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HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

BEAR HUNTING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.—II.

From the Brin River Valley we moved on, with a favourable slant in the wind, to a very beautiful inlet on the western side, unmarked in the latest Admiralty charts, but known to the Indians as the Inlet of Gilt-tu-yees. Here we found slides extending over a mile of country, a well-known haunt for bears at this season of the year, but still covered with snow, with green strips of grass along the edges of the ravines. We left camp early in the afternoon of our arrival at this glorious land-locked inlet, in plenty of time for a good spy and an evening stalk, nor had we to wait for more than half an hour under the shadow of the trees on the side facing the bear ground before a large black bear stepped into the sunlight on a knoll 500 feet above the water. He was three-quarters of a mile away when we first saw him, and looked immense. We watched him walk down to a narrow torrent of snow brook, where he drank eagerly, and then we sent the canoe flying across the inlet as fast as four pairs of arms could make her go. Directly her keel grated on the rocks we were ashore and off uphill after him. The wind had died away, and it became intensely still. At last we stood on the plateau, within fifty yards of where we had last seen our bear, and glancing downwards to the canoe, could see an oar held vertically in the direction of camp, telling us that our bear was ahead of and above us, though still invisible to us. With rifle at the ready we carefully approached the clump of trees indicated, and were actually within fifteen yards of the beast, when with an angry cough he was gone. Regrets were useless; we rushed to the highest point near us, and could follow his track through the brush by the swaying of the branches, but he never gave us the slightest chance of a shot. We spent several days at Gilt-tu-yees, but owing to the mild weather our chances were ruined by the thunder of continual avalanches, keeping game on the move and bears in the recesses of the forest. Day and night one heard a continuous roar as thousands of tons of snow fell ceaselessly in all directions.

From Gilt-tu-yees we moved back thirty miles to Kitlobo, at the head of Gardner Inlet proper, in the hope that the fortnight's interval might have brought fairer weather. We took up our abode in a deserted Indian hut at the mouth of the Kitlobo river. On the afternoon of our arrival we separated for the evening hunt, my companion watching some excellent slides at the junction of the Kitlobo and an unnamed river that evidently drains the country to the northward and eastward of the Kitlobo, while I took the Indians and the canoe to watch all the country for a mile down the west side of the inlet. We were soon afloat and had not rowed a furlong before the men sighted a bear on some narrow slides about a mile away. He was feeding close to the water, so we had to use the utmost caution. As we came nearer he would stop feeding occasionally, looking anxiously in our direction, and though a bear's eyesight is his weakest point, we rested on our oars until he again set to work munching great mouthfuls of grass from the openings among the trees. What little wind there was favoured us, and we were soon ashore, immediately below the strip of covert in which he was feeding.

The avalanches in this particular section of the mountains had cut the forest into consecutive strips of covert, leaving regular rides between each section, just as clean cut and bare of timber or undergrowth as the rides in any English game covert. Frank noiselessly stole up the slide where the bear had last been feeding in case he broke back. David and I taking the next one where we imagined he might next emerge. Five minutes, ten, twenty passed. A twig cracked, and out he came into the sunlight less than forty yards away, a glorious spectacle of a wild animal at home. He never saw us, as we crouched beside a log. The sun shone straight into his eyes and appeared to daze him, so I drew a bead on his broad shoulder and let him have it. It was the easiest chance imaginable, and no duffer could have failed to take advantage of it. This, our third bear, had a coat every bit as fine as his predecessors, and in size ranked a little smaller than our second.

Rowing home in the twilight we watched a Kemano Indian stalking a small brown bear on the hill above us, and were greatly interested to see the stalk end in the discomfiture of the Indian and the bear galloping a mile away over the distant snowfields. We hunted in the vicinity of the mouth of the Kitlobo river for at least ten days, and saw during that time at least a dozen bears, some of which doubtless were seen twice over. With the Kitimaat and Kemano Indians May 14 is deemed the first day of bear shooting from the fact that the average spring is so timed that the date in question is accepted as approximate.

Our fourth bear came to hand after many unsuccessful stalks in the Kitlobo country. We camped at the mouth of the Brin river, twenty-five miles from Kitlobo, and were watching some slides in the vicinity, when, half a mile away, a big black bear suddenly scrambled to the top of a withered pine tree in full view of the canoe. We were at a loss to account for this extraordinary behaviour when she lowered herself down again, and we went after her. The hillside at this point proved to be very precipitous, choked with fallen timber and dense underbrush, so thick that little or nothing could be seen until we climbed up a few hundred feet on to the rocky plateau where we had first seen the bear, when we paused for breath. Below us lay the canoe containing our companions; above us a steep but narrow cleft

in the rock showed us the stunted tree the bear had so recently climbed, and we crawled upwards beside a small cascade among the rocks to a point that seemed to cover the place where the bear lay feeding. Quietly we crawled up almost at the same instant, for our first shot, fired as she galloped away up the narrow cleft in the rocks, splintered the rocks ten yards ahead of her. She turned slightly at the second bullet, lost her balance on the slimy boulders, and the next moment came tumbling head over heels to the edge of a steep bluff, over which she fell 50 feet on to a ledge of jagged rocks below. Here she feebly tried to regain her foothold without success, and when we reached her after her second fall she was entangled in the bushes, stone dead. Meanwhile, our voices were drowned by overwhelming cries from a small cub. The little creature we easily caught, and subsequently regaled with a mixture of condensed milk and sugar. It is now the pet of the children in the park of Vancouver City.

