

## HUNTING THE ARCTIC GRIZZLY.\*

BY FREDERICK SCHWATKA.

OUR first introduction to this boreal Bruin, "the tiger of the ice," as an Arctic writer has aptly termed him, occurred in the latter part of July, 1878, when we encountered the Eskimo of the Savage Islands, on the northern coast of Hudson's Strait, who had, among other kinds of Arctic merchandise, a number of polar bear skins to sell. These simple natives are certainly easily satisfied, or, more properly speaking, easily cheated; for half-a-tumblerful of shot secured four saddles of reindeer meat, while a fine polar bear robe was obtained for half-plug (one-twelfth of a pound of Navy six) of tobacco and a few charges of powder. Twenty-five caps were given for one-fifth as many white fox skins, and many other things were paid for in the same proportion. I bought three dogs—all they had brought in their *oomien*, or seal-skin scow—for my party, and when I gave them something approximately near their true value (for I was not a little disgusted with the Shylock manner in which they had been treated), their astonishment knew no bounds, and one old fellow, with a huge smile breaking through an inch of dirt, so insisted on rubbing noses with me, that, although the ceremony was a pledge of eternal friendship, I almost repented of the act of justice which he mistook for generosity.

Polar bears are quite numerous along the shores of Hudson's Strait, and as they are extremely aquatic in their habits, being often found on cakes of ice or on icebergs many miles from land, it occasionally happens that American whalers *en route* through these straits to their whaling grounds in North Hudson's Bay, or the Hudson Bay Company's ships, in their annual visits to their trading posts, encounter Bruin here and have many interesting bouts with him. If he is found on isolated cakes or small floes of ice, his capture is almost certain when pursued in the well-manned small boats of the whalers, who have no trouble in overtaking him in a fair race in the water and then shooting him. But if the ice-cakes are numerous enough to force the rowers to take sinuous courses and make wide

deviations, or are packed so tightly together as to obstruct the boats, Bruin generally manages to save his blanket. If the ice-pack is very dense, the only method is the one used by the Eskimo, of bringing him to bay by pursuing dogs, the same as if on land or on the shore ice. So great, indeed, is the polar bears' love for the salt water, that it is a very unusual thing to find them far from the sea-shore, and the only time I have ever known them to leave it any distance was when the salmon ran up the small streams opened by the perpetually shining sun of the short Arctic summer; for in the ripples and rapids of these cold creeks Bruin finds a most generous commissary department while it lasts, and at all such places he is liable to be found.

After the winter has set in and the ice has formed to a considerable depth along the coasts, the native sledging parties that are then following the shore ice from one village to another are the ones most likely to come in contact with this particular game. In fact, by far the greater number of robes are thus secured by them. When in the summer this solid sheet of ice is broken up and driven out to sea by the winds and currents and tides, the polar bear often follows his icy home to its new abode, and it is here and under these circumstances that he is most generally encountered, killed and studied by civilized man, and his habits and peculiarities noted. His love for the sea, in which he is so characteristically distinct from all others of his tribe, has determined his scientific name, *Ursus Maritimus*, although the assertions of some that his habits are purely aquatic must be taken with a few grains of allowance. In the summer, as I have said, he occasionally goes inland in quest of salmon, and in winter, when there is but little difference between the land and the frozen ocean, both being covered with their common mantle of drifting snows, his inland excursions are not at all rare. The absence of encounters between polar bears and men in such places is due more to the rarity of visits by the latter than the former. It is

\*Note.—As many of OUTWING's readers have, after reading General Marcy's interesting article on Bear Hunting, requested us to complete the subject by publishing an article on hunting the polar variety, we are enabled by the courtesy of Messrs. Cassell & Company, Broadway, New York, to offer Frederick Schwatka's graphic reminiscences of the sport as told to in his excellent work, "Nimrod in the North."



