

## THE BLACK BEAR.



AMONG the rapidly-diminishing victims of creation the Black Bear is one of the most pertinaciously sacrificed. Unfortunately for him his fur and his fat are of great value, and soon it will not be truthfully said of him that he inhabits every wooded district of North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Carolina to the Arctic Sea. It is smaller than the brown bear, and though it hibernates during the winter in the fur countries, yet in very severe winters it has been known to migrate southwards to the United States. So much is its fur used for military purposes that it is called the Army Bear. There is little if any difference between the general habits of the black and brown bear, and what is said of the latter may roughly apply to the former. Its fur is smoother, and perhaps the animal is fiercer; and the chase of the black bear is exceedingly dangerous, and it is said that there are very few bear-hunters who do not in the end succumb to their intended victim. When brought to bay, it is a truly furious beast. "Seated erect, with its eyeballs darting fury, its ears laid closely upon its head, its tongue lolling out of its mouth, and every gesture glowing with fierce energy, it presents a sight sufficient to unnerve any but an experienced hunter. Horses are almost useless, for unless specially trained they are seized with such terror at the sight and scent of the bear that they become wholly unmanageable in their frantic plunges. As the bear stands, or rather sits, at bay, it deals such terrible and rapid blows with its ready paws that it strikes down the attacking dogs as if they were so many rabbits, and ever and anon makes a furious and

eccentric charge at its enemies. During the month of June their flesh is of no value whatever, at other times it is much sought and relished, particularly the hams, and as they are also then selecting their mates, and particularly ferocious among themselves and to man, they are then avoided."

But the Indians are always superstitious concerning this bear or the Musquaw, as is illustrated in the following account by Mr. A. Henry, who had been told of one which had taken up his quarters in a pine-tree:—

"In the morning we surrounded the tree, both men and women, as many at a time as could conveniently work at it, and there we toiled like beavers till the sun went down. This day's work carried us about half way through the trunk, and the next morning we renewed the attack, continuing it till about two o'clock in the afternoon, when the tree fell to the ground. For a few minutes everything remained quiet, and I feared that all our expectations would be disappointed; but, as I advanced to the opening, there came out, to the satisfaction of all our party, a bear of extraordinary size, which I shot. The bear being dead all my assistants approached, and all, but particularly my old mother (as I was wont to call her), took the head in their hands, stroking and kissing it several times; begging a thousand pardons for taking away her life, calling her their relation and grandmother, and requesting her not to lay the fault upon them, since it was truly an Englishman that had put her to death. This ceremony was not of long duration, and if it was I that killed their grandmother, they were not themselves behindhand in what remained to be performed.

The skin being taken off, we found

the fat in several places six inches deep. This being divided into two parts loaded two persons, and the flesh parts were as much as four persons could carry. In all

family, such as silver armbands and wristbands, and belts of wampun, and then laid upon a scaffold set up for its reception within the lodge. Near the



A FAMILY PARTY.

the carcass must have exceeded five hundred weight. As soon as we reached the lodge the bear's head was adorned with all the trinkets in the possession of the

nose was placed a large quantity of tobacco. The next morning no sooner appeared than preparations were made for a feast to the manes. The lodge

was cleaned and swept, and the head of the bear lifted up, and a new Stroud blanket, which had never been used before, spread under it. The pipes were now lit, and Wawatam blew tobacco smoke into the nostrils of the bear, telling me to do the same, and thus appease the anger of the bear on account of my having killed her. I endeavoured to persuade my benefactor and friendly adviser that she no longer had any life, and assured him that I was under no apprehension from her displeasure; but the first proposition obtained no credit, and the second gave but little satisfaction. At length, the feast being ready, Wawatam made a speech resembling in many respects his address to the manes of his relations and departed companions, but having this peculiarity, that he here deplored the necessity under which men laboured to destroy their friends. He represented, however, that the misfortune was unavoidable, since without doing so they could by no means subsist. The speech ended, we all ate heartily of the bear's flesh; and even the head itself, after remaining three days on the scaffold, was put into the kettle."

The following story illustrative of the habits of the black bear is worth perpetuating:—

What amused us most in the Lake House last summer was the performance of a bear in the back yard.

