

THE PROFESSOR'S PERILOUS BEAR TRAPPING.

By C. C. Farr.

THE Professor was seized with the ambition to catch a bear, so he persuaded Harry to secure him a bear trap, one with strong springs, and with jaws bristling with teeth. In fact, it became a joint stock company, or rather, a partnership of two, for Harry insisted that, if he secured the trap, he should be admitted into partnership in the bear that they were going to catch. The professor acquiesced to this proposal, and mighty preparations were made; moreover, the whole atmosphere became charged with mystery, and one secret consultation followed another in rapid succession, in which the bear trap figured conspicuously, so that Mrs. Sportsman finally protested against this monstrous engine of jaws, teeth, springs and chains, being dragged about over her polished floor.

"We shall have to get some kind of bait," said Harry. "Bear traps always have to be baited. The beasts won't walk into a trap unless there is something to attract them. They are mighty cussed in their habits. I wonder what is the best thing for bear."

"I think," answered the professor, reflectively, "that a bleating kid or a lamb tied with a string is the acknowledged method of baiting for wild beasts. I fear that we cannot get a kid, but perhaps Mrs. Sportsman would lend us a lamb."

"Mrs. Sportsman is a little too fond of her lambs," answered Harry, "and she has not one that she could spare; but she might lend us a cat; she has lots of them, and goodness knows they make noise enough, if that's what you want."

"I am afraid," said the professor, "that a cat, being carnivorous, and not herbivorous, a bear, which is also carnivorous, might fraternize with the cat, and possibly the two might combine to defeat our object. Perhaps Mr. Sportsman might give us some information on this matter. We will ask him."

So to Mr. Sportsman they went.

"You want to set a trap for a bear, where do you intend to set it? The bush is rather large, and the mathematical chances against a bear walking into your trap are also large."

"There is a well-beaten path on the edge of the clearance," said the professor. "We thought that if we set it

somewhere on that we might have a chance of catching one."

"That well-beaten track is made by my cattle, professor, and though I encourage sport, I do not wish to go to the expense of a cow or a calf on it, for that is what you would catch there."

"Dear me," said the professor, "where can we set it, then? We cannot set it in the lake, for you know that the bear is not aquatic, nor even amphibious."

"I can show you a good place," replied Mr. Sportsman. "There is a creek about three miles from here, a creek running through a succession of beaver meadows, that is the very place in which to set a bear trap. You will find on it, as on most creeks of the kind, a path, worn by generations of bears. As a rule, they have their bathing places on such a creek—nice little pools, cool and shady, and not too muddy; just enough mud at the bottom to enable them to sit comfortably."

"But what bait is the best for them?" asked the professor.

"Ah! there you ask a question of considerable magnitude. There are so many ways of baiting a bear trap. Anything does, and the more it smells the better the bear likes it. Indians use dried and tainted moose meat. Anything that, as Kipling says, 'will raise a blue sensation.' Some use rotten fish, and the bear himself, whose tastes certainly should be considered, has leanings that way—in fact, in the spring he glories in such diet."

"How does he get rotten fish?" asked the professor; "he surely does not sit on the edge of a lake or stream and wait for his breakfast until the fish go bad."

"Certainly not. In the spring the suckers crowd up to the little rapids on the creeks running into the different lakes. Then the bear goes fishing. He walks about the rapid and throws out the unfortunate suckers with his paw on to the banks, where he leaves them until they smell, which in the spring does not take long. The Indian knows of these spots where suckers abound, and when he finds that the bear has been fishing he also waits until the fish begin to smell; then he sits during the night patiently watching for the bear to come and eat his highly-flavored gamy suckers,

and thus in the uncertain light of darkness is able to get a shot at the bear."

"Well," said the professor, "I would not care to sit long inhaling such an unsavory aroma as that raised by dead and decomposing suckers; commend me to the trap."

"Oh, yes; I forgot the trap. The fact is, Indians will often prepare the places for their traps in the winter. I know an Indian on White River, a river running into the head of Lake Temikaming, who shoots about half a dozen or more moose in the winter and leaves them there where they fall for bait for bears. He goes in the spring and sets his traps at these carcasses. The sooner the traps are set the better, for one of the hardest things to do is to obliterate all signs and scent of man. The Indian tries to get his traps set before rain, and never expects much success until rain has fallen, for rain is, of course, the great effacer of all abnormal signs and scents. It is far easier, however, to trap a bear in the spring than in the fall, for in the spring a bear comes out of its den, hungry from its long winter fast, whereas in the fall it is fat and satiated with berries and nuts, upon which it principally feeds previous to its hibernation."

"Suppose," asked the professor, "that we were fortunate enough to catch a bear in our trap, how would we secure him when so caught? Would the trap have a taming effect upon him, and could we then take him out and despatch him?"

"Never monkey with a bear in a trap," answered Mr. Sportsman. "It is one of the worst things you can do. He would despatch you quick enough. A bear in a trap is a dangerous animal, and one that Indians most carefully avoid—far worse than when wounded by a bullet, for in the latter case, it might try to get away, whereas when held fast it has no alternative left but to fight. In any case that I have heard of where an Indian has been killed or maimed by a bear it was by one in a trap or wounded. The Indian always shoots it as soon as he can, for when the bear becomes aware of his proximity it redoubles its efforts to get away, and often the fool will have been so cut into by the jaws of the trap that this final exertion will release the bear by leaving its foot in the trap. By the by, it is generally the custom not to attach the chain to a solid, immovable object. The Indians usually prefer a young birch sapling, or even a small balsam tree—something that the bear can drag for some distance, but which finally gets caught against some log or tree, and this exercise tires the bear, so that by the time that it does become fast, his