POLAR BEAR ON ICEBERG BREAKING UP AT SEA.



doubtless the ease with which they obtain seals or the carcasses of "flensed" whales, or those which have had their blubber stripped from them by whalers, walrus and other sea-abiding animals, that attracts them so persistently to their abodes. The inland country would not furnish them enough to support their huge carcasses for even a few days, unless perchance they should fall in with the meat caches of the inland reindeer hunters, which, by the way, the Eskimo say they have been known to destroy a distance of two or three days' sledge-traveling from the main coast (probably thirty or forty miles), although it may be nearer some of the deep finger-like fiords characteristic of the Arctic coasts of some districts. As showing their maritime character and the great distance to which they will journey on fields and cakes of ice, let one pick up an atlas showing the geographical relations between Iceland and Greenland, the distance between which is about equal to that between New York City and Washington; yet these polar pirates often stray in this manner from the eastern coast of Greenland to Iceland in such numbers as to seriously frighten the inhabitants, being famished and desperate with hunger after their long ride and fast *en route*, and attacking everything living they see, man not excepted. The natives, however, have an ingenious way of escaping their fury, if they can only spare some article of wearing apparel to amuse them or arouse their curiosity. A glove, they say, is sufficient for this purpose, for a bear will not stir further till he has turned every finger of it inside out, and as these animals are not very dexterous with their clumsy paws, this takes up enough time to allow the man to escape.

The winter camp of our little party for 1878-79 was pitched near Depot Island, in the northernmost part of Hudson's Bay, amid a large camp of mixed Iwllik, Igloolik and Netschilluk Eskimo. I employed four families of them, thirteen souls in all,

to accompany me on my proposed spring sledge journey to the Arctic Sea. Around this winter camp the natives reported that bear were reasonably common, and quite a number of them had promised that we, the white men, should be indulged in some of this exciting sport before the winter should wear away, if we would accompany them on their sledge journeys along the coast. That winter, however, yielded us no sport in this line, although one of the native members of the party, Ik-quee-sik, a big, robust Netschilluk, fully six feet in height, killed one bear on or near Depot Island, while encamped there for walrus hunting to secure oil for my party's sledge journey, and this was the only bear, I believe, whose tracks were seen near our camp that winter, although such a scarcity was unusual. Bruin had evidently been attracted by the scent from the numerous walrus cairns, or little rock caches where meat is stored, that dotted Depot Island, and he came lumbering along, suspecting no danger, early one February morning. Now early in the morning depends upon the season, and in the Arctic February or thereabouts it means nearly eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and consequently our polar ursine friend found everybody astir in order to take full advantage of the very short day. Ikqueesik's family were alone on the island, many of his associates of the village being absent at the whale-ships wintering at Marble Island, some eighty or ninety miles to the southward. The consequence was that the bear got fairly into the village before he was discovered even by Ikqueesik's four or five runty, little, half-grown black dogs that looked more like wolverine kittens than the true Eskimo class of canines. They were, however, equal to the emergency, and, Eskimo-like, Ikqueesik had to first come out of his snow hut unarmed to see the cause of the disturbance, when Bruin got a good long start of him, despite the persistent nippings of the pursuing puppies that delayed him considerably. It was a running chase for a good long distance, but the dogs, encouraged by Ikqueesik's approaching presence, worked like heroes to delay the bear, and finally succeeded to an extent that gave their master a long shot at the game with his smooth-bore musket that luckily planted itself in the foreshoulder and brought Bruin effectively to bay. Loading leisurely at this distance he approached much nearer, and as a result he

had one close shave from a daring charge of the ferocious beast over the hummocky ice; but our Netschilluk Nimrod soon dispatched him and brought his robe triumphantly into camp. He was an immense fellow, weighing undoubtedly over a thousand pounds, and would have been a bad customer at close quarters had not his shoulder been rendered worthless at the first fire. The size of the polar bear varies considerably even with those that may be considered full-grown specimens, and some naturalists class them as the largest of the genus *Ursus*, yet his famous western brother, the grizzly (*Ursus Horribilis*), will certainly dispute the point closely with him. This one killed by Ikqueesik was pronounced by the Eskimo to be "an-a-yo-ad'-lo," or very large, and had he been weighed I would not have been surprised to see him show 1200 pounds; I certainly would have been surprised had he stopped short of 1,000. Captain Lyon, a British Arctic explorer, mentions a polar bear which weighed 1500 pounds and measured eight feet and seven inches "from tip to tip." It is said that Barentz, in his expedition of 1596, killed two polar bears whose skins measured no less than

