

Joe Ball, of Michipicoten, With Clothes Torn Off, Won Desperate Battle with Wolf Which Attacked Him

Hobbled by a snowshoe and unarmed he strangled the wolf with a piece of trappers' cord. — Beat off three others with snowshoe he was able to retrieve from left right foot.



The WIGWAM built in Michipicoten Harbor for the use of the builders of the Algoma Central Railway who in 1899 built the Michipicoten Branch to Helen Mine — Three miles away is "The Mission" Gijway village ~



The MISSION from the trail to Michipicoten Harbor ~ Sketch from photo

(By J. W. Curran in the Sault Daily Star)

On Oct. 21, Sam and I reached the Long Portage on the Michipicoten River. We spent the evening listening to our host, Joseph Ball, tell the best wolf story I have ever heard. It was a true one.

Coming from "The Mission" on the Lake Superior shore you climb pretty steadily upwards. When at last you peer over the rim into the valley of the Michipicoten you see a basin say ten or twelve miles wide from rim to rim. The river is away down below you and across it is a vast vista of autumn leaves, whose wealth of color fill the eye. You get the feeling you are looking at the side of a mountain that stretches away in the distance down the river. Down on the river we could see a bridge, and hear the roar of the 200 foot falls. Across the bridge was Joe's house, alone in this great stretch of wilderness.

The Sault Daily Star has always combatted the idea that an Algoma wolf would attack a man. It has investigated several stories of alleged attacks, and none of them had ever stood up under examination. But I am prepared to accept Mr. Ball's story that a wolf did attack him. He answered freely all questions put to him, and went into minute details. We talked for several hours in the evening and then reviewed the fight for more than an hour next morning at his request. There couldn't have been anything vital left uncovered.

Mr. Ball has been in the Michipicoten wilderness for over 25 years. He came in with the Foley when they were building the Algoma Central & Hudson's Bay Railway to do backcountry. For the last couple of years he has lived at the falls on the Michipicoten river with his cousin, Isaac, looking after the power plant there that hasn't turned a wheel for some time, waiting for the day when Michipicoten's iron and gold will need power.

Mr. Ball is tall and square and spare, with a build that would fill well as an upholder of law in a lawless camp. I noticed at our evening meal he didn't eat partridge, and Sam said he hated to see the birds shot. Our host casually mentioned then that he was sure he could raise partridge with his hens "if people would not bother them." You don't have very many visitors seven and a half miles from Lake Superior on the Algoma trail.

The fight took place in February, 1917—seven years ago. There were four wolves in it, one principal and three assistants. Mr. Ball killed the principal with his bare hands. The others fled.

The scene of the battle was on the road that ran south from the Grace Mine, five and a half miles from Michipicoten Mission. That winter Mr. Ball had been the caretaker of both the Grace and the Norwalk mines,—both of these having a full equipment of machinery and buildings to look after. They had grown up overnight in the boom of a quarter of a century ago when Michipicoten's wonderful showings of free gold started the province,—a promoters' boom that was developed so assiduously to Michipicoten's hurt that only in the last couple of years have its riches been again taken seriously by the outside world.

One and a half miles south of the Grace, a miner named Dyce had a shack; a mile west of Dyce was the Norwalk mine. It was Mr. Ball's duty to inspect the equipment at both the Grace and the Norwalk two or three times a week. His permanent quarters were at the Norwalk, and it was after a visit of inspection at the Grace about the first of February that he encountered the wolf a quarter of a mile after leaving the Grace on his return home. At the time the nearest human being was Mr. Dyce, a mile and a quarter away.

"It was ten o'clock in the morning," said Mr. Ball. "There were three and a half feet of snow on the ground and snow was falling so heavily that objects a few yards away were hidden. I never remember flakes so large, or a fall of snow so completely blotting out objects at a short distance away. I was on snowshoes, and was on the trail I had made on my regular trips. This trail was firm,—a beaten path. I do not remember hearing a sound of anything but the

drag of my snowshoes when about thirty feet away from me or less, a wolf came out on my trail and headed me off."

