

A Bear Hunt in the Kootenays

By SHERWOOD B. MARSHALL

"YOU actually saw marks of bear on the trees ten feet above the ground? Come now, Jack, you know your failing. Remember, I am no tenderfoot. Ten feet, why that's as high as the ceiling."

"Well, candidly, I cannot quite understand it myself unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless it was a grizzly."

* * * * *

In the fall of '01, when I was hunting and prospecting along the "Crow," I happened to run short of grub and came into Cranbrook to replenish my supply. After I had attended to everything and was sitting in the hotel enjoying the luxury of a chair, my attention was by chance drawn to the above conversation. I had not decided where to go next and would have paid no further attention had it not been for the last word, "grizzly."

Immediately after speaking, the younger of the two stood up and moving toward the bar beckoned his friend to come along. Then seeing me for the first time he said, "You had better come along too, stranger." I at once accepted.

After we had set up the drinks a couple of times, we became quite friendly and I found out that they had come in from the country west of the Columbia the day before to get their prospecting licenses renewed, and were going out again that night.

I asked the younger of the two about the marks he had seen on the trees and he told me that a couple of nights before, while camping between the two ranges, he had seen what was undoubtedly the marks of a large "grizzly" where he had been scratching the barks off the trees. I immediately offered to join them to see if we could not get Mr. Bruin. To this they seemed quite agreeable, when they saw that I had had considerable experience in hunting, and also a good full outfit, and would evidently be good company.

We arrived at Kootenay Landing next morning, and after procuring a couple of canoes and Indians, set out up the river. We paddled about eight miles, paid off the Indians with half a dozen plugs of chewing tobacco, and hit the trail until about dusk. We then camped right in the heart of the hills about a mile from where the "grizzly" had left his marks. After supper we had a smoke and went to bed, though I tried in vain to persuade one of our party to come with me up the mountain to see if we could find any traces of the bear; but he could not see it my way.

It must have been about midnight when I awakened. Something seemed to be on my mind—the nearness of having my dreams realised and the strangeness of my surroundings, probably. So when I found I could not sleep I picked up my rifle, a Savage carbine, which I always preferred on account of its handiness in the bush, lighted my pipe, and decided I would take a walk.

It was bright moonlight—almost like day; not a breath of wind, and the very air seemed hushed. I had wandered on probably a quarter of a mile, thinking the while of my friends in the east, but as I walked a feeling of loneliness crept over me. The trees rose up ghostly and weird; strange noises from time to time cut the stillness like a knife and caused cold shivers to run up and down my spine. The mountains loomed up on either hand—awful in their majesty. My very shadow seemed unearthly and whenever I happened to tread on a dead limb the noise made me grip my rifle till my fingers ached and my heart almost ceased to beat. The awful lonesomeness of the mountains seemed to clutch my heart and I could hardly breathe.

I was about to turn and run in reckless fear when suddenly I heard a sound which rooted me to the spot. Then the hunting blood went surging through my veins and my heart was again beating naturally and once more my nerves were like steel. The terrible spell of loneliness was broken, as with a deep whoof! whoof! accompanied by a crashing of boughs Mr. Bruin arose from where he had been spending the day, and came out to hunt frogs, little dreaming of the welcome that was awaiting him in the shape of a "303 soft point."

My rifle had unconsciously leaped to my shoulder and I stood there facing what seemed to me an elephant, walking on his hind legs, about twenty-five yards away. After what seemed to me a long time I found myself still facing him as he continued to advance; then summoning all my strength, I pulled the trigger. He came at me, and I saw a

spurt of blood along the side of his head. Springing to one side, and grabbing a young sapling to enable me to turn quickly, I pumped three bullets behind his shoulders in quick succession. With a wild roar he bit the spot where the bullets entered, then turned and ran.

I did not try to follow as it would have been very dangerous, especially at night, and besides the strain I had been through was too much so that I was almost exhausted. I retraced my steps toward the camp.

About half way back I met the rest of the party running my way. They had been awakened out of a sound sleep by the noise of my rifle, and wondered what had happened. We returned to the camp together, and at daylight took up the trail from where I had first shot. It was plainly visible both from the blood and by the way the underbrush was trampled down. After we had gone about a mile, we saw where he had steadied down after his headlong flight, and we could see that although badly, he was not mortally wounded.

His tracks led us through heavy underbrush, which was very difficult getting through, for about

two miles, then struck off at right angles for the mountains. After some very tedious climbing, when almost exhausted beneath the cruel glare of the sun which reflected mercilessly off the arid rocks, and when hope of ever again encountering the bear had almost been extinguished, we came over a sharp rise and upon the object of our search. He saw us almost immediately and rose up on his hind legs, wild-eyed and menacing, but as our rifles cracked together, came at us. I happened to be slightly in advance of the other two and as I turned to dodge him, my foot slipped and I came crashing to the ground. In a second the bear had me in its terrible embrace. I tried to draw my knife but was too late. I could feel his hot breath on my face—and we fell together.

When I came to myself I was lying on the ground with my head pillowed on the grizzly and my two friends standing over me. In a few minutes I had recovered my wind, which the bear had squeezed out of me. Soon I was able to examine the carcass. The whole top of his head was blown off where the others had shot when he grabbed me, but he was one of the most magnificent specimens of a bear that I had ever seen. When we had skinned him we returned to the camp.