twelve and thirteen feet in length, and which must have represented enormous animals, rivaling even the largest grizzly. They were secured on an island near Spitzbergen. Franz-Josef Land is pre-eminently the paradise of polar bears, the Austrian expedition of 1872-4 which discovered the island encountering and killing them by scores, yet the largest one they mentioned "was eight feet long, and therefore of unusual size." In Parry's Arctic voyage of 1819, his party succeeded in killing a bear which, although measuring eight feet and two inches in length, only weighed 900 pounds. "It will be seen," says a chronicler of that expedition, "that his weight is not at all in proportion to his dimensions, for he was a very large animal, as far as length and height went, but although six inches longer than the bear we killed in this country last summer, he was upward of two hundred pounds lighter."

During the fall of 1878 my hired native hunters, as well as many from the village that had clustered around, for which our tents served as a nucleus, started inland on their annual reindeer hunts to procure the hides of that animal, which are used



BARENTZ'S PARTY AND THE BEARS.

almost exclusively for their winter clothing and bedding. Joe (Eberbing) attached himself to a young Iwllik Eskimo, Too-loo'-ah by name, who will appear many times in these accounts as my most valuable and intelligent hunter. Toolooah and Joe, as the autumn snows commenced falling, had pitched their sealskin tent on a precipitous hill overlooking a small fresh-water lake, where the reindeer, on their autumnal southward migrations, could be seen for many miles. When the weather became too cold to allow the tent to be warmed by their rude stone lamps, an igloo or snow-house was built and the hunt continued. One cold, gloomy, storm-boding day, when both our heroes were snugly ensconced in bed (which with the natives means stripped stark naked, lying between their dressed reindeer blankets), a terrible racket was heard near the lake, sufficient to excite their curiosity. Joe jumped up, and, partially and hurriedly dressed, emerged into the open air. Toolooah, less excited, stretched out, back up, with his chin in both hands, eagerly awaiting developments. It turned out to be a big, shaggy polar bear, breaking the ice of the lake where it had an outlet into a small creek and trying to catch the fish that some instinct told him would be found there. As soon as Joe comprehended the situation, he seized a loaded musket, the only arm on the outside of the hut, and, faking deliberate aim at Bruin, who was about a hundred and fifty yards away, he let him have an ineffectual shot in the leg. This so astonished his bearship, who had perceived no danger, that he only looked at Joe in amazement, howling furiously at his slight wound. "Nannook! Nannook!" (a bear! a bear!) yelled Joe, just after he fired, and then dodged into the low entrance of the snow-house in order to get his Winchester carbine, his head meeting, with a good round thump, that of Toolooah, who, stark naked, was emerging, Winchester in hand. By the time that Toolooah had straightened up in front of the entrance, and recovered from his dizzy collision, the bear had commenced to appreciate that he was in an unhealthy neighborhood, with a high rate of mortality that could only be counteracted by a high rate of speed, and he had just swung his carcass around for a retreat when he got Toolooah's first fire in his hams. Then he started on the run, Toolooah giving him a second as he disappeared over a crest about forty or fifty

yards further on. He was not yet permanently disabled, although carrying three wounds more or less severe; and there was no time for our hunters to delay if the prey was to be secured. Despite his immodest appearance, and to the Eskimo mind the more deterring fact that the thermometer was below zero, Toolooah ran like a race-horse for about a hundred yards and got a long-range shot of about three hundred yards at the retreating polar, who was looking at him from his haunches on a second ridge. This shot gave him a fatal bullet in his neck. An Eskimo Nimrod, stark naked, standing half-knee deep in the snow, in the midst of an Arctic winter, gun in hand, over a fallen bear, would be a good picture to hang in one's room of hunting trophies, to contemplate in the summer time. The robe of this bear and that secured by Ik-queesik had fallen to me, but during my year's absence on the sledge journey from Hudson's Bay to the Arctic Sea, the retiring whaler who had been hired to bring us into Hudson's Bay from the United States appropriated them along with other trophies, for the polar bear robe has a market value in civilized marts.