Mr. Ball took his pipe from his mouth and put it on the table beside the coal oil lamp.

"I had heard the wolves before I saw the first one. I said to myself when I first heard them 'There are my two hounds; some one must have lost them.' I knew that nobody but myself had keys for my house, and I figured that someone had broken in. Wolves first make a few yips and then comes the long howl. You can always tell them. I had only my jack knife and a piece of trappers' cord about three feet long. All trappers carry some cord. It's a very useful thing in the woods, it comes in handy for a hundred uses, but I carry a shot gun now too."

Mr. Ball drew a piece of cord out of his pocket. It had a loop on one end. I adopted it on the spot. Next day I used it on the trail to tie a can on the outside of my pack, and thereafter to truss up a coat to put in the same place.

"Did the wolf know you were a man?"

"Certainly it did. No question of that. I had noticed its tracks in the fast falling snow, which was coming down so thickly that it would cover your tracks in five minutes. It was the freshness of the wolf tracks that drew my attention. 'Why?' I said to myself 'that wolf is right here.' I hadn't gone ten yards then before the wolf jumped out ahead of me on the trail. He stood broadside on, licking his lips. He didn't hold up his head but kept looking down. Then his tail began to rise and he came to me. I braced myself."

"I wasn't frightened," said Mr. Ball. "I think I can say that the feeling uppermost in my mind was surprise. I had never in all my experience in the woods where I have spent most of my life heard of a wolf deliberately stepping ahead of a man to dispute the road with him. It puzzled me, and even when the yellow brute stood his ground and stared at me boldly I had no idea he would attack me,—not the faintest suspicion he would. And I was unarmed,—didn't even have a stick in my hand."

"The wolf came on slowly on my trail,—he probably took two minutes to get within jumping distance. When I realized through his slow approach, his showing his teeth, his licking his lips,—and I didn't take my eyes off him for a second,—that he was going to attack me, I tried to get my snowshoes off. I managed to untie the right one, but somehow in the hurry my left foot slipped through the harness, and I couldn't free my foot. By this time I fully expected a battle, and what was more I had made up my mind to do my best without losing my head."

"On the right the road had a bank about three feet high on which small spruce grew very thickly with some cedar. This high bank was the result of the roadmakers using a scraper to make a level way. They had taken the earth from the right and spread it on the low side at the left. On the low side a lot of small alders grew."

"The wolf didn't give me any time to do more than slip my right snowshoe off, and this snowshoe in my hand was the only means of defense I had. He came on slowly,—I will never forget the snarling teeth and the slavering lips,—and when about five feet away he jumped. He almost reached my chest, trying to grab my clothes."

Mr. Ball was wearing a coat of rough cloth, and apparently during the fight that followed this coat became unbuttoned and when the fight was over, both it and the shirt were in rags.

For four successive times, the timber wolf jumped. The man, powerful and cool headed, threw him back, arms crossed in front of his chest. The fourth time Ball managed to grasp the jaw of the wolf with his

left hand, just far enough back so the animal could not bite him. "I just had hold of the cheek; it wasn't a bone hold."

"I had always had a powerful grip, and people had remarked it even when I was a boy," he said. And with this brawny left hand on the jaw in a death grip, the wolf and the man fell off the hard trail into the three feet of soft snow,—the man on top.

Mr. Ball held out his snowy left hand. He had fingers of great natural power, and his work at the forge for a lifetime has strengthened them.

"Men would break the skin in my palms, but not one ever was able to break my grip," he said.

You must realize that Mr. Ball was telling a guest a story that enthralled both speaker and listener. His narrative was simple and sincere and there was no thought of boasting. The man took no offence at the most searching questions; his reply was always unaffected. His only thought was to make his story perfectly understood.

