

# Forest and Stream

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## THE ACCOUNT OF HOWELL'S CAPTURE

### The First News.

CHICAGO, Ills., April 27.--The *Forest and Stream* Winter Exploration of the National park, now just concluded, was a venture singularly fortunate in every respect. Not devoid of certain hardships, and not free from possible dangers of more sorts than one, it was nevertheless brought to a close without illness or accident to any of the party other than of the most trifling sort, and from start till close progressed with the smoothness and merriness, if not the ease and indolence, of a summer picnic. Fortune was kind and raised no obstacle to hard to be overcome. Thus the *Forest and Stream* may truthfully say that it is the first and only paper ever to send a staff man through the Park during the winter time. Schwatka once made 20 miles of this 200 miles winter journey in the interests of the New York *World*. Overcome by his failing, and perhaps discouraged or disgusted by the amount of unavoidable hard work ahead (for the only possible method of locomotion in those high, rough and snowy regions, is by one's own snowshoes), he allowed his undertaking to come to failure, and returned to his starting point with no results to show. Since him one or two other men have gone to the gates of the Park, looked at the big snow land, and resolved that it was easier to write about the winter scenery of the Park from imagination than from fact. The only man ever successful enough to go through the Park in winter, and intelligent enough to make a newspaper account of it, was Mr. Elwood Hofer, whose stories of his two trips, simply and clearly written, appeared in *Forest and Stream*. Mr. F. Jay Haynes, the able St. Paul photographer who

has done so much to make public the beauties of this wonderful region, went through the Park after the collapse of the Schwatka expedition, but never wrote of it, so far as I know. His party was lost on Mount Washburn for three days, and they all came near perishing.

The effort to learn of the winter life of this tremendous and fateful region had hitherto been, let us then say, severely frowned upon by Fortune. When *Forest and Stream*, always rather a favorite of the fickle dame, made the attempt, Fortune relented, and all became possible and plain. To this end, *Forest and Stream* was in the first place highly fortunate in having Mr. Hofer as a member of the party. His guidance, counsel and assistance constituted the difference between success and failure. Without him the trip could not have been what it was, and it is to him, very much more than to its staff representative, that this journal is indebted for the success of the undertaking just completed. What were the obstacles to be overcome before success could be reached, and what were the trials, the pleasures and the incidents of the winter journey through the mountains of the Great Divide, it will be a pleasure to recount later, but the first duty is to tell at first hand, and exclusively the story of the capture of the man Howell, who was caught in the act of butchering the Park buffalo. This story taken from *Forest and Stream's* first and exclusive report, has appeared in various forms and in some inaccurate shapes, in the press all over the country, and such is the importance of the occurrence that it has driven Congress to an action delayed years too long. This is undoubtedly the most dramatic and sensational, as well as the most notable and important piece of sporting news which has come up in recent years. It is news which will be

historic. The Howell buffalo slaughter marks an epoch, the turning point, let us hope, in the long course of a cruelly wasteful indifference on the part of the United States Government in the matter of one of the most valuable possessions of the American people--a possession growing yearly less and less through this indifference, and which as it has grown less has increased in value, since when once destroyed, it can never by any human power be replaced. Had not *Forest and Stream* been born under a lucky as well as an energetic star, it could not have enjoyed the journalistic good fortune of having a man right on the spot-- and a most remote and improbable spot, too-- to obtain exclusively for its services the most important piece of news. Now that we are out of the mountains, the first opportunity offers to give the story in accurate detail.

### The Telephone Carries It.

Capt. Anderson, the best superintendent the Park ever had, and one good enough to be retained there for an indefinite term, is a thoroughly fearless and energetic man, and disposed to do all that lies in his power, with the limited means at his disposal, to protect the vast tract of land which lies within the bounds of this peerless reserve of wilderness. How difficult a task this would be with many times the troops and many times the money no one can understand perfectly who does not know the Park, and who does not know what winter in the mountains means. A part of the system of winter patrol consists of little details, usually a sergeant and two privates, stationed at remote parts of the Park. Thus there is a substation of this sort on the east part of the Park, on Soda Butte Creek; one on the west side, known as Riverside Station; one twenty miles from the Post, and near the center of the Park, at the