In quaint old Purchas' "Pilgrimes" is a most interesting account of the ancient way "ye white beare" was hunted, and being short, I transcribe it. It was during Barentz's second Arctic expedition, chronicled by Gerard de Veer, the historian of the voyage, who says:—"The 6th of September some of our men went on shore, upon the firme land (Nova Zembla), to seeke for stones, which are a kinde of diamond, whereof there are many also in the States' Island; and while they were seeking the stones, two of our men lying together in one place, a great leane white beare came suddenly stealing out, and caught one of them fast by the necke; who not knowing what it was that took him by the necke, cryed out and said, 'Who is it that pulls mee so by the necke?' Wherewith the other, that lay not farre from him, lifted up his head to see what it was; and, perceiving it to be a monstrous beare, cryed out and said, 'Oh, Mate! it is a beare,' and therewith presently rose up, and ranne away. The beare at the first falling upon the man, bit his head in sunder and sukt out his blood; wherewith the rest of the men that were on the land, being about twentie in number, ranne presently thither, either to save the man, or else to drive the beare from



DOGS BRUSHING A POLAR BEAR TO BAY.

the body; and having charged their pieces, and bent their pikes, set upon her that was still devouring the man, but, perceiving them to come towards her, fiercely and cruelly ranne at them, and got another of them out of the companie, which she tore in pieces, wherewith all the rest ranne away. We perceiving, out of our ship and pinnasse, that our men ranne to the sea-side to save themselves, with all speed entered into our boates, and rowed as fast as wee could to the shoare to relieve our men. Where, being on land, wee beheld the cruel spectacle of our two dead men that had been so cruelly killed and torn to pieces by the beare. We, seeing that, encouraged our men to goe backe again with us, and with pieces, curtelaxes, and half-pikes to set upon the beare, but they would not all agree thereunto; some of them saying, our men are already dead, and wee shall get the beare well enough though we oppose not ourselves into so open danger; if wee might save our fellows' lives then wee would make haste; but now wee need not make such speed, but to take her at an advantage, with most securitie for ourselves, for we have to doe with a cruell, fierce, and ravenous beast. Whereupon three of our men went forward, the beare still devouring her prey, not once fearing the number of our men, and yet they were thirtie at the least; the three that went forward were Cornelius Jacobson, Wilhelm Geysen and Hans Von Nuflen, Wilhelm Barentz's purser; and, after that the sayd master and pylot had shot three times, and mist, the purser, stepping somewhat further forward, and seeing the beare to be within the length of a shot, presently leveled his piece, and discharging it at the beare, shot her into the head, betwene the eyes, and yet shee held the man still fast by the necke, and lifted up her head with the man in her mouth; but shee began somewhat to stagger, wherewith the purser and a scottish man drew out their curtelaxes and strooke at her so hard that their curtelaxes burst, and yet shee would not leave the man; at last Wilhelm Geysen went to them, and with all his might strooke the beare upon the snout with his piece, at which time the beare fell to the ground, making a great noyse, and Wilhelm Geysen, leaping upon her, cut her throat."

Just how brave, ferocious, or dangerous the polar bear may be, it is extremely hard to say, owing to the variety of disposition and dissimilar traits it has ex-