He was fastened to a pole by a chain, which gave him a range of a dozen or fifteen feet. It was not very safe for visitors to come within that circle, unless they were prepared for rough handling.

He had a way of suddenly catching you to his bosom, and picking your pockets of peanuts and candy—if you carried any about you—in a manner which took your breath away. He stood up to his work on his hind legs in a quite human fashion, and used to paw and tongue with amazing skill and

vivacity. He was friendly and didn't mean any harm, but he was a rude playfellow.

I shall never forget the ludicrous adventure of a dandified New Yorker, who came out into the yard to feed bruin on seed-cakes, and did not feed him fast enough.

He approached a trifle too near, when all at once the bear whipped an arm about him, took him to his embrace, and "went through" his pockets in a hurry. The terrified face of the struggling and screaming fop, and the good-natured, business-like expression of the fumbling and munching beast, offered the funniest sort of a contrast.

The one-eyed hostler, who was the bear's especial guardian, lounged quite leisurely to the spot.

"Keep still, and he won't hurt ye," he said, turning his quid. "That's one of his tricks. Throw out what you've got, and he'll leave ye."

The dandy made haste to help bruin to the last of the seed-cakes, and escaped without injury, but in a ridiculous plight—his hat smashed, his necktie and linen rumped, and his watch dangling; but his fright was the most laughable part of all.

The one-eyed hostler then made a motion to the beast, who immediately climbed the pole and looked at us from the cross-piece at the top.

"A bear," said the one-eyed hostler, turning his quid again, "is the best-hearted, knowin'est critter that goes on all-fours. I'm speakin' of our native black bear, you understand. The brown bear ain't half so respectable, and the grizzly bear is one of the ugliest brutes in creation. Come down here, Pomp."

Pomp slipped down the pole and advanced toward the one-eyed hostler, walking on his hind legs and rattling his chain.

"Playful as a kitten!" said the one-eyed hostler fondly. "I'll show ye."

He took a wooden bar from a clothes-



BEAR AND PREY.

horse near by, and made a lunge with it at Pomp's breast.

No pugilist or fencing-master could have parried a blow more neatly. Then the one-eyed hostler began to thrust and strike with the bar as if in downright earnest.

"Rather savage play," I remarked.

"Oh, he likes it!" said the one-eyed hostler. "Ye can't hit him."

And indeed it was so. No matter how or where the blow was aimed, a movement of Pomp's paw, as quick as a flash of lightning, knocked it aside, and he stood good-humouredly waiting for more. "Once in a while," said the one-eyed hostler, resting from the exercise and leaning on the bar, while Pomp retired to his pole, "there's a bear of this species that's vicious and bloodthirsty. Generally, you let them alone, and they'll let you alone. They won't run from you, maybe, but they won't go out of their way to pick a quarrel. They don't swagger around with a chip on their shoulder lookin' for some fool to knock it off."

"Will they eat you?" some one inquired; for there was a ring of spectators around the performers by this time.

"As likely as not, if they are sharp-set, and you lay yourself out to be eaten, but it ain't their habit to go for human flesh. Roots, nuts, berries, and any small game they can pick up, satisfies their humble appetites as a general thing."

The one-eyed hostler leaned against the post, stroked Pomp's fur affectionately, and, continued somewhat in this style:—

Bears are particularly fond of fat, juicy pigs; and once give 'em a taste of human flesh—why, I shouldn't want my children to be playing in the woods within a good many miles of their den!

Which reminds me of old Two Claws, as they used to call him, a bear that plagued the folks over in Bridgetown,

where I was brought up, wall, as many as forty years ago.

He got his name from the peculiar shape of his foot, and he got that from trifling with a gun-trap. You know what that is—a loaded gun set in such a way that a bear or any game that's curious about it must come up to it the way it p'int's; a bait is hung before the muzzle, and a string runs from that to the trigger.

He was a cunning fellow, and he put out an investigatin' paw at the piece of pork before trying his jaws on it; so instead of gettin' a bullet in the head, he merely had a bit of his paw shot off. There were but two claws left on that foot, as his tracks showed.