It would be impossible to reproduce the dramatic recital in cold type. When Mr. Ball, in telling of his wrestling with the wolf got on his knees on the floor, to show how he had fought the animal, my mind carried back to the night Sir Henry Irving had played the part of old Mathias, the inn keeper who under hypnotic spell is forced to rehearse the tragedy he was mixed up in. Mr. Ball lived over again his terrible experience. It was plain that the story gripped his whole being and that no little part of it would ever escape his memory.

The battle in the snow was a terrific one. "I was filled with a cold fury," said Ball. "The wolf was a powerful brute, and you will realize that when I tell you that several times he had me practically off my feet when I straddled his back. In this way he carried me about twelve feet. The brute's efforts to shake himself free of my grip, while I battered him with the snowshoe I held in my right hand would have shaken off an ordinary man, I think. I tried vainly to break a leg. But I was able to jam his head down through the snow time after time, and through the soft snow filling his mouth he began to choke."

"I was beginning to feel I had him, when I became conscious of something on the road behind me. I turned my head—and to my horror saw three more wolves, only a few feet away."

"Realize the position! I was hobbled by the left snowshoe, and couldn't use that foot. I was holding a wolf by the jaw and lower lip with my left hand and dare not loosen my hold. I had nothing to defend myself with but the snowshoe I held in my right hand. I realized the chances I had were slim, but I never lost my head. If the worst came to the worst, I instantly made up my mind I would fight back to the alders about twelve feet away and try to draw myself out of reach of the wolves, no matter how badly I had been torn. Then I would get my knife."

"Did you ever see a wolf's fore teeth?" Mr. Ball turned to ask. "They are not straight. They curve

inwards like a shark's. Consequently when a wolf bites, he tears away what he takes hold of. I have seen deer here at my door terribly torn,—not badly enough wounded to immediately die. I knew if any of the wolves behind me reached my thigh, I was gone. They would have torn out the muscles. So that I kept down as much as I could striking out from my position on the ground. The three jumped at me perhaps ten times,—I don't know. They came on together just like three dogs. They took the back out of my coat in mouthfuls."

"I had fought the single wolf for possibly five minutes, when the three others came at me from behind. They tried to bite me, and I slashed back at them with the snowshoes. One I managed to kick heavily as he lunged at me from behind, trying to reach my thigh."

"There were two things that favored me. One was that I had the wolf in the soft snow, where he had not the footing he would have had on the hard trail and the other was that we had rolled off this trail to the left. The three wolves stuck to the trail, and thus I was able to oppose them with the snowshoe in my right hand, and to kick at them behind with my right foot while I knelt over the other wolf. Had the three attacked on my left side I couldn't have done a thing. They would have had me in a trap. But they never attempted to leave the hard trail to the left of which I was, and they didn't press home the attack. Something seemed to be on their minds, and after making several attempts to reach me, they backed up suddenly and all three of them raised their heads. They seemed to be looking over the trees on the high side of the road when suddenly they struck off swiftly together, jumping the high bank and disappearing like a flash."

"I was string. I had been holding a powerful animal for several minutes with my left hand, and I dare not let go. I had been tempted to get my knife. I could open it with my teeth, I argued. I wanted it to rip open the wolf. But my better judgment told me there was a considerable risk that I would seriously cut my mouth in doing so, the knife possessing a strong spring."

"Then I thought of the piece of trappers' cord I carried. I could tie it around the wolf's neck and strangle him."

Mr. Ball reached for a ball of trappers' cord, cut off three feet of it and went through the whole performance. First the permanent two inch loop on the end of the cord, then the other end run through the loop, and the cord was tightened on the writer's wrist; then an additional turn around the wrist and a knot. The wolf's hair had gotten into both knots and held the cord fast."