hibited in this respect, under the scrutiny of equally credible observers. One authority says:—"It is the largest, strongest, most powerful, and, with a single exception, the most ferocious of bears," the exception evidently meaning the grizzly. Yet the many mutilated persons I have seen in the great west who have been intimate with the "cinnamon" bear of that region, and describe him as equal in ferocity with, and superior in activity to, the grizzly, would certainly not be willing to surrender his claims to those of the polar bear. Again, the testimony of those who have shot a helpless animal swimming in the sea from the deck of an exploring steamer, is of no more value than that of a menagerie keeper who has poisoned a caged Bengal tiger. I am inclined to place the polar bear below the cinnamon and grizzly in bravery, although the superior of either in activity. His long, lithe, snake-like form, compared with the bungling carcasses of the others, would show this without further argument or practical demonstration, yet it has received the latter without doubt. Those who speak of the ferocity produced by a carnivorous diet may think the polar should excel his omnivorous brethren of the south, as he is wholly of this type; yet, singularly enough, his system of dentition is exactly the same as that of the other bears. Still, as has been said, the polar bear has exhibited all degrees of bravery, from that of the most ferocious disregard of life to the most abject cowardice. The old Norsemen, than whom no braver men ever lived, came in contact with these glacial grizzlies when their most venturesome explorers discovered Greenland, and Eric the Red, their bold leader, is said to have quarreled furiously with one of his best friends from sheer envy because the latter had killed a polar bear, and thus distinguished himself among those who valued bravery as highly as it has ever been held since, when his chief should have been given this honored opportunity. They certainly regarded him as a plucky adversary. "Killing a bear," says Chevalier Rink, once Danish inspector of Greenland, "has, in ancient as well as in modern times, been considered one of the most distinguishing feats of sportsmanship in Greenland." If the Eskimo of Greenland are the peers of their polar brethren on the main continent; they would certainly pick no mean opponent to be thus distinguished. All Arctic authorities seem to unite



INTERIOR OF A BEAR HOLE.

in the assertion that the mother is unsparing in her exhibition of bravery to protect her young, and hardly a boreal book exists that does not recount one or more of these instances of maternal affection; and yet I am compelled to narrate an incident that came under my own personal observation, that will shatter somewhat even this unanimity of opinion. My party of four white men and Toolooah's family were on their southward search along the western coast of King William's Land, in August, 1879, and had encamped inland about five or six miles from Erebus Bay, while crossing over the peninsula between it and Terror Bay, fifteen miles wide. While thus moving our effects, I had occasion to send Toolooah back to the for-

mer bay to get a large drift log that I had seen there and had split up to be used for firewood. He took a number of the dogs, harnessed, and only a snow-knife, a two-edged one, about sixteen inches long in all, and which had had the wooden handle knocked off of the tang in order to crease one end of the logs so that the drag-rope would not pull off. Nearing the shore of the bay, he discovered a she-bear and a goodly sized cub trotting along the edge of the water, which the dogs, when slipped, soon brought to bay. Nothing daunted, Toolooah separated the dam from the cub by pelting the former vigorously with stones, and while she was employed growling at the snapping dogs a short distance off, he dispatched the cub with



his decrepit knife; then, after running the mother out to sea on the ice-floe, he brought the carcass of the cub triumphantly into camp, tied on the spreading pieces of the split log. I told Toolooah a story of Captain Hall's, which he relates in his book, of having killed a polar cub while his native allies were in a fruitless chase after the separated dam, and their consequent fright and dismay when they saw it. They so feared the vengeance of the returning mother, that they made almost incredible exertions to avoid it, such as doubling upon their retreating track repeatedly and traveling nearly all night. I inquired of Toolooah if he was not afraid of the mother following his plainly marked trail to the tent and wreaking due vengeance. But he smiled as he answered that he hoped she would, as he felt very angry at himself for being caught in such a predicament without his gun, and if she would only come along again he would make due amends. He said he had known several instances wherein the cub of the polar bear had been killed, and where the mother had not been injured, but had never known any evil to result from the anger of the latter, unless it occurred right on the field of battle, where she often displays great energy in the defense of her young, though she certainly showed a lamentable absence of that trait in this particular instance. It would seem from this that either Captain Hall's allies were needlessly frightened, or that the disposition of the polar bear varies much with the locality. Joe, who was with Hall in all his Arctic travels and remembered this incident, says that both views are partially correct, and in fact, that the polar bear is very uncertain in his combativeness. Probably had a less active hunter than Toolooah, who was agility personified, undertaken the assault, the result would have been different; but his rapidity evidently confused the animal, so that the whole tragedy was over before she really comprehended the situation.

