

BIG GAME HUNTING IN THE WILD WEST.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE art of hunting large game within the limits of unpopulated districts remote from civilization often calls into action the most skillful, vigorous and self-reliant exercise of our physical and mental faculties.

The attainment of this art cannot be taught theoretically, but must be acquired by long practical experience and attentive observation.

Of the many recent magazine and newspaper articles treating of this subject, some are sound, veracious and instructive, but the majority are diffusive and unreliable, evidently emanating from fancy sporting tyros, who have, perhaps, made a trip or two to the Adirondacks, or into the most accessible skirts of the Canadian forests, and possibly may have extended their wanderings as far out as the eastern borders of the plains; but it is doubted if their practical acquirements are sufficient to communicate instruction in the higher branches of the art. Woodcraft, like every other occupation, subjects its votaries to instruction and discipline in fitting them for a successful career in its pursuit.

Half a century's service in the army, for the most part within the wilds of the west, and in advance of the outer pioneers, where I conducted many extended explorations, occasionally involving severe toil and hardships, has often afforded favorable opportunities for the indulgence of my dominant propensity for hunting.

The information thus acquired of the character of the country, as well as of the habits and peculiarities of the different varieties of large game quadrupeds, has been of great service to me since, as I have frequently, while hunting and traveling through the Rocky Mountains, had occasion to avail myself of this matured experience.

An excursion into the wilderness may be well organized, and everything provided in the way of "impediments" that the wisest experience can suggest; yet circumstances beyond the control of the most dexterous woodsman may sometimes occur to defeat the best concerted arrangements.

It is not, for example, an impossible contingency that unforeseen delays or obstructions from losing animals, breaking wagons, crossing streams or other unavoidable casualties may consume or destroy supplies, and necessitate a resort to an exclusive commissariat of game, if and is on hand or attainable.

My purpose will be to give in these papers a succinct narrative of some of the most notable incidents connected with my hunting career, with incidental pertinent remarks upon the habits and peculiarities of the different varieties of the game quadrupeds that frequent the mountains and plains of our territories, including my views as to the most sportsmanlike and successful methods of hunting them, with their *habitat*, all of which will be sustained by examples within the scope of my own personal experience.

In carrying out this design I will commence the narrative by offering a few words regarding that huge monarch of the plains, the "American bison," popularly known as "buffalo," which has been substantially exterminated by the vandalism of unscrupulous white "*skin-bunters*," who, in contempt of the game laws, have slaughtered them by the thousand, for no other purpose save that of securing their hides; in evidence of which I was informed from a source believed to be reliable, that over 300,000 buffalo hides were brought into Kansas City during one season; and this was only one of the many marts where they were disposed of in that part of the country.

The buffalo was doubtless the most useful native quadruped that ever inhabited this continent; for he supplied food, clothing and shelter to millions of natives for centuries.

The geographical range of this nomadic mammal formerly extended over almost the entire area of North America, but from the advent of his direst enemy, the white man, his species has rapidly diminished in numbers. As late as 1858 I saw immense herds of them along the Platte River, in the vicinity of Fort Kearney. But shortly afterwards the skin-hunters began their work of destruction;

and in a short time dispersed the terrified herds; scattering them in all directions over the plains, when with relentless insatiability they slaughtered them in detail and have virtually extinguished the race.

In all my hunting excursions through different sections of the Rocky Mountains for the last fourteen seasons I have but twice met with buffaloes, once in the Big Horn Basin, where we found twenty-four old bulls, and again we saw three near the Judith Basin.

The last I heard of was near Bismarck, Dakota, on the Missouri River, and I do not believe 100 are still existing in a wild state anywhere.

The speed and endurance of this ungainly looking beast were subjected to a thorough test with the first one I ever saw, which I chased upon a fleet horse at full speed for about eight miles, during which I fired several balls into him; but this did not appear to slacken his pace in the slightest, and when I left him he seemed to be running as fast as when the contest began; while the generous animal I bestrode was exhausted; and this was not an uncommon result of reckless buffalo chasing.

The buffaloes were truly noble animals, and retained their gamy propensities to the last.

Poor creatures; your fate has indeed been a sad one!

The oft-reiterated prediction that the existence of your race would be co-extensive with that of your aboriginal masters has not been literally fulfilled, as your final exit from the theater of your nativity preceded that of your enemies upon that tortuous trail that led you through dismal, unexplored regions, where you suffered greatly from anxiety, but were finally richly compensated when this trail debouched into the luxurious pastures or the spirit world, where all was peaceful and serene.