"He began to weaken in a minute or two, and when I had him groggy I slipped over to the alders and quickly cut a club, with which I battered his head. It's wonderful how much a wolf's skull can stand. The place looked like a slaughter house. I battered the wolf's head and his blood covered the snow. Then I bundled the body into my pack

and set off for the Dyce shanty. Mrs. Dyce was alone. I told her the story and showed her the wolf. She called attention to the fact that my coat and vest and gray flannel shirt were torn to shreds back and front. I told her I was going home for my gun, and would go back after the three wolves. But when I got home I found I had to go to bed."

The reaction had come. Mr. Ball could not bring himself to skin the animal he had killed.

"I never can explain what came over me," he said.

He crawled into bed and lay there for two hours. Then he arose, found his clothes were beyond repair, and donned another suit.

Mrs. Dyce had endeavored to dissuade him from returning to the scene of the fight, but Ball spent the rest of the afternoon there with his rifle. The wolves did not return.

a limited extent, but none of the true breed have ever been seen in Algoma. The Fish and Game Department of the Ontario government has for years been paying bounty on so called "brush" wolves. Experienced bushmen in Algoma do not believe in the existence of the brush wolf; they say that a brush wolf is simply a young timber wolf. So it turned out to be in the case of Jack Eggesfield's wolf, and this is also the case with Jim Summers' two wolves at MacLennan. If any trapper in Algoma believes there are two kinds of wolves I have not yet run across him. The farmers have accepted the government's dictum that there are two breeds, with reluctance, and lately there has grown up a legend that the brush wolf hangs around farmhouses to kill sheep. He will come right onto a field to attack them, in sight of a plowman.

The bold brush wolf seems to be simply a young and unsophisticated timber wolf, there being no other kind of wolf in Algoma. In support of this theory it may be pointed out that no old wolf has been caught in a trap and no old wolf is caught around a farmhouse. The old and wise wolves are only to be found away back from where man lives. Only the youngsters are venturesome enough to try sheep raiding.

The theory that Mr. Ball was attacked by wolves probably about ten months old does not lessen the interest in the story or take away any of the credit due him. He would have had a harder fight if his assailants had weighed 150 pounds instead of half that amount, but the probability seems to be that no old wolf would ever have ventured to attack him.

Mr. Ball has no fear of a wolf. But he thinks no one should be foolhardy. He makes it a practice to get out of the woods before dark, because he can't then see his rifle sights. For this reason he likes a shot gun in the woods. He says no wolf will stand before a shot gun.

Contrary to most people Mr. Ball believes wolves are hungrier when frost first comes and just before the lakes freeze over.

THE KLAN IN CANADA
(Toronto Globe)

An Ontario man, Charles Monteith, who admits that he is a Ku Klux Klan organizer, has been arrested at Hamilton on a charge of carrying a loaded revolver. The police say that cards found on him show that he had enrolled four women as Klan members, at the rate of three dollars apiece. According to a Police Inspector for this town he initiated over thirty Hamiltonians into the mysteries of the hooded order. His notebook shows perhaps those which have recently been displayed on a burning cross to set tongues wagging.

The gun-toting charge is apparently the only legal complication in which Monteith is involved. The Ku Klux Klan is not known to the Criminal Code, and it would not be an indictable offense to belong to it or persuade others to join it. If a number of "callthumpians" availing themselves of a cow pasture, as William Allen White calls the Klansmen, choose to pull white sheets over their heads and go through some mummerly which they call a ritual, it is not a cause for police attention or for public alarm. If it goes no farther, it is an occasion merely for ridicule. Such nonsense is natural in children, but in men and women it is excusable only in a circus or an indoor masquerade. The law of common sense ought to be a sufficient guarantee against the spread of an organization like the Klan, but if unkind-eyed people choose to belong to it the statute book will be invoked against practices as have made the name of the Klan a synonym for mob lawlessness in many parts of the United States. The first exhibition of the kind in Ontario will be the last.

Canada, as we have remarked before, has its racial and religious difficulties, but Canadians have surmounted them in the past and will surmount others of the same nature in the future—in the Canadian way. The Klan on this side of the line would be an importation or an imitation of something of which broad-mindedness of all parties and

our own experience and apply our own methods.

