



Common black bear of B.C., harmless to man if left alone

years ago, just before my broncho died, and there had been quite a litter in the log pen last spring. Right behind my very house, after us a-hunting all down the valley, was a nice he bar a-standing looking over our pig pen a picking out of his supper. Well! I was most out of powder and ball, so I whips up my axe, Alexander leaps in, and I got first blood with a neat clip over Mr. Pig-stealer's eye—that's his skin you can see right on my floor. I've killed more than a hundred of the critters with my old 'Maria,' but that's the only one I ever chopped up. Grizzlies is different game altogether. I've killed them and then they have most killed me; but for Alexander's father and mother chewin' at one old dam's heels and ears I had wounded, I guess the old wretch would have everlastingly chewed me into mincemeat. I just spoiled that hide cuttin' into her with my knife; forty-six slits I made 'fore she left go, and we was good ten miles from home, too. Alexander's father and mother they just licked my wounds and whimpered around me, and I got to the shack in two days, an' we did some more huntin' that same fall."

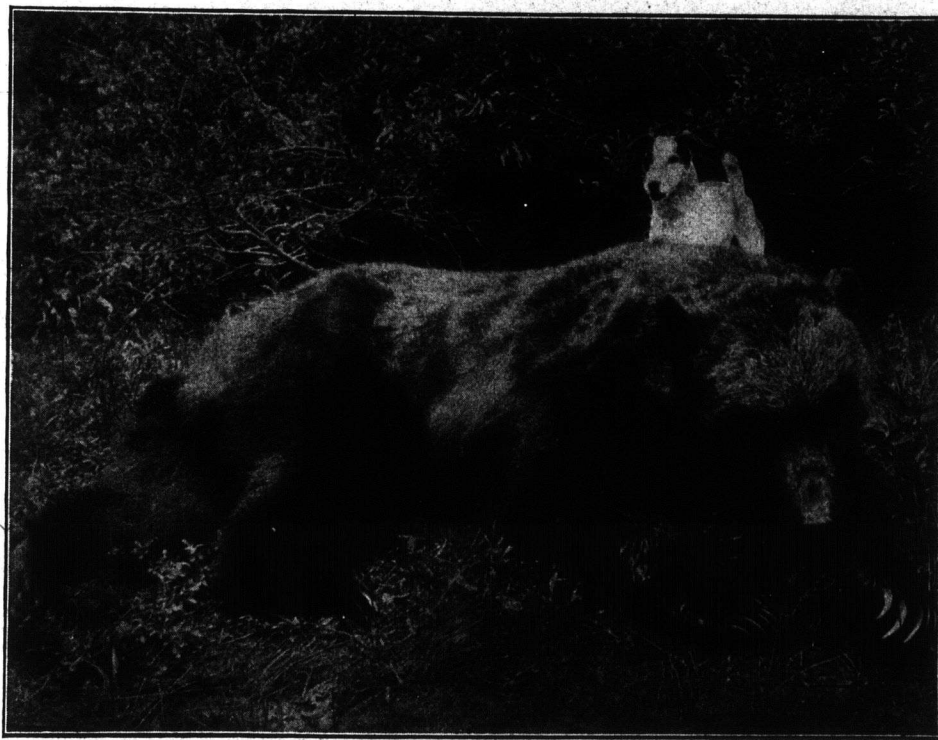
This remarkable old man showed us a heap of fine bear skins, and he had a sort of ornamental name-plate over the door made out of long grizzly claws and the shorter ones of the common black bear—the latter do not show their claws when walking, unless very old beasts, but the grizzlies, are plainly visible. The ancient hunter told us, as all other old hunters have done, that the beasts of the forest do not unmolestedly attack men. We ate a bit of dried bear meat next morning with Alexander the Great and the ancient hunter, and soon they were hidden away by a bend in the creek trail.