Whereas the location of the skin-hunter (if he gets his deserts) will be so very far beneath you, in so warm an atmosphere, and so safely, corralled around by deep and impassable cañons that he will never be able to approach or molest you again.

The prevalent idea entertained by those not familiar with the real nature of our large carnivorous quadrupeds, believing their instinctive ferocity impels them to assault every person they meet, is not sustained by practical experience.

Those animals appear much more formidable in the distance than when approached in their own native wilds.

But few eastern sportsmen would, it is believed, voluntarily attack a bear, wolf or panther, yet I have seen and killed many of those animals, and not one of them ever turned upon me.

And in further corroboration of this, my guide, "Little Bat," who has during his lifetime killed over eighty grizzlies, assured me that all he ever met with invariably ran from him.

So confident was he of his ability to cope with these much-dreaded monsters, that he did not hesitate to hunt them when alone and on foot, and only two years ago he encountered four grizzlies eating a dead elk upon Casper Mountains, when he crawled to within short rifle range and shot every one of them without moving from his tracks; and upon another occasion, while we were hunting in the valley of the Big Horn, he went out alone during a moonlight night and shot two grizzlies from behind a tree.

Panthers and wolves are most arrant cowards, and the traditional story of General Putnam having performed an extraordinary feat of courage, by entering a cave and shooting a wolf, is supremely laughable when contrasted with the fact that my wife, upon one occasion, in the night time at a frontier post, when a large black wolf had purloined one of her turkeys and was dragging it off, hurried out and with a stick made him drop the bird and run away.

In the papers that follow this, I propose to give more circumstantial accounts of some of my own adventures while hunting bears, panthers, wolves, peccaries, elk, mountain sheep and goats, all of which have fallen before my rifle, and which will, I think, fully vindicate the opinions herein advanced regarding the aggressive proclivities of those animals.

IN THE MATTER OF OUTFIT.

The following list of articles are deemed sufficient for an autumn hunt of three or four weeks in the Rocky Mountains, or in the Canadian provinces, viz:

A heavy hunting suit of soft corduroy, with plenty of pockets, the pants reinforced on the inside with chamois or soft buckskin.

- 2 heavy flannel colored shirts.
- 2 heavy flannel colored undershirts.
- 1 pair rack-leather moccasins, large

enough to admit heavy wool socks.

Heavy shoes, with broad soles to allow a square, firm tread, are good, but make some noise in stalking.

The color of the outside clothing should be near that of the autumn foliage, and the hat of soft material, the same color:

- 1 heavy overcoat.
 - 1 India-rubber blanket or poncho.
 - 1 comb and brush and tooth brush.
 - 4 coarse towels.
 - 1 cake castile soap.
 - 2 colored silk handkerchiefs and mufflers.
 - 2 pairs thick blankets, and one pillow.
 - 1 piece stout canvas to roll up bed in.
 - 1 pkg. matches, and pocket-box for do.
- Sewing implements in stout bag, with needles, thread, buttons, etc.

Baking-powders, sugar, pepper, salt, with provisions to suit taste.

Cooking utensils, table articles, dishes, knives, forks, etc.

Tin wash-basin, water-bucket, tin dipper, bar soap, dish-cloths.

CAMP EQUIPAGE.

1 tent and stove, axe, hatchet and hunting-knife.

1 magazine rifle, 45 caliber, with good supply of cartridges.

1 prefer carrying cartridges in the different pockets of coat and vest, where they are more handy for quick loading and the weight more equally distributed around the body than when carried in a belt or box, and less in the way while running.

The 45 caliber is referred, as they can be had at nearly all the frontier shops, and the other sizes cannot

BLACK BEARS.

My first experience in bear-hunting occurred in 1853, when I was detailed to, locate a new military post as far out in the plains of western Texas, upon the California emigrant road I had made in 1849, as the requisites of wood, water and grass could be found.

In the execution of this service I organized an exploring party at Fort Washitaw, in the "Choctaw nation," consisting of an escort of United States Infantry soldiers, sufficient for protection against hostile Indians, with four Delaware Indian guides and hunters who were familiar with the section to be traversed, and with all equipments and supplies necessary for making a thorough examination of the country and ascer-

taining the most available location for the establishment of the new post.

The significant appellations of my Indian companions were as follows: "Black Beaver," a veteran campaigner, who had served for many years in the Hudson's Bay and American Fur Companies, and was with me for six months in the Comanche and Kiowa country in 1849, and invariably proved competent and reliable as a guide and interpreter, and he was especially proficient in the language of signs, which nearly all the prairie tribes understand and practice, when oral communication is impracticable.