As illustrating in an interesting adventure the extreme savageness of the polar bear I take from good authority the following anecdote:—"Not many years ago, the crew of a boat belonging to a ship in the whale-fishery shot at a bear at a little distance, and wounded it. The animal set up a dreadful howl, and ran along the ice toward the boat. Before he reached it a second shot was fired, which hit him. This served but to increase his fury. He

presently swam to the boat, and, in attempting to get on board, placed one of his fore-feet upon the gunwale; but a sailor having a hatchet in his hand cut it off. The animal, however, still continued to swim after them till they arrived at the ship, and several shots were fired at him, which took effect; but on reaching the ship he immediately ascended the deck; and the crew having fled into the shrouds, he was pursuing them thither when a shot laid him dead on the deck." Mr. Hearne, an Arctic explorer, says that the males of this species are, at a certain time of the year, so much attached to their mates, that he has often seen one of them, when a female was killed, come and put his paws over her, and in this position suffer himself to be shot rather than quit her corpse.

About the middle of October, 1879, while Toolooah was in Terror Bay, he killed three polar bears in about half as many minutes. He had descried them from a distance, as he was driving his dogs and sledge over the eastern ridge of the bay, and managed to so direct his course among the hummocks of ice (the ice-hummocks are the immense cakes of ice as large as one and two-story buildings, that have not melted during the summer, and are frozen every winter in a thick mass) as to get within a couple of hundred yards of them before they noticed his presence, when he slipped the dogs from the sled, and although the open water along the shore ice, to which they always take when pursued, was but one or two hundred paces distant, they were so slow in getting under way, that one was brought to bay by the dogs before it could reach the water, which Toolooah dispatched with a single shot of his Winchester through its head, and so quickly that when he gained the edge of the ice-floe the other two were not over forty or fifty yards away, swimming for dear life, although they did not manage to save themselves, as two well directed shots laid them out. Then Toolooah, extemporizing a raft from a small floating cake of ice, managed to get out to both of them, and having taken the precaution to pay out his sledge-lashing from the shore as he went, pulled himself and prey back, and brought us the three robes to verify his powers. It is said that the Eskimo of Cumberland Sound fearlessly attack the polar bear in their frail *kayaks*, or light sealskin canoes, but are afraid of them on



YOUNG BEAR CRASHED.

the ice or land. In October, 1877, an enormous female with two cubs paid an Eskimo encampment in this sound a visit. They swam over one of the fjords, probably scenting a dead whale that was on the beach near the huts. The bears made a lively time here, and a considerable outlay of ammunition and dogs was made before they were finally captured. There were about two hundred dogs and half as many natives, besides the crews of two whalers. All this motley crowd made war on the bears. One of the whaling captains, a little braver than the rest, got too close to the old bear, and she dealt him a blow that knocked his gun many feet into a snow bank; she then began to make away with him, but was prevented by the Eskimo and dogs. A young Eskimo was served in a similar manner, but sustained quite serious injuries. Great consternation and fear prevailed among the women and children, and that memorable night, when the *nannooks* besieged their quiet camp, was long a lively topic of conversation. During the season the common hair seal have their young, the bears begin to wander up the fjords in search of them, and are at this time often found a considerable distance from the open water.

Toolooah killed a monstrous polar bear, that would probably turn 1,300 or 1,400

pounds, the day we reached the northernmost cape of King William's Land, July 3. Bruin came up the beach from the south, snuffing by the camp, when Toolooah and Frank were the only ones not absent, and while the dogs were yet harnessed to the unloaded sledge. But a good view of the situation sent him off on the sea ice at a smart lope, Toolooah and Frank following him with the light sledge over the terribly rough hummocks of Victoria Channel. The nineteen strong and excited dogs would have made a spectator think that the sledge was a piece of paste-board, so lightly did it carom from one hummock to another, leaving tracks only on the crests of the snow drifts as they flew after their enemy. It was a good five-mile chase before Toolooah got near enough to slip his team, and the dogs soon commenced nipping the bear's hamstrings so persistently that he had to sit down on them for protection, and commenced playing a sort of juggler's game with the bolder ones' heads. A shot through the neck so infuriated him that he plunged for Toolooah, who was only a few steps away, but the latter's activity with his Winchester carbine put another shot through the beast's backbone, and he lay spread out on the ice, a huge, helpless mass of howlings and hair. There were thus five bears killed on our sledge

journey, which lasted from April 1st, 1879, to March 20th, 1880—nearly one year—Toooloah scoring them all.

