

How Angus Shot the Bear

"There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who mail for gold,
The Artic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold."

And the early settlers in this province down by the sea can tell many a facinating story of danger and adventure. Not long ago I received an invitation from my friend Jo to spend a week in the country and hastily throwing into a suit-case all kinds of unnecessary articles, I cheerfully bade adieu to Caesar and his Germanic friends and stepped aboard of the Souris flyer which set me down at a small way-station at the close of a cold January evening. Jo was on hand to greet me and a four mile drive in the crisp evening air helped sharpen my appetite,—which was entirely unnecessary as the "Bursar" would readily grant—and as the culinary artists at Jo's well knew 'ere I decided to again hit the trail." After tea, as we sat by the fire bandying jokes, a crunching step on the snow without and the bark of "Jack" announced the approach of some one. "That's Angus," pronounced the youngest of the group and in a few moments the new-comer, having vigorously stamped the snow from his well oiled boots, was seated in the circle which smilingly surrounded the roaring kitchen fire. Reminiscences were in order and Angus who was known far and near as a mighty hunter was called upon to entertain the circle with a story. Having carefully loaded his well colored "T. D." this village Nimrod related the following story :

"Fifty or sixty years ago this part of the country was but thinly settled, guns were scarce and bears were numerous. Sandy J—, who lived in the back settlement, was known far and wide as a powerful speaker and like Jacob of old he was a mighty raiser of sheep.

His old Aunt Mary who lived with him was the proud possessor of one ewe, which was allowed to run with Sandy's bunch and which she had for purposes of identification marked with "a split in the right ear and a herring tail on the left." One cold November morning the news was brought to me that, on the night before the bear had visited Sandy's field and killed—not Mary's little lamb you hear so much about—but Mary's petted ewe the pick of the whole lot. I was asked to go over to the house and bring my gun—an old Queen Anne rifle and the only one in the settlement—along with me. I arrived at the house before noon-time and spent the rest of the day helping the men to mow a field of green oats. In the evening we prepared for an all night watch. The carcass of the sheep lay where the bear had killed it, about fifteen yards out from the fence and we removed two rails from the bottom part of one of the panels in order to see clearly in all directions. We knew the bear would not come from the east as the house lay in that part and as the country in a northern direction was settled it was very unlikely that he would come from there. To the south was heavy timber and we felt sure that when the darkness deepened Mr. Bear would come out of its shelter and help himself to a feed of mutton. We knew that the bear in coming would keep close to anything that offered shelter and it was easy to conclude that he would follow the line of fence which stretched snake-like away towards the blackness of the woods. About twenty-five yards from where we lay a small spruce grew close to the fence and "says I" if he passes between that tree and fence, I'll easily detect him. At times ragged black clouds would scud across the face of the moon and heavy showers of hail stones reminded us that it was a northern November night. Suddenly, it grew dark between the fence and the spruce and I nervously shoved C—who was dozing

asleep. 'He is coming' I whispered and C — took a new grip on the handle of his axe. I could now see distinctly the outlines of our watched-for visitor as he silently slid from panel to panel. When about fifteen yards away he angled off for the carcass but had gone only half the distance when he stopped quickly and sniffed the air suspiciously. I sighted behind his fore shoulder and fired. He jumped straight into the air and the next moment was tearing along in a westerly direction making as I thought undue haste towards the shelter of the timber. He had hardly run one hundred yards when he turned and growling horribly made straight for us. C— grabbed his axe, prepared to sell his life dearly, I clubbed the gun—no breech loaders in those days— and waited, the seconds seemed hours. When close upon us he suddenly wheeled about and made straight for the woods.

In the morning we got a dog and started out to find the bear. The trail was not easily followed and some one rubbed the dog's nose in the blood to make sure that said dog would not leave the trail, but alas! now, everywhere the poor dog turned it was 'Bear, Bear.'

We followed through scrub and windfall,—where only a bear could go—the trail getting plainer all the time. I noticed that on many occasions he had pulled the moss off a windfall as he dragged himself wearily over it, and I wondered why he had stopped to do so. We finally came to a spot where some timber had been cut previously, and there, leaning up against a big stump, looking straight at us was Mr. Bear. I pointed my gun at him and advanced cautiously until with the muzzle to his head I shoved him off the stump.—He was dead.—Why did he pull off the moss? Oh Yes! The bullet hit him behind the fore shoulder and he rolled that moss up and stuffed it into the hole made by the bullet.

Finding this method did not stop the flow of blood he finally leaned upon that stump in an endeavor to stop the flow of blood.

Don't call me a nature faker. That's true. I kept the hide and the boys divided the bear grease equally among them and if you were present at one of the parties which took place along the North side any time during the following winter, while you might not be able to verify all of this story, you would certainly have to admit that present day hair oils do not match up with the old fashioned unadulterated simon-pure bear-grease.