Beaver commanded a company of scouts during the Mexican war, under General Harney, and never received any compensation for his services, although the general did his best to secure it for him; but his claim was never allowed by the Treasury officials at Washington, although his services were fully attested by his commanding officers; and after a correspondence lasting several years, he applied to Congress, but met with no better success there, and at length he abandoned it in despair, being (with considerable reason) fully impressed with the conviction that he was deliberately swindled by the Government authorities.

I first encountered him at his house upon the Canadian River in 1849, and endeavored to hire him as guide and interpreter, but he made various excuses for declining my proposal, until I offered him two dollars and a half a day, when he said—

"That Government he owe me heap of money now for Mexican war; I b'lieve he big rascal!" and related to me the difficulties he had encountered in trying to get the pay for his scouts.

Thereupon I told him I would pay him every night in silver dollars, if he wished it, which was satisfactory to him, and he joined us the following morning, and accompanied us for 2,300 miles over the plains, but did not ask for pay until our return to Port Washitaw, when he came to my tent upon his mule and said—

"Well, good-bye, captain; I'm going home now; may-be so you pay me."

I replied, "Certainly, Beaver; I will give you a paper showing how much is due you and you can send it to Washington and get the money."

He looked indignant at this and replied—

"I s'pose you give me one paper, I throw it in the fire; I no want any more papers."

I then counted out to him something like \$300 in silver, which was quite satisfactory to him.

The names of the other Delawares were: "John Wagon," "John Bull," and "Billy Boy," all of them capital hunters and trailers, eminently fearless and self-reliant, and abounding in ready expedients for unforeseen casualties.

They served me faithfully and I parted with them reluctantly; but, alas I they are all in their spirit-land now.

When they joined me first I imagine they had not, for some time, indulged in the luxuries of coffee, sugar, or other components of the army ration, as Beaver, soon after their arrival, informed me that his men were "big-heap hungry;" thereupon ten days' rations were issued to them, and they were told these must constitute their entire subsistence for that period, but to my astonishment, about thirty hours subsequently, Beaver came to me again, and with a most doleful expression of countenance, said—

"Them h'inguns h'aint got nothin' to h'eat, captain."

"I think you must be mistaken, Beaver," I replied, "as rations for ten days were given them yesterday."

"Yes," he said, "but he h'eat um all up last night."

In consequence of this voracity, we afterwards issued their rations from day to day.

On leaving Fort Washitaw, we followed the California road to the crossing of the Brazos River, where Fort Belknap was afterwards established, and thence our course was more southerly until we entered the Valley of Pecan-Bayou, a beautiful little stream of pure water that meanders through quite a well-wooded section abounding in deer, antelope and other game, which enabled the hunters to keep our larders well stocked with delicious venison and fish.

While in this vicinity, we encountered and gave chase to a large black bear, but the trees and brush were so dense that we lost sight of him before getting a shot, which was a serious disappointment to me, as I never before had an opportunity of adding one of these rare animals to my collection of hunting trophies, and I expressed my regret to the interpreter, Beaver, telling him I was so desirous of

shooting a bear that I would give any of his hunters \$5 who would put me in the way of doing so. At the same time, I thought there was not much prospect of their accomplishing it.

On the following morning, however, I, as usual, started out alone to examine the surrounding country, carrying my double-barreled rifle and Colt's army revolver, so as to be prepared for action in the event of seeing large game or encountering hostile Kiowas, who occasionally extended their raids into that section.

My officers and the hunters also went out in different directions.

After going several miles from camp and seeing nothing unusual, I at length, while riding over very rough and rocky ground, suddenly heard a most wild and terrific whooping of Indians in the distance, but rapidly approaching directly towards me.

The woods at that place were so thick I could not see them, but thought it not improbable they might be Kiowas who had discovered and were making a charge upon me; and as I had the year before lost one of my lieutenants, who was murdered and scalped by those fiends while out alone, near this very place, I did not feel very secure at this special juncture; but seeing a large rock near, I tied my horse behind it and crawled to near the top, where I could, by lying flat upon the rock, look over towards where the Indians were approaching, while I was, at the same time, screened from their observation.

In this position I anxiously and breathlessly watched for their appearance, and as they continued to approach nearer and nearer, their frightful howls became more vociferous, until suddenly from out the dense cover impetuously rushed a large black bear, with his mouth wide open, his tongue hanging out to its fullest extent and his breathing as loud as that of a broken-winded horse, and to my intense gratification and relief, directly behind him appeared my four Delawares, screaming and laughing at the very tip-top of their powers, at the same time running, jumping and making other grotesque and hideous contortions to direct and keep the bear in motion, while the jaded beast was putting forth his very best efforts to escape.