Lower Geyser or Firehole Basin; and one at the extreme south end of the Park, known as Shoshone Station. Communication with these stations can only be made by snowshoe parties. The winter's supplies are carried into the stations by pack trains early in the fall, before the impassable snows have covered all the trails. Under such conditions news would naturally travel slowly. Yet we knew of Howell's capture, some seventy miles from the Post, the very day he was caught in the act of his crime, the news coming by telephone from the Lake Hotel. The Park Association keeps attendants at three hotels within the upper Park, not counting the one at the mammoth Hot Springs (Fort Yellowstone), on the entrance side of the Park. There is one attendant, or winter keeper, at the Canyon Hotel, one at the Lower basin hotel, and a man and his wife at the Lake Hotel. All these hotels are connected by telephone with the Post, otherwise the loneliness and danger of the life of the solitary men thus cut off from the world through the long months of an almost Arctic winter would deter even such hardy spirits from undertaking a service worse than that on a lighthouse tower at sea. When the telephone line fails to work, as naturally in such a wintry country of mountain and forest it often does, old Snowshoe Pete, the lineman, is sent over the line to locate and repair the damage. He is the only man allowed to go alone through the Park in the winter, and he has had some rough and dangerous experiences. When the soldiers of the out-stations wish to report to the Post they go to the nearest hotel, perhaps fifteen, perhaps forty miles, and telephone in, if the telephone happens to be running. Burgess, the only scout whom the munificent U.S. Government provides for the protection of this peerless domain-- a domain which any other power on earth would guard jealously as a treasure

vault-- makes scouts from time to time in all directions through the Park, traveling of course on snowshoes. He may sleep and get supplies at some of the out-stations, or of one of the three winter keepers of the hotels, or it may be that he will hole up for the night in one of the several shacks built at certain secluded portions of the mountains for this purpose; still again, he may have to lie out in the snow, perhaps without a blanket, perhaps with nothing to eat. This all depends on circumstances. A poacher's trail has to be followed hard and sharp, with no let-up and no returning. It was fortunate for Burgess that he caught his man within a days march of the Lake Hotel. He brought him in to the Lake Hotel that day and at once telephoned to Capt. Anderson, commanding officer at the Post, Mammoth Hot Springs. The message was received at the Post about 9:30 in the evening, Monday, March 12. This was just before Hofer and I started into the Park from the Post, and as I was the guest of Capt. Anderson at the Post, of course I learned the news at once, and at once put it on the wire for *Forest and Stream*, which had the information within twelve hours of the capture, which latter had occurred 2,000 miles away in the roughest part of the Rocky mountains, and four days journey from the nearest telegraph station, by the only possible means of travel. The next day *Forest and Stream* was represented in Washington. Within thirty days the Lacey bill had passed the House. To *Forest and Stream*, born under a lucky, as well as an energetic star, will be due more than to any other one agency the thanks of the public for the ultimate preservation of one of the public's most valuable heritages. No other paper has made the fight for the Park that this one has, and it deserves the utmost success which now seems certain to attend it. When the people

finally come to look upon an undivided National park, and one tenanted once more with some specimens at least of its grand though vanishing animals, they may thank all the men who nobly and fearlessly worked for that and so carried out the actual will of the people-- they may thank all these friends of intelligence and justice and public honor and decency; but they will have only one newspaper on earth to thank, and that one will be *Forest and Stream*.

#### **Capt. Anderson's Story.**

When Capt. Anderson came in after hearing the news of this capture, he was positively jubilant through every inch of his 6ft. 2in. of muscular and military humanity. He couldn't sit still, he was so glad.

It was some time before I could get from him the story of the plans leading up to the capture.

"I knew that Howell had been in the park," said he, "and had an idea that he was over on Pelican Valley somewhere. I sent Burgess in after sign once before this winter, but Burgess broke his axe and had to come back. I told Burgess this time that I wanted him to come back this time with a whole axe and a whole prisoner, if possible. I knew that Howell had come out of the Park for supplies, not long ago. He came out from Cooke City, where he hails from. He brought out his toboggan, and took back a load of supplies with him. I knew he must leave a broad trail, and knew that if Burgess could strike his trail and follow it into the Park, not out of it, he could catch him sure. Burgess had been scouting on Pelican, as directed. He says, by telephone, that he found the trail early in the morning, and followed it until he found a *cache* of six buffalo heads, hung up in the trees. Then he followed the trail a good distance until he found Howell's tepee. While he was there he heard shots.

