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The King of the Mamozekel

1235 Sr.

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WHEN the king of the Mamozekel barrens was born, he was one of the most ungainly of all calves,—a moose-calf.

In the heart of a tamarack swamp, some leagues south from Nictau Mountain, was a dry little knoll of hardwood and pine undiscovered by the hunters, out of the track of the hunting beasts. Neither lynx, bear, nor panther had tradition of it. There was little succulent undergrowth to tempt the moose and the caribou. But there the wild plum each summer fruited abundantly, and there a sturdy brotherhood of beeches each autumn lavished their treasure of threecornered nuts; and therefore the knoll was populous with squirrels and grouse. Nature, in one of those whims of hers by which she delights to confound the studious naturalist, had chosen to keep this spot exempt from the law of blood and fear which ruled the rest of her domains. To be sure, the squirrels would now and then play havoc with a nest of grouse eggs, or, in the absence of their chisel-beaked parents, do murder on a nest of young golden-wings; but, barring the outbreaks of these bright-eyed incorrigible marauders,—bad to their very toes, and attractive to their plumy tail-tips,—the knoll in the tamarack swamp was a haven of peace amid the fierce but furtive warfare of the wilderness.

On this knoll, when the arbutus breath of the northern spring was scenting the winds of all the Tobique country, the king was born,—a moose-calf more ungainly and of mightier girth and limb than any other moose-calf of the Mamozekel.