We resumed our overland hike along the Thompson, gathering folklore and specimens. A little over a dozen years ago this land and its people were as unknown to the average Canadian as those of the interior of South America. Jessup of New York, president of the American Museum of Natural History, sent in an expedition in the late nineties, but the few remaining natives needed much urging before they would allow their old home and village sites to be excavated. They were an inland people, with very little connection with their far distant sea-coast neighbors, but the sea shells discovered in their graves prove they did trade with them to some extent. The weapons and domestic articles of the ancient people were mainly of stone, laboriously chipped and carved. Pipes, tools, and axes were made from hard and soft stones. Colored earths were collected for paints; copper was made into beads and necklaces—the copper stains on the skeletons proving this. Leaps of bones at various depths tell of the hunt and capture of elk and bear, wolf and beaver, panthers and mink, and many a wood rambler. The women used stone scrapers to prepare the deer-skins for bedding, clothing, travelling covers; the men made rude mortars and pestles to grind the nuts and roots and grains. They made ear-rings of copper for their chosen village beauties, or a nice nose ornament of stone and shells, or they carved the animals' teeth for rude dice to gamble with. The youngsters learned to hunt and carve and to

prepare skins and weapons and ornaments, and so the tribal life went on. As the pipes they made ante-date the white man, they must have used native plants in place of tobacco, as, indeed, there is a plant closely allied to the common tobacco growing wild on these Rocky Mountain plateaus. No doubt this tribe of the North Thompson river traded and copied the Indians of the various mountain plateaus of this huge chain of mountains, which extends clear down to California.

One day, when O'poots and I made a side expedition of a few days' duration, leaving Fritz to mind the horses in the riverside camp, I decided to cut short the trip, fearing I had left the lad too long alone already. O'poots lingered on the trail, hoping for a deer close to camp. I swung silently ahead, camera laden, and came up the trail to the camp on the grassy river flat silently and unannounced—Fritz had been playing a strange game. He had imagined for the time being he was one of the old-time Thompson Indians. With great labor he had constructed a rude earth dwelling,

underground room, pole roof, tree ladder, sodded roof, all complete. He had buried the dead members of his tribe in the ancient custom—a little tapi of sticks covered one, a rockslide another, a hollow log, rudely formed to represent a canoe, held another; all the bodies were made from riverbank clay, and if they harden and petrify, future naturalists will indeed be puzzled. All our bone and copper and stone finds were laid out, and the lad was clothed in a grass mat—very, very scanty indeed. His plump, white body was daubed with the primal yellow, white and red clays, his face was a fearsome black (my precious ink I found out later, and it was India ink, and would last him a while anyway). He had a white nose, a red forehead and two great white rings about his eyes, looking like unto some new baboon, a rondrous necklace and ear-rings, some cedar wristlets, and the much too short mat completed his attire. He was pretending to soften and scrape a deerskin. As I called the one word "So-pe-pe" (leap), and leap he did right into his tiny earth dwelling, and emerged a moment later a perspiring, much ashamed lad.



The dead giant and the impudent dwarf

## "Unk-Wa"

By H. Mortimer Batten.

IT was the boy's first trip into the woods with his father. A week ago they had left Porcupine Creek, where the boy had spent the twelve happy years of his life, and made their way by canoe through the great chain of lakes to the little known country of the Whitefish Ponds, to the North of Thunder Bay, where, some months previously, the boy's father had pegged out a number of claims.

The old man was now busy with the assessment work, and as the boy was still too small to handle a pick, he was left in charge of camp each day, and thus had plenty of time to explore the surrounding woods.

It was the third day out that he made the great discovery. He was wandering through a poplar grove, quite near to camp, when his attention was arrested by a strange sound. It came from among the trees overhead—a constant grunting and squealing. This way and that it led him, for as soon as he reached the place from which it had seemed to proceed it commenced elsewhere—"Unk-Wa, unk-wa, unk-wa," then a weezy squeal.