Approaching carefully, he saw Howell skinning out the head of one of five buffalo he had just killed. Making a careful run over the 400yds. of open ground between Howell and the timber he got the drop on Howell. Burgess had with him no one whatever but one private, Troike, who was not armed and who stayed back in the timber. Capt. Scott, Lieut. Forsyth and party were at the Lake Hotel not engaged in this scout at all. I must say that Burgess's action has been in every way highly courageous and commendable, and I shall be glad to commend him publicly. He made his arrest alone and brought his man into the Lake Hotel to report for orders. I have ordered him to bring his prisoner on in to the Post as quickly as he can. Tomorrow I start out a party on snowshoes from here to bring in all the heads and hides of the buffalo killed. I have ordered Howell's tepee and supplies burned. His arms and outfit will be confiscated, and I will sock him just as far and as deep into the guard-house as I know how when I get him, and he won't get fat there either. That is all I can do under the regulations. I shall report to the Secretary of the Interior and in due course the Secretary of the Interior will order me to set the prisoner free. There is no law governing this Park except the military regulations. There is no punishment that can be inflicted on this low-down fellow. I only wish I had the making of the law and the devising of the penalty. I'll bet you this man wouldn't soon go at large if I did have."

#### **Scout Burgess's Story.**

This was Capt. Anderson's story of the plan that led to the capture, a plan evidently wise and well laid. But how wide a difference there remained between this plan and the actual arrest I never knew until I had seen the Park itself in all its immensity, its impenetrableness, its forbidding and awful regions

of forest, precipice and crag, until I had traversed with weary feet some of those endless miles of bottomless snow; until I learned how utterly small, lonely and insignificant a man looks and feels in the midst of solitude so vast, so boundless, so tremendous and so appalling. Then I knew that the man Howell was in his brutal and misguided way a hero in self-reliance, and that scout Burgess was also in courage and self-reliance a hero, nothing less. Howell or any like him, I hate instinctively, but I salute him. To Burgess the salute will come more easily from any man who knows the facts and knows what a winter trail in the Rockies means.

Burgess's story of the capture, as told by himself, simply and modestly, would make it out no great thing. This story I heard from Burgess himself at Norris Station, which point he had reached coming out with his prisoner at the same time the *Forest and Stream* party made it, going in. We spent the night there together.

"I expect probably I was pretty lucky, said he. "Everything seemed to work in my favor. I got out early and hit trail not long after daybreak. After I had found the *cache* of heads and the tepee, over on Astrigent Creek, in the Pelican Valley, I heard the shooting, six shots. The six shots killed five buffalo. Howell made his killing out in a little valley, and when I saw him he was about 400yds. away from the cover of the timber. I knew I had to cross that open space before I could get him sure. I had no rifle, but only an army revolver, .38cal., the new model. You know a revolver isn't lawfully able to hold the drop on a man as far as a rifle. I wouldn't have needed to get so close with a rifle before ordering him to throw up his hands. Howell's rifle was leaning against a dead buffalo, about 15ft. away from him. His hat was sort of flapped down over his eyes, and his head

was toward me. He was leaning over, skinning on the head of one of the buffalo. His dog, though I didn't know it at first, was curled up under the hind leg of the dead buffalo. The wind was so the dog didn't smell me, or that would have settled it. That was lucky, wasn't it? Howell was going to kill the dog, after I took him, because the dog didn't bark at me and warn him. I wouldn't let him kill it. That's the dog outside--a bobtailed, curly, sort of half-shepherd. I can get along on a snowshoe trail the best of any dog I ever saw, and it had followed Howell all through the journey, and was his only companion.