He got off; but his experience seemed to have soured his disposition. He owed a spite to the settlement.

One night a great row was heard in my uncle's pig-pen. He and the boys rushed out with pitchforks, a gun, and a lantern. They knew what the trouble was, or soon found out. A huge black bear had broken down the side of the pen; he had seized a fat porker, and was actually lugging him off in his arms! The pig was kicking and squealing, but the bear had him fast. He did not seem at all inclined to give up his prey, even when attacked. He looked sullen and ugly, but a few jabs from a pitchfork and a shot in the shoulder convinced him that he was making a mistake.

He dropped the pig and ran away before my uncle could load up for another shot. The next morning they examined his tracks. It was old Two Claws.

But what sp'ilt him for being a quiet neighbour was something that happened about a year after that.

There was a roving family of Indians encamped near the settlement; hunting, fishing, and making mocassins and baskets, which they traded with the whites. One afternoon the Red-Sky-of-

the-Morning, wife of the Water-Snake-with-the-Long-Tail, came over to the settlement with some of their truck for sale. She had a papoose on her back strapped on a board; another squaw travelled with her, carrying an empty jug.

Almost within sight of Gorman's grocery, Red-Sky took off her papoose and hung it on a tree. The fellows around the store had made fun of it when she was there once before, so she preferred to leave it in the woods rather than expose it to the coarse jokes of the boys. The little thing was used to such treatment. Whether carried or hung up, papoosey never cried.

The squaws traded off their truck, and bought, with other luxuries of civilisation, a gallon of whisky. They drank out of the jug, and then looked at more goods. Then they drank again, and from being shy and silent, as at first, they giggled and chatted like a couple of silly white girls. They spent a good deal more time and money at Gorman's than they would if it hadn't been for the whisky, but finally they started to go back through the woods.

They went chattering and giggling to the tree where the papoose had been left. There was no papoose there.

This discovery sobered them. They thought at first that the fellows around the store had played them a trick by taking it away, but by-and-by the Red-Sky-of-the-Morning set up a shriek.

She had found the board not far off, but no papoose strapped to it, only something told the story of what had happened.

There were bear-tracks around the spot. One of the prints showed only two claws.

The Red-Sky-of-the-Morning went back to camp with the news; the other squaw followed with the jug.

When the Water-Snake-with-the-Long-Tail heard that his papoose had been eaten by a bear, he felt, I suppose,

very much as any white father would have felt under the circumstances. He vowed vengeance against old Two Claws, but consoled himself with a drink of the fire-water before starting on the hunt.

The braves with him followed his example. It wasn't in Indian nature to start until they had emptied the jug, so it happened that old Two Claws got off again. Topsy braves can't follow a trail worth a cent.

Not very long after that a woman in a neighbouring settlement heard her children scream one day in the woods near the house. She rushed out and actually saw a bear lugging off her youngest.

She was a sickly, feeble sort of woman, but such a sight was enough to give her the strength and courage of a man. She ran and caught up an axe. Luckily she had a big dog. The two went at the bear.

The old fellow had no notion of losing his dinner just for a woman and a mongrel cur. But she struck him a tremendous blow on the back; at the same time the pup got him by the leg. He dropped the young one to defend himself. She caught it up and ran, leaving the two beasts to have it out together.

The bear made short work with the cur; but instead of following the woman and child, he skulked off into the wood.

The settlers got together for a grand hunt, but old Two Claws—for the tracks showed that he was the scoundrel—escaped into the mountains, and lived to make more trouble another day.

The child? Oh, the child was scarcely hurt. It had got squeezed and scratched a little in the final tussle; that was all. As to the bear, he was next heard of in our settlement.

The hostler hesitated, winked his one eye with an odd expression, put a fresh quid into his cheek, and finally resumed.

A brother-in-law of my uncle, a man

of the name of Rush, was one day chopping in the woods about half a mile from his house, when his wife went out to carry him his luncheon. She left two children at home, a boy about five years old, and a baby just big enough to toddle around.

