabbet run by the different birds were singing as though they liked the pleasant weather we got a pretty good supply of beach nuts for the winter we got about half a bushel of them it was fast coming winter the trees began to get bare and the nights were cold [page break] but we were glad it was coming winter so that we could skate and slide there were not many places where we could slide but there were a few but there was plenty of skating for there was the river right near home and the lake six miles up the river and the pond five miles away it wouldnt take us over an hour and a half to go up to the lake on skates so we were anticipating pretty good times Will and I had our traps set most of the time Will and I had our traps set most of the time we caught ten otter and two minks through the hole fall one day mother said that there was an otter in our in our suller [cellar] so we set our trap for him the there there [sic] was a hole in the bottom of the cupboard door and in and out at this place he went we set the trap in this little hole but he made out to get over it several times but at last we found our trap sprung with the tail of the otter in at least part o the tail a few days after this Will went down stairs to get an apple for we had bought something soft it jumped and went out he called father and he came down and we made out to catch it and kill it

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Come on Will dont you want to go up to Deer lake (for so we named the lake) and have some fun skating said I. Oh yes said he did mother say we could and are you going to take your rifle of course Im going to take my rifle and do you suppose that I would go with out mothers permision replied I so Will ran in and got his skates and we went down to the river and put our skates on and started up the river the ice was smooth and thick and we went a long rappidly after an hour and a half of fast skating we reached the lake we skated around on the lake till along in the afternoon. What are those specks up on the lake at the upper end said I. Specks said Will I dont see any Dont you see those specks up in that bay at the upper end said I and they are coming towards us [page break] What do you bet that those are not wolves said Will if they are we had better go for all we are worth towards home said Will. Well we will wait and find out said I just then we heard a howl down below us We are surrounded said Will what shall we do. Go right at those that are down the lake I have got my rifle said I so we turned and skated as fast as we cold towards the lower and the wolves were coming right at us when that we got with in forty rods of the wolves we stopped and I got ready to shoot I emptied my rifle and shot ten wolves my rifle was a Winchester the wolves at the lower end turned and fled but those at the upper end were getting pretty near Will and I skated for our lives down the lake I looked my rifle while I skated by the time we got to the mouth of the river the wolves behind were getting so near that Will and I stopped and I unloaded my gun among them again this checked them for they stopped and ate up their wounded fellows but we knew that there was no time to lose so we went on as fast as we could we got with in two miles of home before we had to stop and fire a gain this time we put them to root [page break] and went on our way home we did not know before that the wolves were very plenty around here but Will and I thined them out some on our skate home from the lake. We found eleven wolves that had not been eaten the next day when we went to look for them we though[t] that was a lucky escape sugaring was near and we hadnt built our sugar house but before sugaring we had got it build we had a few warm days and then father tapped the sap run lively and we made a lot of syrup and sugar one day father was driving up the steers along gathering the sap father had not been kepping a very sharp lookout around because that he knew or thought he knew that there was nothing around all at once the steers gave a spring and ran with all their might father called whoa whoa but they went on then father began to look around to see what had frightened them at last he aspied [sic] a bear sitting up [page break] drinking sap out of one of the sap buckets father started for the sugar house to when he saw the bear as he went a long he saw the sap holder that had rolled off of the sled and a little further on he found the sled broken some but not enough but so that father mended it all right. When Will and I saw the steers coming we ran out and stopped them they were panting pretty hard father fixed the sled and then every thing was all right but the bear father got my rifle and went down to try and shoot there but when he got there the bear had gone and father thought he wouldnt follow the bear a great ways the steers shied every time they went by that place all through sugaring. Sugaring was soon over and it was getting most time to plant and now we had been here a year.

By Elmer H Nelson

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