



Painted for Oettinger by C. Rungles.

"Sucking out a Grizzly." (pp. 225-226.)

"OLD EPHRAIM" (THE GRIZZLY).

SMOKING OUT A GRIZZLY.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR.



MANY blood-curdling tales have been told of the sanguinary ferocity of "Old Eph-

raim," and the large majority of the reading public have come to regard any chance meeting between his grizzled majesty and a human being as the signal for a duel to the death, provided said biped had no other means of locomotion than those afforded by nature. No doubt this is the rule during certain seasons of the year, as in the fall, when amorous Eph is on the rampage, or later in the season, when a sudden storm has snowed up his usual supply of food. Then, like a hungry man, Ephraim is an ugly customer to cross.

On the other hand, when a plentiful crop of berries is ripe, the grizzly luxuriates and becomes almost docile with surfeit and fitness. Twice on such occasions I have, while on foot, come fairly face to face with a bear. On the first occasion, I don't know which one of us was the more frightened, but I do know that we both ran—in exactly opposite directions. On the second, while I hurriedly took to the nearest tree, Ephraim made no offer to follow, but squatted upon his haunches, actually laughing—at any rate, he grinned and showed his berry-stained tongue—at my needless alarm. It is only fair to state that on both occasions I was armed with a shot-gun, loaded for birds.

Even during the season which is generally considered the most "unhealthy"

time to hunt bears, there are instances known when the "king of American beasts" has shown the white feather most decidedly. One of these forms the materials of this paper. If not so breathlessly thrilling as some, it will serve as a contrast and foil to the class of bear-yarns that so often find their way into print.

I was once one of a party of six spending several months in hunting big game in Montana, our principal range being in and around the Crazy Mountains.

We were all what might be called experienced hunters, well armed and equipped, having along a packer who also officiated as cook. We each had shot-gun and rifle, revolver, knife and hatchet. Lark Taylor had his three hounds along, Pawnee, Mingo and Black-foot.

It was drawing near to the date originally set for our return to the haunts of civilization, in order to avoid being snowed up in the mountains, and yet we had none of us seen, much less shot at, a grizzly bear. But then, one day, just as five of us were sitting down to dinner, Tom Deakin came running in, panting and almost breathless. He could scarcely tell his story, which was, briefly, as follows:

He had been hunting and was on his way back to camp, when he suddenly came face to face with a grizzly bear, "big as the side of a barn!" Though his double-barrel was loaded only with coarse shot, Tom gave Old Ephraim the contents, then "lit out" for camp. He swore that the bear pursued him—was still in chase—and that naught had saved him but the rapid manner in which his feet had passed and repassed one another.

Of course, there was a hasty jumping for rifles on our part, and looking about for convenient trees to climb in case of emergency. We all gradually cooled down as half an hour crept by without the expected visitor putting in an appearance, and began a search.

We finally struck the bear's trail, but not a little to Tom's confusion, as it was the very spot where he had met the animal. The ground here was soft

enough to read the sign clearly. We found the wads from Deakin's gun, and saw where he had started on his head-long, breakneck race for camp. But, alas! for the close chase, we likewise saw where Ephraim had turned tail and made a rapid retreat in the opposite direction.

Despite this display of cowardice, there could be no doubt as to the bear's being a grizzly, and a huge one at that. The enormous footprints, with claw-marks fully five inches in front of the sole on each fore-paw, plainly proved this.

For two miles and over, the trail led through the wild, rocky region, then entered a deep, narrow gorge, which had at some distant day been the bed of a raging torrent. Half a mile farther we came to the end. Here was a perpendicular rock, some twenty yards high, over which the waters must have plunged. At the base of this rock was a huge mass of tangled logs, limbs and stones, covered over and interlaced with vines both living and dead.

As there was no practicable outlet save by the way we entered, we knew that Ephraim must be concealed somewhere in that pile of drift.

The game was holed, but how could we get at it? That was the all-important question just now. There was one plan, suggested by the mass of sun-dried timber, but who was to "bell the cat"? Just then, I believe each one of us thought of those huge claw-marks. I know I did, and did not feel urgently called upon to volunteer.

The afternoon was wearing away, and fearful lest nightfall should come and rob us of our coveted prize—for, eager as we were to bag a grizzly, no man in his sober senses would remain in that narrow gulch on a moonless night with such an ugly neighbor—it was decided that the log pile should be set afire, in order to awake or roast Ephraim out of his den.

That all might have an equal chance to win the coveted (?) post of honor, lots were prepared, but before they could be drawn, Tom Deakin, who had been chafing over his recent scare, volunteered. We made some slight remonstrance, but did not weep when Tom doggedly persisted in his determination.

Collecting a few scattered fagots of dry wood a fire was kindled; and when

the sticks were fairly ablaze, Tom grasped a handful, and slipping along the base of the side wall, while we stood with cocked and leveled rifles to salute Ephraim in case he should make a rush, he set the dry mass afire in three separate places, and beat a hasty retreat.

During all this, though growling freely, the grizzly did not show so much as the tip of his nose. In fine, he acted so much like a cowardly brute instead of the ferocious, bloodthirsty creature we had been led to expect, that we began to fear we must have made some mistake in following the trail, and holed some other animal instead.

However, the question would be soon settled now. The flames were spreading rapidly, and unless it chose to be roasted in its den, the occupant of that drift must make its appearance before long.

Expecting this at any moment now, we spread out, forming a line across the narrow gulch, rifles in readiness for the fray. But minute after minute passed, and still Ephraim did not emerge. He growled angrily enough, but, though the smoke must have been terrible and the heat extreme, he still held out—or in.

At length the entire mass was ablaze, and we were beginning to utter strong exclamations of disgust, when Bruin made his appearance so suddenly that we were taken quite by surprise.

It was even larger than we expected, and had its courage been in proportion to its size, some of our number would almost assuredly have had cause to rue that "smoking-out."

We opened fire, too hurriedly for certain aim, and though struck by nearly every bullet, the bear was not seriously hurt. It squalled loudly, and turned back, almost rushing into the blazing mass in its blind terror. Recoiling, it strove to scale the nearly perpendicular wall. It never once made an offer to assail us, and while striving to drag itself up the rock, fell stone-dead at our second volley, not having shown as much courage as an old ram would have shown under similar circumstances.

We unanimously voted the hunt a failure. True, we had killed a huge grizzly bear, but there had been no fight, its hide was ruined—the whole affair a consummate fraud and imposition.