May 28 proved to be the red-letter day of our trip. We left our camp at Brin river at

vast, precipitous rock wall towered upwards into the clear blue sky.

Every sense was naturally on the alert at the proximity of the bear, but the denouement was certainly unexpected. I heard Frank's excited yell from above me: "Look out, below there!" There was only one possible way to look, and that was along the game trail, but I certainly never expected to see that great brute appear suddenly on the very path on which I myself was standing, less than fifteen yards away. If he had not received a bullet in his great chest almost the instant he appeared in sight he would have undoubtedly pushed me off the trail. At the shot he fell sideways down-hill, and a second shot through the neck effectually settled him. This was the largest black bear killed up Gardner last season, a very fine male in perfect coat. Even the Indians, who speak of a skin with the critical eyes of a fur trader, were obliged to confess this great bear was one of the best they had ever seen. It took three of us to lift him out of the wedge into which he had fallen and roll him downhill towards the canoe. We had now the carcasses of two heavy bears on

of the two men amidst a thicket of cottonwoods. When we next saw them they were within a hundred yards of the unsuspecting bear, and we could see the glimmer of the rifle barrel in the sun. With the report of the shots the bear galloped away, but had not run a hundred yards before he rolled over among the rocks and we soon scrambled up to him. He proved to be a remarkably fine brown or cinnamon bear, only a few inches shorter than our last black one, with a coat of almost chestnut hue, thick and glossy. My companion, who has probably killed more bears than any other non-professional hunter in British Columbia, was justly proud of the beast.

We had now three bears to engage our attention for the next three hours, and while three of us set to work skinning, David prepared a savory meal. It took us until three in the afternoon to clean and stretch the skins, when suddenly Frank exclaimed, "Look there!" We all sprang to our feet and followed the direction of his outstretched hand. There, less than half a mile uphill, fast asleep on a huge isolated boulder, lay a great black bear. Incredible though it may seem, we had for more

a mile before Frank finally gave him the coup de grace, he was obviously ours from the first. It turned out subsequently that the first bullet, aimed for his shoulder as he lay outstretched, had struck him too low, and was within an ace of inflicting a trivial wound that would have lost him to us for ever.

Our luck for the day was now about finished, for though we sighted yet another bear on the east side just before sundown, he was too high up, and it was too dark, too late, and too dangerous to go after him. We cruised down the Inlet for another fortnight, and saw bears in several of the subsidiary valleys, but with our great day at the Brin River our adventures were practically at an end. We were detained by contrary winds and bad weather for another week before reaching the nearest settlement, when a south-bound steamer might be expected, and two idle days had to be wasted before a steamer of any kind came along and bore us southwards.

Looking back at the results of that trip and the number of bears seen, I am more than ever convinced of the necessity of being on the spot as early in the spring as possible, for once the leaves cover the cottonwood bushes the bears are lost in a veritable jungle.—John H. Wrigley in The Field.

THE LADY AND THE TARPON

One day I said to my boatman: "It's twelve minutes to twelve o'clock let's start for the launch and hurry to the hotel." He answered, "Your wife has just hooked a fish." I looked back and saw at once that she was fast to a hummer. I quickly reeled up; we anchored our boat and followed her in the launch. This fish was a heavy one and only made three jumps, none of which carried it clean out of the water. It was plain to me that she was in for a long and hard fight—how long, none of us ever dreamed. The fish zig-zagged and fought clean into the breakers. At this time it was fully 600 feet from the boat. Occasionally it would raise its head and slash the water into foam; so far from the boat that one could scarcely tell whether it was a small whitecap breaking or the silvery head of the fish. It carried her down the pass, going with the tide past Tarpon Inn to the lighthouse, fully two miles from shore. She had now been fighting this fish for two hours, and I wished with all my heart that she had never hooked it. Just about this time the most unfortunate thing that could happen did happen. Her reel-handle unscrewed and came off, the screw dropping in between the latticed board flooring which covered the bottom of the boat. To add to her difficulties the flooring was nailed fast. I ran as close alongside as I dared, just in time to hear her command her boatman to rip it up, which he quickly did. Soon the screw was found and, believe it or not, she fixed on the handle, and screwed it on, unaided by her boatman. Meanwhile, she held on and kept a tight line as best she could. With the reel again in order, she started hard after the fish, now easily 250 yards from the boat. About this time I remembered that in the morning she had asked me to buy her boatman a new gaff, and had told me that the one we had was too short and utterly unfit for the work. From this time until within a quarter of a mile of Lydia Ann, I really suffered. I would have given any price for a fit gaff, and not a chance in the world was there to get one in time.