The boy had often been told that if he strayed into the woods with his brother a bear might carry them off, and she charged him again that forenoon not to go away from the house; but he was an enterprising little fellow, and when the sun shone so pleasantly and the woods looked so inviting he wasn't to be afraid of bears.

The woman stopped to see her husband fell a big beech he was cutting, and then went back to the house; but just before she got there she saw the older boy coming out of the woods on the other side. He was alone. He was white as a sheet, and so frightened at first he couldn't speak.

"Johnny," says she, catching hold of him, "what is the matter?"

"A bear!" he gasped out at last.

"Where is your little brother?" was her next question.

"I don't know," said he, too much frightened to know anything just then.

"Where did you leave your brother?" says she.

Then he seemed to have gotten his wits together a little. "A bear took him!" said he.

You can guess what sort of an agony the mother was in.

"Oh, Johnny, tell me true! Think! Where was it?"

"In the woods," he said. "Bear come along—I run."

She caught him up, and hurried with him into the woods. She begged him to show her where he was with his little brother when the bear came along. He pointed out two or three places. In one of them the earth was soft. There were fresh tracks crossing it—bear-tracks. There was no doubt about it.

It was a terrible situation for a poor woman. Whether to follow the bear and try to recover her child, or go at once for her husband, or alarm the neighbours; what to do with Johnny meanwhile—all that would have been hard enough for her to decide even if she had had her wits about her.

She hardly knew what she did, but just followed her instinct, and ran with Johnny in her arms, or dragging him after her, to where her husband was chopping.

Well, I needn't try to describe what followed. They went back to the house, and Rush took his rifle and started on the track of the bear, vowing that he would not come back without either the child or the bear's hide.

The news went like wildfire through the settlement. In an hour and a-half a dozen men with their dogs were on the track with Rush. It was so much trouble for him to follow the trail that they soon overtook him, with the help of the dogs.

But in spite of them the bear got into the mountains. Two of the dogs got up with him, and one, the only one that could follow a scent, had his back broken by a stroke of his paw. After that it was almost impossible to track him, and one after another the hunters gave up and returned home.

At last Rush was left alone, but nothing could induce him to turn back. He shot some small game in the mountains, which he cooked for his supper; slept on the ground, and started on the trail again in the morning.

Along in the forenoon he came in sight of the bear as he was crossing a stream. He had a good shot at him as he was climbing the bank on the other side.

The bear kept on, but it was easier tracking him after that by his blood.

That evening a hunter, haggard, his clothes all in tatters, found his way to a backwoodsman's hut over in White's Valley. It was Rush. He told his story

in a few words as he rested on a stool. He had found no traces of his child, but he had killed the bear. It was old Two Claws. He had left him on the hills and come to the settlement for help.

The hunt had taken him a roundabout course, and he was then not more than seven miles from home. The next day, gun in hand, with the bear skin strapped to his back—the carcass he had given to his friend, the backwoodsman—he started to return by an easier way through the woods.

It was a sad revenge he had had, but there was a grim sort of satisfaction in bringing home the hide of old Two Claws.

As he came in sight of his log house, out ran his wife to meet him, with—what do you suppose?—little Johnny dragging at her skirts, and the lost child in her arms! Then, for the first time, the man dropped, but he didn't get down any further than his knees. He clung to his wife and baby, and thanked God for the miracle.

But it wasn't much of a miracle after all. Johnny had been playing around

the door, and lost sight of the baby—and maybe forgotten all about him—when he strayed into the woods and saw the bear. Then he remembered all that he had heard of the danger of being carried off and eaten, and of course he had a terrible fright. When asked about his little brother he didn't know anything about him, and I suppose imagined that the bear had got him.

But the baby had crawled into a snug place under the side of the rain-trough, and there he was, fast asleep all the while. When he awoke two or three hours after, and his mother heard him cry, her husband was far away on the hunt.

"True—this story I've told?" added the one-eyed hostler, as some one questioned him. "Every word of it!"

"But your name is Rush, isn't it?" I said. The one eye twinkled humorously.

"My name is Rush. My uncle's brother-in-law was my own father."

"And you?" exclaimed a bystander.

"I," said the one-eyed hostler, "am the very man who warn't eaten by the bear when I was a baby!"