This unexpected *dénouement* of the sanguinary tragedy that my excited imagination had previously depicted as within

the scope of probability; was instantly transformed into a superlatively laughable farce that I might have enjoyed at any other time; but just then my thoughts were exclusively occupied with the desire of securing the animal, and taking deliberate aim, pulled trigger, and to my inexpressible delight, he dropped dead in his tracks, shot through the heart.

After the Indians recovered a little from the excitement resulting from their hilarity, they informed me they had driven the animal several miles through the woods, and although he had repeatedly, during the chase, climbed the tallest trees to es-

bend of the North Platte in Wyoming.

We were at the time camped on the Muddy, where we found large game of all kinds very abundant, and hunted very successfully for several days, supplying the entire garrison of Fort Fetterman with all the meat the troops could consume during the time.

Taking a man with me, after an early breakfast one morning, I followed up the Valley of the Muddy to near its source, where we heard the shrill, sonorous whistle of a bull elk, and followed the sound until we came in sight of a small herd, out of which we shot the leader,



"SEEING A LARGE ROCK NEAR, I TIED MY HORSE BEHIND IT."

cape from them, they invariably followed him up and shook him down, for they were fully resolved to drive him to the camp had they not met me before reaching there.

I asked Beaver why they did not shoot the bear themselves when they first discovered him, instead of going to all the trouble of pursuing him so far, to which he replied, with a most comical smile, while holding out his hand: "Ingen like um five dollars, captain," which he received shortly afterwards and divided with his comrades.

My next encounter with black bears occurred at the Casper Mountains, in the big

an old buck that was very fat, and after hanging the meat in a tree out of reach of the wolves, we proceeded on over rolling prairie for some time, when we entered a dense thicket of small pines, and had only gone a short distance when my orderly came to a sudden halt, and coming close to my ear whispered that he believed there were bears about, as he had never known his horse to evince such peculiar evidences of alarm excepting when in the immediate vicinity of bears.

At this moment his horse was standing with his head elevated above the brush, his ears pointing directly to the

front, and his distended eyes seemed to scan every tree or other object within the limited scope of vision in search of the formidable beast, while, at the same time, his nervous restiveness and heavy breathing showed great perturbation.

I had, on several previous occasions, observed horses more frightened coming suddenly within close proximity to bears than they would be when near other strange animals, like buffaloes, cougars, etc.

I remember at one time, while exploring Red River, that one of my Delaware hunters, who was an expert horseman,



"TAKING CAREFUL AIM, I FIRED THE RIGHT BARREL OF MY RIFLE."

and rode a spirited horse that was so much afraid of the sight or scent of bears that it was with the greatest difficulty he could force him within rifle-shot of one,

and whenever he attempted it with a vigorous application of whip and spurs, he became so much terrified that the sweat ran from him in streams, and his frantic



tremors were so severe and exhaustive that he was unfit for any further use during the day. Some horses are equally alarmed on first seeing buffaloes, but soon become accustomed to them, but they seldom recover from their timidity in presence of bears.

In view of these facts, I directed the orderly to keep his horse well in hand and move slowly and cautiously along directly by my side, keeping a vigilant lookout in all directions, so as, if possible, to see the bear before he saw or winded us, and thus we continued on until we came near the border of the copse, when we halted at the edge of a glade on which were several very large pine trees, and near the top of the tallest we discovered two black bears, evidently endeavoring to conceal themselves upon the large limbs.

After tying our horses I left them in charge of the orderly, informing him that I would shoot the bears while he watched the horses, and to have his carbine in hand ready to fire should I wound either of them, but not sufficiently to prevent their making fight.

Then taking careful aim I fired the right barrel of my rifle at the lower one, so that he would not fall upon the other and knock him down upon us unwounded.

The bullet went accurately to its destination and at the report of the gun down tumbled the bear, very dead. But my second shot only wounded the other,

(To be continued.)

causing him to cling more closely to the branch, and he held on until I gave him another shot, which made him struggle considerably until he fell across the limb which held him fast until I fired several more shots trying to knock him off, but without avail; there he remained for some time, but finally fell to the ground dead.



"MY UNCLE AND I."

MY FIRST TROUT.

BY CAPTAIN THOMAS S. BLACKWELL.

"THERE'S nothing in the world like it! Nothing at all to come near it in the way of sport, you may depend upon it!"

"Only fancy hooking a good big fellow who will take out your line like a sky-rocket; then his getting a fit of the sulks,

and your anguish of mind as you feel he is trying to nuzzle off the hook against a root or a stone."

"Then whir-r-r! he is away again like a small steam-engine; and so the game goes on until at last he breaks your tackle and