"I thought I could maybe get across without Howell seeing or hearing me, for the wind was blowing very hard. So I started over from cover, going as fast as I could travel. Right square across the way I found a ditch about 10ft. wide, and you know how hard it is to make a jump with snowshoes on level ground. I had to try it, anyhow, and some way I got over. I ran up to within 15ft. of Howell, between him and his gun, before I called to him to throw up his hands, and that was the first he knew of any one but him being in that country. He kind of stopped and stood stupid like, and I told him to drop his knife. He did that and then I called Troike, and we got ready to come on over to the hotel. It was so late by the time I found Howell-- you see he was a long way from his *cache* or his camp-- that we didn't stop to open up any of the dead buffalo. We tried to bring in some heads, but we found we couldn't, so we left them.

"Howell had been in camp over there for a long time. I only found six heads cached. He wrapped them up in gunny sacks and then hoisted them up in trees so the wolves couldn't get at them. He had a block and tackle, so that he could run a heavy head up into a tree without much

trouble. He was fixed for business..

"Howell said that if he had seen me first, I would never have taken him. I asked him why, and he said, 'Oh, I'd have got on my shoes and run away of course.' I don't know what he meant by that, but he'd have been in bad shape if he had, unless he had taken his rifle along, for I had already found his camp."

#### **Howell's Story.**

Howell was, we found, a most picturesquely ragged, dirty and unkempt looking citizen. His beard had been scissored off. His hair hung low on his neck, curling up like a drake's tail. His eye was blue, his complexion florid. In height he seemed to be about 5ft. 10in. His shoulders were broad but sloping. His neck stooped forward. His carriage was slouchy, loose-jointed and stooping, but he seemed a powerful fellow. Thick, protruding lips and large teeth completed the unfavorable cast of an exterior by no means prepossessing. He was dressed in outer covering of dirty, greasy overalls and jumper. He had no shoes, and he had only a thin and worthless pair of socks. He wrapped his feet and legs up in gunny sacking, and put his feet when snowshoeing into a pair of meal sacks he had nailed on to the middle of his snowshoes. The whole bundle he tied with thongs. His snowshoes (*skis*) were a curiosity. They were 12ft. long, narrow, made of pine (or spruce), Howell himself being the builder of them. The front of one had its curve supplemented by a bit of board, wired on. All sorts of curves existed in the bottoms of the shoes. He had them heavily covered with resin to keep the snow from sticking to them. To cap the climax he had broken one shoe while in the Park-- a mishap often very serious indeed, as one must have two shoes to walk with, and otherwise cannot walk at all. With the ready resources of a perfect woodsman, Howell took his axe,

went to a fir tree, hewed out a three-cornered splice about 5ft. long, nailed it fast to the bottom of his broken shoe, picked out some pieces of resin, coated the shoe well with it, and went on his way as well as ever. He said he could as far in a day on those shoes as any other man in the party could with any other pair, and I presume that is true. Moreover, Howell pulled a toboggan behind him all the way from Cooke City with a load of 180lbs. None of us could pull a toboggan behind *skis*, and we would not wear web shoes. Howell's toboggan was 10ft. long, and had wide runners, like *skis*. He said a flat-bottomed Canadian model toboggan was no good, as it pulled too heavy.

At the Canyon Hotel Howell ate twenty-four pancakes for breakfast. He seemed to enjoy the square meals of captivity. At Norris he was always last at the table. He was always chipper and gay, and willing to talk to the officers, Capt. Scott and Lieut. Forsyth, on about any subject that came up, though the officers mostly looked over his head while he was talking. He was apparently little concerned about his capture, saying, as I have already mentioned, that he stood to make \$2,000, and could only lose \$26.75. He knew he could not be punished, and was only anxious lest he should be detained until after the spring sheep shearing in Arizona. He is an expert sheep shearer, sometimes making \$10 and \$15 a day. He has money always, and was not driven to poaching by want or hunger.

"Yes," Howell said, in reply to our questions, "I'm going to take a little walk up to the Post, but I don't think I'll be there long. About my plans? Well. I haven't arranged any plans yet for the future. I may go back into the Park again, later on, and I may not. No, I will not say who it was contracted to buy the head of me. I had been camped over on Pelican since September. It was pretty rough, of course. If you

don't think it's a hard trail from Cooke City to Pelican Valley, you just try pulling a toboggan over Specimen Ridge.

