The cool October winds of the northwest beleaguered the summer freshness of the dense woods and forests in the area where Bob Furness was born and raised and was still living with his parents and two brothers and three sisters. Every year, for as long as he could remember, while helping to work the soil and watching the honking geese on their journey south, the sensation began somewhere inside his being.
Maybe it was because, as small children his kind gentle mannered father had taken his brothers and him into the woods to scout for game, and along the creek beds to find where the fur-bearing animals were feeding, running, and living Or maybe it was something else. He couldn't say. Little matter what occasioned the feeling, it just came. Regularly. Yearly. As surely and as certainly as the first hint of October lay somnolent in the air and over the fields, the sensation arrived. It was there; just like that.

Bob felt it now. It stirred restlessly and resistlessly inside him. He was sure his father felt it too. At first, it was simply an urge to stare at creeks and fields as one drove down the road or across the land. But soon thereafter, as the lush vegetation devolved to quaking, shaking brown skeletons, the hankering-urge erupted into an explosive passion.

"Think I'll go to the woods for awhile, Dad," he said, sliding the kitchen chair away from the table. "Can you come along?"

Mr. Furness smiled kindly and gave Bob an understanding wink. "Run along," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. "Work's finished and done for the day. I can't go with you this time.

Bob didn't wait to hear more. In an instant he was out the door. Taking a short cut across the fields, he was soon at the foot of the mountain. In the next minute, he stepped into the density of trees. The fields, with their ready to harvest grains, were forgotten.

He walked quickly at first, until he came to the stream. Then, almost noiselessly, he followed it, looking this way and that. The deer should soon be along to drink. They preferred the thick woods in their daily travels, to be sure, and they went out of their way to remain in the dense cover, too. But each evening, they came down to the stream for water. This he knew, and he would wait for them.

He continued walking; more leisurely now but still noiselessly. The wind was in his favor, he realized. This was good. He smiled.

He came to the place where, for more times than he had kept count of, he knew the deer came down off the mountain's heights to drink. Finding the
beech tree from where he had watched on numerous other occasions, Bob stood, statue-like and rigidly erect, against its hard trunk and waited.

"About two months," he said in a muffled voice. "Just two more months!" He shivered with the utterance of the words. All too clearly, the scenario was repeated in vivid mental play-back now. Again. Would he never be able to erase it from his young mind? For two years . . . or better . . . it was there to haunt him.

He remembered the day like it was only yesterday. His father and he had gone hunting. Deer hunting. Their hunting was not a thing of mere sport; not a thing of slaughtering the beautiful animals to brag that they had gotten their deer. Never! Their deer afforded the necessary meat for the household. How he wished he could erase the memory of that one day.

He was following a long stretch of rimrock and peeking over the edge every so often when he noticed the rimrock coming to an end and a thick band of young beech trees leading through a swale that came all the way to the top from the creek below. Knowing the habits of the deer, he felt it would be a great place to stand and wait, when out of the corner of his eye he caught a flicker of movement. Turning, he saw five deer high tailing it out of sight.

Picking a strategically located tree, he sat down, took an apple from his Wolverine hunting jacket, bit into its juicy-tart goodness and waited.

From the opposite ridge, he heard the discharge of a gun. Somewhere below him, another gun fired. He smiled, knowing that some hunter had no doubt gotten his buck and would be heading back home or to the hunting camp as quickly as he could care for his deer. He had sat there, hoping there would be no waste to the meat which God had provided in such great abundance for them in their state, when the crackling of a brush drew his attention.

Bob sighed now. A low moan escaped his manly lips. The memory of that day refused to leave him. He had turned his head in the direction of the crackling brush, he remembered, when a deer emerged almost directly in front of him. It was a doe. Someone had shot her; either illegally or by mistake. Her trail was marked by blood; her eyes, looking pityingly at him,
were dead. And something inside him had died, too, that day: The will to ever
hunt again went with the beautiful doe and her trail of blood.

He had wept for her. How he wept for the brave but suffering, dying
doe! He would never forget her look. Never! It had taken her to remind him of
something; something which he had tried for two miserable years to push
clear out of his mind. He had tried to drown it out by much study . . . much
learning . . . and many books. But it didn't work. Oh, he didn't drink alcoholic
beverages to drown it like so many whom he knew, had done. No indeed. He
had prided himself in his morality and his clean living. Yes he had. Filthy
rags, all, he knew now. Morality would get no one into God's Eternal City.