Three hours had passed, and the utmost that rod and tackle would stand was to get the fish within perhaps fifty feet of the boat, with occasional runs of fifty to seventy-five feet. Nerve-wearing hours passed—the fish now within twenty feet of the boat. Occasionally the tarpon would roll to the top and we could see that it was seven feet long, or nearly so.

Nearer and nearer she brought her prize, every minute closer and closer to the boat. The fish was fairly licked, but fought on, resisting with every atom of strength each inch of line she reeled in. At 4:15 p. m., the boatman was standing up with his pitiful, short little gaff in hand; the tired angler doing her best to bring the fish within gaffing distance. At 4:17 the gaff was driven home, only to tear out and snap the line. The fish seemed unable to get away, but lay broadside on the water, notwithstanding the line was broken. Again the boatman tore out. Then, sad to relate, the incoming tide drifted the boat too far away and the fish slowly swam out of sight, rolling from one side to the other as it went down. We put on full power, and soon the launch was alongside and we had the now weeping little woman aboard. I know that my eyes were far from dry. Her boatman's cheeks were dripping tears, and while my boatman's face was almost entirely hidden, I could see that his chin was quivering just a little and that he, too, was feeling dead sorry for the game little 120-pound lady who had lost her prize after a fight of four hours and twenty-nine minutes, merely because of an unreliable gaff.

When we arrived at the hotel, however, everybody was so very kind and sympathetic, that soon everything was forgotten, except glory for the fish and the certainty that he was a chieftain of his tribe.—WILL H. DILL, in Field and Stream.

"My boy," said a baker to a Scotch laddie who complained of the quality of his pies, "I made pies before you were born." "Ay," said the youngster sadly, "this is ane o' them."

It's too bad laughter in sleeves doesn't come from the funnybone instead of hypocrisy.



AT THE CLOSE OF A
DAY'S RARE SPORT

four in the morning, and had not travelled a mile before we spied a heavy black bear on the east side of the inlet, feeding amidst thick cottonwood brush within a hundred yards of the water. From our point of view he could not have chosen a better position. The wind blew steadily in our faces; above where he was feeding impassable crags towered away up to the snow line; down wind his retreat was cut off by a precipice, and when we had hastily blocked his only outlet on the up-wind side we realised he was bound to afford a shot. It was, however, a dangerous manoeuvre to give him our wind before the canoe reached shore, but we were ready directly the bear realised his awkward predicament. He was probably just out of his winter quarters, for he sulked in the bushes out of sight. I motioned Frank to stir him up, and waited by the trunk of a dead tree, where a narrow game trail led through the bush in his direction. From this position I moved forward to a point where the game trail crossed a narrow cleft in the steep hillside, offering perhaps fifteen or twenty yards' clear view ahead. Through the tops of the pine trees on the left one could see the silvery glimmer of the sea below, and on the right the

board, the female of the previous night and the one just killed, so we hoisted the spritsail and made short tracks to a length of sandy beach, where the warm sun offered a congenial point for the operation of skinning.

At this particular point Gardner Inlet takes a complete rectangular bend, its course changing from a direct N.E. by E. to one in an almost contrary direction. This huge bend forms a sheltered bay on the eastern side, where the sun had evidently melted the snow earlier than usual, and the resulting avalanches had left a succession of bare slides stretching from the water's edge for a mile up to the snow line. Every inch of this grand country needed careful spying, nor were we long in finding what we were in search of.

David, whose keen eyes were glued to the rock walls immediately below the snow, was the first to sight him, a great brown fellow, though whether a grizzly or not we were unable to determine at the distance. The country was more or less open, with here and there clumps of stunted trees in the centre of glades devoid of underbrush, while the wind-swept slides were completely bare of covert. My companion and his guide were soon away up hill after this bear, and for a time we lost sight

than two hours cooked our food, laughed, talked, and smoked our pipes while that bear walked up and had gone to sleep practically within rifle shot. With his head resting on his outstretched forepaws, he was evidently oblivious of our proximity.

From where we stood the bare hillside stretched upwards to the snow line a mile away, and he lay on a boulder about halfway up the slope. Frank and I had merely to change our boots for rubber-soled shoes, throw off our coats, and away up the centre of a narrow cleft filled with muddy, melting snow. Beneath this crust of snow a noisy little stream dashed downwards in a series of waterfalls to the sea below, effectually drowning any noise from our footsteps, affording us a grand approach to within a hundred yards of the bear. The wind was just right, and an easier stalk could hardly be imagined. Then we climbed 100 feet to the lip of the gully, raised our heads cautiously, to find ourselves within fifty yards of the still sleeping animal. One had but to raise the rifle to a convenient position, push up the safety catch, and draw a fatal bead on his shoulder. At the shot he fell or rolled off the rock in one frenzied dive into the thicket below, and though he wormed his way for half