

## The Blueberry Patch

Dave Powell

WHILE vacationing in Quebec City, my three companions and I were befriended by a gentleman who owned a small hunting lodge not many miles away. Ultimately we accepted an invitation to stay at the lodge for a few days and enjoy Canada "in the rough." Though it was only fifteen miles from the city, the area was isolated by the absence of neighbors, the lack of modern conveniences, and the rugged, outdoor scenery. Until the arrival of our adventure-seeking party, the entire population of the immediate area consisted of the caretaker, Andre LaForge, his wife, a few chickens, and a sort of cow. The cow was a particularly disreputable-looking creature and frequently gave evidence of having a disposition to match its appearance. One of my friends shrewdly remarked that it should have been a bull. Obviously, however, the caretaker and his wife were quite fond of the beast, for it did furnish them with milk and butter.

Mr. and Mrs. LaForge were very congenial people. Andre served as our guide on several excursions into the vast woods surrounding the lodge, and led us to a hidden lake where the fish seemed downright anxious to cooperate even with a bungling, inexperienced angler like me.

Among the various paraphernalia we had stacked into the station wagon before leaving home were two rifles. One morning we saw a bear eating blueberries in a patch behind the lodge, and Andre said we could take a shot at it if we got a good opportunity.

Before we were to start home, we were returning from a farewell visit to Quebec City late on a pitch black Canadian night. Walking toward the back door, we suddenly saw two wildly flashing eyes in the vicinity of the blueberry patch. I immediately decided it was the bear, and one of the fellows hurried back to the car for a rifle. By the time he returned, the eyes had vanished, but before we went in I fired once where the cowardly bear had been.

It was Mrs. LaForge who awoke us at 4:30 a. m. with shrieks of Canadian French, intermingled with bits of broken English. From the words vaguely similar to cow, butter, milk, and dead, we managed to grasp the fact that something was amiss concerning the cow. Andre was more coherent though certainly not his pleasant self. Those flashing eyes in the blueberry patch the night before had belonged to that miserable cow, and now it was dead.

That afternoon, after much bargaining, we said goodbye to the lodge and Mr. and Mrs. LaForge, leaving with them forty dollars, a fine 22 automatic rifle, and a good pair of binoculars.