The Savior's precious Blood alone could do this and make the entrance
to Heaven possible.

He had watched the doe until, with what seemed to be the last spurt of
blood gush from her wounded, riven side she had fallen. Dead. He stood
over her and sobbed unashamedly. Brave, she was. Brave and tender. As he
stood and wept, thoughts had flooded his memory. Thoughts, and a
descriptive mental picture. Words which he had read and one time loved and
studied and meditated upon, had washed over him in wave after wave of
conviction.

". . . And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be
crucified."

"And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe."

"And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the
head.

"And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him,
and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."

"They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had
tasted thereof, he would not drink.

"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: . . ." (St.
Matthew 27:26, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35).
"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (St. John 19:34).

He had stood there, condemned and guilty, under the blazing, probing, searching sword of the Lord . . . the Word of God. He saw another sacrifice of blood; this one a sinless, holy, and undefiled Lamb. An only Son; the Son of God! And his heart had melted like butter on a hot stove. He felt all his mental arguments crumble and vanish under the probing intensity of the convicting Word and the Divine presence of Jesus, the Son of God. He had nothing to fall back on. He could make no defense nor produce an argument. The Holy Sacrifice for his sin had left, not a trail of blood, but a fountain! "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1).

"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah 13:6).

He had emptied the gun of its shell, leaned the firing arm against a tree, dropped to his knees and called upon God for mercy. Oh, how he had prayed!

It was a cold day. A light skiff of snow lay crusted on the ground. But he had perspired profusely. In his agony of soul and fervency of prayer, he had fought a battle that day. A severe battle. Of destiny; for eternity. He had realized that God's Spirit would not always strive with his soul and that what he did he better do quickly but thoroughly and genuinely. And he had. He refused to let go until he knew that he was fully restored and that his wicked sin of backsliding and turning his heart away from God was forgiven and made whiter than the snow through Jesus' precious Blood.

When the witness came, and after he had received the blessed assurance of sins forgiven, he opened his eyes to find a hunter staring curiously but wonderingly at him.

"You okay?" the hunter had queried falteringly. Bob remembered his answer: "Never felt better in my life," he had replied, getting to his feet. Slapping his hand to his heart, he added, "I just got things settled between God and me. He forgave me of my many sins and wrote my name down in the Lamb's Book of Life. Is your name recorded there?"
The question took the hunter by surprise. Color drained from his face. "That's my deer," he replied nervously. "I hope you realize that." He evaded Bob's question entirely.

"I do," Bob remembered having answered. "But you got a doe. This is buck season. . . ."

The man had turned gray-white. "You better not squeal on me," came his hot rejoinder. "Now, get out of my way while I care for my deer," and giving Bob a strong shove, he proceeded to work on the doe.

Gun slung over his shoulder, Bob had made his way down off the mountain. He would never again be able to take another deer, he knew. The eyes of the doe had put an end to his hunting days. But he didn't mind; he had found the Pearl of great price through the sad experience. And today, yes, this very moment, his soul was a river of joy and peace and Divine Love. He had gone on into the blessed experience of entire sanctification.

And waiting now for the deer to arrive at the stream, Bob felt a deep inner calm and peace. The experience-encounter with the beautiful doe had changed him from a hunter, it was true. But the inner heart change that it had affected was worth everything.

A bush cracked and snapped nearby and the young man, knowing that deer were coming, pressed his straight, young back harder against the beech tree. Tingles of excitement raced up and down his vertebrae. Every fall, come October, the same sensation took possession of his being. Only not for hunting anymore: It was now simply to get out into the woods and observe the wildlife without destroying them. Let others do the "thinning out" job, he thought silently. For him, this was a closed chapter of his life. Some had called him soft. Little matter. Perhaps he was soft. God had softened his heart, this was true. For this he was thankful.

A buck broke through the rhododendron. Eight points! Magnificent antlers! Bob thought, awe-struck. Three beautiful doe followed. There would be more, he knew. Within a few months, many would never roam the mountains again. They would become meat for many a household. But some would continue to roam free; his father's mountain land had "No Trespassing"
signs posted around its entire perimeter. Those acres would be a haven for the hunted animals.

   The buck raised his head, sniffed the air, then went docily to the stream. Wading in, he began drinking. The three doe followed. Bob smiled and lifted his head toward the sky.