This "mighty hunter" told me that he had seen the polar bear climb up the smooth, perpendicular walls of icebergs to escape from his pursuers, and that when the bergs were reasonably high he generally succeeded in eluding them, as it was very dangerous to attempt to ascend by cutting niches in the ice-wall for foot-holds, which is the method the natives adopt in pursuing bears under these circumstances. This seems almost incredible, and I have never seen it mentioned by previous Arctic travelers; but I consider Toooloah altogether too good an authority to lightly cast aside what he affirms. Lieutenant Parry, in 1818, after much severe labor, succeeded in getting on top of a flat iceberg in Baffin's Bay, and there found a white bear in quiet possession; who, discovering the party, jumped over the perpendicular side of the ice mountain, fifty-one feet into the sea, and swam to the nearest land, which was twenty miles away—or at least disappeared in that direction.

It may surprise the reader to know that the Eskimo of Greenland edit and publish an irregularly issued newspaper in their own language, yet such is the fact, and it is a creditable feat despite the journal's name — *Atavgagdliivt Nalnginar-mik Tvsaruminásassumik Univkát*. In a country where the sun rises and sets but once a year, it may be hard to tell whether it is an annual or a daily publication. But, whatever its period of issue, some good hunting stories are told in it. One by Eskimo writers and one translated by Dr. Rink, regarding a bear hunt at Narsak, I will reproduce. "At this place, in Greenland," the story runs, "polar bears are very rare. A party of seal hunters, having put to sea, observed a very strange animal swimming. While we pursued it on its tracks towards an island it turned landward, whereupon we gave it a sign by calling out a halloo for bears. Once at our shout it turned to us, but on seeing us it turned back and instantly let its voice be heard. To people who are not accustomed to it, its frightful roaring and hissing are most extraordinary. At the same time it sounded just as if one more was approaching, but it only proved to be the echo from a small island in front. When gradually it came near to the shore without yet having been

wounded, we spoke to each other of setting about it, and having backed our *kayaks* astern, we took out our guns; but on cocking mine, I observed that the percussion cap had dropped into the oakum. Whilst I was getting hold of another, Adam fired, and when I was aiming, Andreas also fired, and then I likewise gave a shot. It was really amusing to observe the animal, which I never thought would move so quickly. While the others were reloading I put my gun aside and pursued it, thinking my lance would now be better; but fearing to come too near, I kept a proper distance and threw my lance, but managed it awkwardly, hitting the beast on the nape of its neck. On being hit it stooped down without turning aside in the least, and the lance directly fell off. The second time I missed. When they had loaded anew, Andreas gave one shot more, after which it appeared quite stiff, and I supposed it to be dead, when suddenly it turned its head towards us and begun to wheel round. Adam then gave it the last shot. Again it appeared stiff, but I still expected it would revive, and therefore gave it the finishing stroke with my lance, when it was done for and quite immovable. We had heard people say that the bears had a knack of feigning death, but having got its head so severely wounded it really was dead, and just as we had killed it a *kayaker* appeared from the north side, who even before we had killed had heard its loud roar, so awfully does it resound. The place to which we intended to tow our game was close by; we hauled it ashore and commenced to rut it up. To people who have never seen such a beast its fatness is really surprising; unto the very feet nothing but grease is to be seen. On dragging it up the beach, I measured it, and was just able to span its body completely. On being opened, its inward parts glistened as white as those of a full grown fat reindeer."

Upward of fifty polar bears, says Dr. Rink, the same authority we have just quoted, and who was a Danish official in Greenland many years, are on an average shot yearly in this section of the country, of which more than one-half are shot in the environs of the northernmost settlement of the west coast, and of the remainder the greater part at the southernmost extremity of the country on the same coast, where they arrive with the drift ice around Cape Farewell. Throughout the whole

intervening tract bears are scarce, but still they may be found everywhere, and solitary stragglers may even be met with unexpectedly in summer in the interior of the fjords. In the north of Greenland, on the west coast, the bear is pursued upon the frozen sea with the aid of dogs. It often takes refuge on the top of an iceberg, where it is surrounded and held at bay by the dogs until it is shot, generally not without some of the latter being lost on the occasion. In the north the male bears at least seem to roam about in winter as far south as 68° north latitude,

