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The Bull Moose Song

Linwood Brown
“The Bull Moose Song” is a local lumber camp satire written by Charlie DeWitt, one of Maine’s many lumber camp satirists. DeWitt was the great-uncle of another singer featured in the Maine Song & Story Sampler, Ernest Lord (“Young Charlotte”). Dewitt wrote many other songs within the satirical tradition, and some of them got him in deep trouble with bosses! The present song’s joke comes at the expense of the camp’s operator, Frankie Malcolm. Malcolm, the first stanza tells us, will be dead broke by spring. In stanza three, he suggests to Georgie that they kill a few deer for meat, although the season is closed; he also says that if Georgie gets caught, he can leave the meat with him and he’ll keep him on salary while he’s in jail. In stanza six, Frankie discovers that he is otherwise occupied when it comes time to skin out the ripening moose. The tune is uncertain, and seems to be an amalgam of at least two well-known traditional tunes.

1.
Come all you jolly lumbermen that mean to pay your bill,
And take no stock in what you hear on Jimmy Johnson’s Hill;
For Frankie Malcolm has gone there a-fixing for to log,
Before the spring does roll around he will be on the hog.

2.
He hired them to do it, boys, to go up and begin,
Also Charlie and his horse to do the toting in;
They had been there but scarce three months and they found it would not pay,
For it’s hardly any oats they had and scarcely any hay.

3.
So Frankie says to Georgie, “If you’re good enough with the gun,
You’ll go with me this afternoon, to deer shoot on the run;
And if you happen to shoot one and have to pay your fine,
You can drag it here and leave the deer, I’ll allow you all your time.”

4.
So Georgie shouldered his carbine and started for Frazier’s Camp
To get a box of cartridges to take him on his j’ant;
Far through the burnt lands he had begun to cruise,
When his surprise right to his eyes came a charming big bull moose.

5.
So Georgie levelled his carbine and for to get his game,
He fired his shot right through his heart and dropped him on the plain;
When he got it to the camp and devil the Frank was there,
The only way they’d get him out was t’harness the old gray mare.

6.
So George and Herb and Charlie they had the thing complete,
They got it up and put it round and got thereout the meat;
And when they got it to the camp it had begun to thaw;
So Frank he says, “I’d help you skin it boys, but I have to file my saw.”

7.
Now here’s to Percy Howland who thinks he is a man,
You’d ought to see him jump around and wave the frying pan;
He waves a great big butcher knife and he slices up the pork,
He says, “I’d slice it thinner, boys, if it wasn’t for outside work.”

8.
Now the moral of this story we leave it now and tell,
Take my advice: stay away from lice, stay off of Jim Johnson’s Hill.