After resting a couple of days I went back to Cranbrook, where I sold the hide for a hundred dollars, a transaction which I have never ceased to regret.

My First Hunting Experience

By J. H. TERNEY

WE were a merry party of ten that on the morning of Thursday, October 29th, entrained at Beaverton on the Canadian Northern Ontario, bound for the wilderness lying north of the French River, to track and if possible to capture the wily and elusive deer. The lure of the Northland was in every man's heart, and there were ten of us. We had come from different parts of the province, but only one ambition animated every breast—to forget for a while our little cares and worries, in the enjoyment of a holiday where Nature is to be found in her rugged yet attractive form.

What a motley crowd was there! Two or three novices who had never smelt the camp-fire's smoke, nor packed the trail under the shaggy foliage of the northern fir-lands; several old-timers whose first hunt ante-dated the smokeless cartridge or even the modern repeater, yet eager for another sniff of the healing breath of the unpeopled wilds; business men and lawyers, doctors and clergymen, all seeking the repose of the great shadow-land, and if possible, some trophy of the untamed wilderness.

On we sped over the beautiful road which financial enterprise and engineering skill have made a throbbing artery of commerce and pleasure. Innumerable lakes, rock-robbed hills, lonely muskegs, illimitable forests—these in rapid and fantastic succession flew past as the great mogul engine throbbed its tortuous way over its bed of steel, drawing in snake-like procession its train of palace coaches, fit for the aristocracy (and such we thought ourselves) of any country in the world.

In rapid succession we passed Washago, Parry Sound, Shawanaga, Still River, South and North Maganetawan, the Pickerel and French Rivers with their long steel bridges, and arrived at last at our unknown and lonely destination, the most adventurous party in the most remote camp in the wilderness of Southern Nipissing. We were fortunate in securing a deserted engineer's camp, on the shore of as beautiful a lake as ever nature bedded in the fastnesses of the eternal granite; but it was two a.m. on Friday before the last man of the bunch settled himself comfortably among the blankets.

Morning broke cold, clear and inviting. Over to the east the sun was rising over as entrancing a scene as ever charmed the sight of man—undulating masses of adamant grandeur, thickly studded with the charred relics of former greatness, rising like grim sentinels amidst an almost unbroken frontage of pulp-wood, ash, poplar, birch and jack-pine, eagerly pushing upward as if endeavouring to hide the disaster of former days, or afford a shelter for their mighty though stricken predecessors now hastening to decay. Northward the limpid waters of the lake, whose placid bosom was pierced by a succession of cone-shaped islands, stretched arms of welcome east and west, musically lapping the walls of their granite prison, or baptising with matutinal freshness the

sandy stretches, where deer and bear were wont to quench their thirst.

Big game "signs" were everywhere abundant. The "borrow-pit" near the big rock cut where we detrained was literally cut into sections like a checkerboard by the sharp hoofs of the white-tailed deer. On every sandy lakeside reach could be read the history of daily visits. Mossy ridges covered with scrub-oak despoiled of their branches, betrayed the secrets of Bruin's high carnival on the nutritious acorns. The "sacred" partridge strutted amid the ferns, gazing curiously at the strange two-legged creatures whom he had not yet learned to fear. Beaver, muskrat, mink and otter disported themselves in the aqueous element, which afforded them protection and a home. It is indeed a "happy hunting ground," a veritable paradise for the sons of Nimrod.

On exploring the lake, the beautiful Ka-ke-ki-wa-gan-da of Algonquin lore, we found an ancient but commodious vessel, left to her fate by her former masters. We at once re-launched her, brought her to port under her own canvas, constituted ourselves a gang of ship-builders, re-fitted her hull and promptly put her into commission. Many were the guesses as to her origin and history. Jack, the Tory politician of the party, disgustingly expressed his belief that she was the Minnie M. of "Soo" election fame. Joe said that she must be Noah's Ark and that the mountain in the distance was Ararat. But all agreed that of all the ship's afloat "there was not another like it," and merry excursions were made upon her by all hands to the tune of "Pull for the Shore."

Saturday, November 7th, was big game day. The dogs did their work nobly and Harry, who had taken the canoe to watch the lake, had a contract on his hands, which only skilful seamanship and unerring aim enabled him to bring to a successful conclusion. The game came in showers. Four bucks and a big black bear at once, is rather more than a modest citizen can successfully maroon on a four-mile lake. However, Harry came off with flying colours, and two of the finest deer that ever polished antlers on the "runway" saplings were suspended that night as a tribute to the "man behind the gun." Bob, too, was one of fortune's favourites. The spiteful snap of the 30-30 laid one of equal size and beauty at his feet. Somehow or other that night when we all gathered round the camp-fire to satisfy the cravings of the inner man, admiration for his skill became the parent of sweet forgiveness.

Next day being Sunday was quietly spent, but bright and early Monday morning the Doctor took the canoe and with Harry in the stern to paddle, landed another antlered monarch to adorn the pole. Such a quartette of size and beauty could not be found, so we thought, between Parry Sound and Sudbury.

(Concluded on page 14)