BUTCHER OF DEER

(Ottawa Journal)

Ernest Thompson-Seton made a fine appeal at the Canadian Club luncheon in Ottawa Saturday for consideration for wild life. He touched on various aspects of worthiness of wild life, whether of animal or bird, and pleaded for restraint in the destruction of it.

Which reminds us of the butchery of deer which occurs every year in this part of the world by driving with dogs. A party of so-called hunters came back to Ottawa recently from a trip in the Gattineau country having killed sixteen deer in the water—and fifteen of them were does. A wonderful sample of how to kill out wild life!

Deer, when hunted by dogs, make for water. They can swim twice as fast as any dog. Also deer, when pursued, usually keep on fixed paths, called "runways" which are easily noted. Accordingly the men who use dogs to hunt take up their positions on runways leading to lakes, before they turn loose their dogs. Hunted by the dogs, the deer make for the water, and are shot in the water by the men who have been waiting near the runways.

That sort of shooting is not sport, but butchery. In the woods a deer has a chance. If a man still hunts—that is if he hunts individually, endeavoring to see a deer before it sees him—he has his work cut out, and a heap of exercise provided. If he takes part in a "drive," where some of the party try to round up deer and scare them towards other ambushed near runways, he usually gets only a shot at a deer going past him at 20 miles an hour or so. In any case, most everybody has to do a lot of stiff tramping. And there is some real sport to the hunting. But a deer in the water is a mere pot-shot.

Driving deer by dogs should be prohibited. It is a means of slaughter which sooner or later, if tolerated, will extinguish the deer. Shooting of does should be prohibited under all circumstances. Such shooting is another sure way towards rapid extinction of the deer.

U.S. EUROPEAN DEBTORS

(New York Herald-Tribune)

Poland is the fifth European debt to arrange for a funding of its debt to the United States. The others are Great Britain, Finland, Hungary and Lithuania. That Poland should be able at this juncture to carry through such an agreement is one of the most startling evidences of the capacity of European nations to restore their finances and discharge their war obligations if they have a real will to do so.

Not long ago Poland had a worthless currency and was plunged in financial embarrassments. Now she has a currency maintained on a parity with gold, a balanced budget and a reestablished credit. Her outstanding public debt is small, slightly in excess of the government's estimated revenues for 1925. Under these circumstances she has promptly negotiated for a funding of her American indebtedness of \$175,500,000 in bonds maturing over a period of sixty two years, bearing interest at 8 percent up to December 15, 1929, and 3½ percent interest thereafter.

WE WANT MORE PEOPLE

(Medicine Hat News)

Canada is equipped with railways and productive machinery adequate to serve three times as many people as the present population of less than 9,000,000. Tax burdens have grown enormously in recent years, without any proportionate increase in population to lighten the load. Canada's part in the war cost the federal government about \$1,460,000,000, according to the statement of the Minister of Labor, from 1914 to 1923, the annual interest charges on the national debt increased from \$14,687,797 to 138,007,667. For pensions alone, in 1923, the total liability amounted to over \$30,000,000.

With this national obligation to be met, the Dominion is impelled to look for new settlers. There is any amount of room, too, for a much greater population. Canada is naturally endowed with great potential sources of wealth. There is no lack of fertile land, and the climate is all that industrious northern people could desire. There should be employment opportunities for all.

THE INDIAN PROBLEM

(Ottawa Citizen)

During Labor's nine months of office at Westminster, no attempt was made to introduce any fresh policy regarding India. In fact, one of Mr. MacDonald's first acts was to issue a plain warning against Indian extremists who imagined that the advent of a Labor Government meant a sympathetic response to their demands. So that matters have not changed since either of the old parties held power. Now Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues have the problem of India before them again. And it is a problem which may easily overshadow all others before very long.

our own experience and apply our own methods.