"If I'd seen Burgess first, he'd never had arrested me. I'd have got away from him. It was so windy and stormy, I never heard him till he got right up against me and hollered for me to put up my hands. He was sort of blowin', and was nervous like. I see I was subjec' to the drop, so I let go my knife and came along."

#### **Private Larsen's Story.**

Larsen, one of the men Capt. Anderson sent in with our party, talked with Howell later in the day, when most of us were away, and Howell was freer with him. Larsen says that Howell told him he had been camped in the Park since September and that at first he had a partner, a man by name of Noble, but that they had a falling out and he run Noble out of camp. Noble went out at the south end of the Park, not going back to Cooke City. Howell said there was nothing in being arrested, they couldn't do anything to him. Howell also said he "supposed them ---- fellers would want to get a photograph of him in the morning, but he wasn't going to let them." (Nevertheless, one had already been made of him and in the morning I got a shot at him without his consent, while he was stooping over and fastening his shoes. He tried to spoil the picture by rising and coming toward me. He had told me previously that he would not have any pictures taken and I was sorry to so impolite about it. Capt. Scott, who had at that time gone on down the trail with Lieut. Forsyth, had said to me that if I preferred it he would give me the privilege of photographing Howell standing on his head. On the whole I believe that would have been nicer, if Howell could have been induced to look pleasant. The negative is not yet developed, but my impression is that he wasn't looking so very pleasant

over the surreptitious *Forest and Stream* shot at him.)

### **The Butcher's Work.**

The party sent out by Capt. Anderson to bring in the heads and hides of the slaughtered buffalo consisted of Sergt. Kellner and two privates. They passed the incoming party between Norris and the Canyon, and pushed on down to the remote corner of the Park where the butchery took place. The second day out from Norris found them near the spot, but it was two days later before the animals were found, a fall of snow having covered them up, and Troike, the private who was with Burgess at the capture, having lost his head entirely about the localities. If it was so hard a spot to locate among the interminable mountains, even after a man had been there but a few days before, how much harder must it be to locate a poacher whose whereabouts is not known at all, but who has the whole great winter wilderness of the Park to surround him and his doings? The only wonder is that arrests can be made at all, where the country is so great and so difficult, and the special police of the Park limited to just one scout. The need of more scouts is too apparent to require comment.

When finally the butchers work had been found again, it was learned that most of the robes and some of the heads were ruined for lack of proper care. Howell having been stooped to early in his work for this. The scene of the butchery was a sad sight enough for any one who has the least thoughtfulness in his make-up. The great animals lay slaughtered in the deep snow in which they wallowed and plunged in their efforts to escape. To run up to them on the *skis* and to shoot them down one by one-- only six shots to kill the five buffalo outright-- was the work of the clumsiest butcher. In the snow these animals are

absolutely defenseless. Howell could have killed more of the band, if there had been more, and he would not have stopped had there been more to kill. As I shall show later, I think he had killed far more than the eleven head discovered. I think his partner, Noble, let the camp of his own free will, and took out a load of heads at the lower end of the Park. I do not consider it impossible, from news I had after I left the Park, that Howell took out some heads with him when he went out to Cooke City after supplies. As *Forest and Stream* has said, he was killing cows and calves in this last killing. He had been in camp since September, and he was killing cows and calves. I cannot evade the belief that he would kill any buffalo he could get to. He could prepare and hang up a good many in five months.

The heads and the available robes were brought first into the Lake Hotel. Capt. Anderson sent another party over the long trail from the Post, and the spoils were finally received at the Post the first week of April. The capture of Howell had required two trips by Burgess, aggregating 250 to 300 miles, one trip by the first detail of men, nearly 150 miles, and a final trip of a little less than the latter distance by the detail who carried in the plunder. The heavy heads and hides all had to be packed in on the backs of the men. Every foot of the way had to be traveled on snowshoes. No men but just these hardy ones could do this work. For a time the Park had more men in it than it ever had in winter time before. The stir was all over this miserable specimen of humanity who was heartless enough to kill all he could of the few remaining buffalo left alive on earth to-day. These bare words convey no idea whatever of the hardships and dangers incurred in the winter patrolling of the Park. To criticise the military, or to say that Capt. Anderson should have caught the fellow sooner, is to

display a total ignorance of the conditions, and to be absurdly unjust as well as ignorant. For such ignorance and injustice we must look first in just the quarters where it should not exist. Nowhere can we find an ignorance and indifference on this subject equal to that which has so long existed in the halls of Congress. It is time the change should come.