At length the boy caught sight of a strange animal resting among the slender branches of a poplar sapling twelve feet above his head. Its back was towards the ground, its fore and hind legs clasped separate branches so that its body was stretched out to full length, and as the breeze moved the tree the animal grunted and squealed laboriously.

"A porky!" cried the boy in delight. He had never seen a porcupine before, so cutting a long branch he proceeded to poke the unfortunate beast in the stomach.

The unexpected happened, as it invariably does when one molests a strange animal. The porcupine loosened its hold of the branches, and dropping with a thud to the boy's feet began to walk foolishly in a circle.

It appeared harmless enough, and the boy stepped up to examine it more closely. Exactly what happened next he did not realize at the time. There was a soft hissing sound, a dry thud, and the boy was aware of a burning pain in his foot. He leapt aside just in time to evade a second lightning sweep of the porcupine's tail, and looking down saw that one of his small moccasins was bristling with quills.

The boy's interest in porcupines died instantly. He limped to his father, sorrowful and tearful, and the removing of those quills was an operation not to be forgotten.

That night, when the two sat over their tiny camp fire, the boy with one foot roughly bandaged in the sleeve of his father's shirt, the old man removed his pipe and began to discuss porcupines. "They ain't worth playin' with," he said, "but they're interesting beasts all the same. The greatest fools in all the woods I call them, but there is no animal better able to look after itself than a porcupine. Wolves and bears and lynxes won't touch them. These animals learn when they're cubs what

you've learnt to-day, and what I learnt when I was a cub.

"When your mother and I were living down Sweetwater George, there was one porky used to come round the shanty—walk in and out whenever it took the fit—"

"Tame?" interrupted the boy, regaining some of his lost interest in porcupines.

"They're all tame," said his father. "As I told you before, they fear nothing. Well, at first mother was kind of scared. When she tried to drive the beast out it would turn round and walk towards her. But she soon got used to it.

"If there was a bit of bacon rind anywhere, that porcupine would nose about till he found it. If there wasn't any bacon rind he'd return to his old friend the salted kipper box, and gnaw away at it till the noise set your mother's teeth on edge. It was a dry old box, but must have had a bit of flavor about it. The porky ate it all, 'cept the nails, in less than a fortnight.

"When the box was gone, he became rather a nuisance. You see, a porky has to gnaw something. One morning I heard the cow lowing and straining at her chain. Going to see what was worrying her I found the porky, bristles all spread, gnawing at the manger under her very nose.

"He also gnawed a chunk off the verandah, and one time when your sister Molly left her best doll on the step, where she had been knocking nails in with it, the porky gnawed off the doll's face. He finished off by gnawing a hole in my canoe, and that settled it.

"A porky will just eat anything. I've known valleys so lone and cold in winter time that even the wolves couldn't live there. Yet the porcupines lived and flourished. Their chief food is the bark of young poplar trees, but they can keep themselves fat on any sort of timber that happens to be handy.

"Nature blessed the porcupine more than she has blessed any other animal—save, perhaps the skunk. No animal will tackle a skunk. Nature gave him a brilliant brown and white coat, so that the other creatures could see him coming and make way for him. Nature gave the porcupine a loud grunt, which he utters whenever he walks, and other animals, hearing that grunt, move respectfully aside to let him pass. The porky never moves aside himself, for nature gave him quills instead of brains.

"In the forests across the line porcupines are protected by law. If a man gets lost in the woods, the porcupines are the only animals he can kill without a weapon. They—"

"Are they good eating?" queried the boy.

The old man shook his head. "I wouldn't eat one, unless it was porcupine or starvation. The niggers say that the best way to treat the meat is first to soak it in vinegar for five hours, to make it tender; then bury it in smouldering wood ashes, and let it bake underground for two and a half days. Dig it up and warm thoroughly in the oven, with plenty of butter and salt and pepper. Then dig another hole about twelve feet deep, and bury it for good."

The boy's mild blue eyes were fixed upon his father. He was thirsting for serious knowledge about porcupines.



A well bred pointer