### **No Penalty.**

Let us remember, then, first, that Howell was killing cows and yearlings; second, that the few buffalo left are helpless when pursued in the snow; third, that for a crime of this sort Congress *provides no penalty!* As this is written the word comes that the Secretary of the Interior has ordered the release of Howell from custody. On this old basis he can now go into the Park again and kill more buffalo, and have another hunt made after him by the U.S. Army. Let us hope that by the time this shall be in print there will have been a new basis established by Congress, so that such villainy as this shall obtain a punishment, prompt, adequate, and just. Kill a Government and try what the U.S. Government will do to you. Yet a mule can be replaced. A buffalo cannot be replaced. This is the end. But kill a Government buffalo, and what does the U.S. Government do? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! This is the old basis. Let us sincerely hope that the new basis will come soon and that it will be widely different. Gentlemen of Congress can surely only need to have the matter called to their attention, and this has been done in the various measures this year submitted by the members who know the facts.

In a later article I shall advance the facts on which I base the firm belief that half the buffalo in the Park have been killed, and that not over 200 now remain alive. The Howell killing above described has been only a part of the total. Nineteen head were

killed by Indians southeast of the Park last fall. Seven heads were offered to a Bozeman taxidermist for sale (not of these nineteen heads) from Idaho this winter. We found what we supposed to be 6 or 8 dead buffalo in the Hayden Valley. I have track of several other heads that have this year appeared in Montana towns. No one knows how many heads have been quietly bought by Sheard or another Livingston taxidermist. Certain is this, that the traceable total of buffalo killed this year in the Park is alarmingly, appallingly large. There are not very many more now left to kill.

#### **The Snowshoe Trail.**

The method of work in scouting for a poacher is simple if arduous. The scout must know the country and the course likely to be taken in the Park. He circles to cut the trail of the man he wants. The snowshoes leave a deep, plain trail on any ordinary snow (except crust), and this will remain for weeks. Even if covered by later snow, the trail will eventually become evident again. The trail packs the snow under the line of the shoes. in the spring when the snow begins to melt, a snowshoe trail will not melt and sink, but will show up in the form of a little ridge above the level of the snow, the other snow melting and sinking below it. The poacher can get in in no possible way but on snowshoes, and he can not travel without leaving a trail which for the rest of the season will endure, though part of the time it may be invisible under new snow.

#### **A Plucky Scout.**

I can not leave this description of the Howell capture without mentioning one fact showing the indomitable grit of the scout Burgess who brought Howell in. We were all looking out over the trail when Burgess and his prisoner came into sight. Howell, or course, was ahead, but we noticed that Burgess was limping very badly. How he was able to

travel at all was a wonder. When he got in by the fire he said nothing, but took off his heavy socks, showing a foot on which the great toe was inflamed and swollen to four times its natural size. The whole limb above was swollen and sore, with re streaks of inflammation extending up to the thigh. How the man ever walked I can not see. I noticed that Burgess had lost the two toes next to the great toe, and that the scar of the cut ran half way through the great toe. He told me, quietly, that the Crow Indians did that for him. They made him put his foot on a log, and amused themselves by cutting off his toes, taking two off clean and nearly cutting off the great toe. Since then the circulation had been bad in that member, and he had frozen it more than once. It had been frozen again on this trip, and was now in bad shape. Yet in spite of this injury, which would have disabled most men, Burgess passed the evening calmly playing whist, and the following morning again took the trail, making the twenty miles to the Post before evening, and delivering his prisoner safely. The Post surgeon, Dr. Gandy, after making examination of burgess's foot, at once amputated the great toe, thus finishing what the Indians had less skillfully begun some years before.

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