but getting into a difficulty on account of finding it too narrow, was killed by the inhabitants, who, having been warned by their dogs, fired at it through the doorway and from the window. At another time, a woman staying alone with her child in a house, observed a bear outside. Thinking it might be likely to give her a call, she placed the burning lamp at the window, keeping some straw at hand. The bear soon came on, pushing its head through the intestine-formed curtain of the window, whereupon she threw the straw into the lamp, at the blaze of which the bear re-



LASSING A POLAR BEAR CUB, AUGUST 9TH, 1850.

for wherever the carcass of a whale may be found, or a rich hunt of seals or white whales occurs in a certain place within these confines, there several bears are sure soon to make their appearance. In the south, where no dogs are to be had, for instance, the natives generally try to force the bear into the water and often kill it with harpoons from the *kayaks*. At the southernmost stations bears have often been shot close to the houses, being apparently attracted by the scent from the human dwelling places. Several years ago a bear had pushed the foremost part of his body into a house passage at night,

treated; it then tried to scratch a hole through the wall from another side, but was killed by some passing travelers.

While camped on the northern side of Simpson's Strait, in the fall of '79, and waiting for them to freeze over, we all participated in an exciting foot race of a couple of miles, after a large polar bear that had been started up some seven or eight miles inland. Bruin, however, placed Simpson's Strait between the pursuers and pursued, and thus saved his robe. Toolooah, never exhausted, way-laid a herd of reindeer that had remained stupid spectators of the bear chase, and by

killing two and wounding two others, completed a score of nine in as many hours.

While living among the Netschilluk Eskimo, who inhabit the shores of Simpson's Strait, I remember their telling me a story of a very strange animal they had met at long intervals of many years, when upon their summer reindeer hunts with *kayaks* and spears. They described it as a black monster, as large and heavy as a musk ox, with a face like that of a man and feet like those of a bear. They report them to be very ferocious, making sad havoc among the Eskimo dogs that attempt to bring them to bay, and when thus irritated do not hesitate to attack the natives themselves. Joe (Eberbing) tells me that the Kinnepetoo Eskimo of Chesterfield Inlet, who are armed with guns obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company, have killed several of these beasts, so they report, but I have never been able to procure, or even to see, any of their robes. I think it can be no other than the grizzly bear of North America, which is thus shown to occasionally extend its limits as far north as the Arctic Ocean during the short summer of that region, and no doubt returns to the timber limit, many hundreds of miles to the southward, to hibernate.

Speaking of hibernating, there is probably no other subject of Arctic zoology on which there is such a variety of opinion and of which there is so little known, and so much interesting information yet to be gained, as pertains to the hibernation of the northern bear. The very first conclusion to which one would naturally jump is, that this species of all others would be the very one to seek such a state as a protection from the intense and bitter cold of the polar winter; and I am much inclined to think that the published opinions of many writers have been based on such conclusions rather than on personal observation. Some authorities are found who deny that the polar bear hibernates at all, in the true sense of the word, and from what little I know of the subject, I feel disposed to side with them. Dr. Richardson, the naturalist of several Arctic expeditions, and a most conscientious and voluminous writer on the natural history of the polar regions that he traversed, maintains that the hibernating of these animals is confined to the females during the time they

are with cub; and yet I find by native testimony that they have slain them while in this condition, and I believe this can be relied on. Others think that the mothers remain secluded while the cubs are too weak to elude pursuit, but it is hardly worth while to deny this, so numerous are the cases furnished by civilized and savage observers who have secured the cubs when they could not have been much over a few days old. I am prone to believe that the polar bear never hibernates under any circumstances. The mother, for a few days on either side of the cub's birth, may remain secluded in the den she has excavated in some deep snow bank, and is more shy than at any other time; but beyond this, and the fact that bear holes are occasionally found, there is nothing upon which to base any theories in favor of hibernation, while the facts that polar bears of both sexes have been encountered and killed in every month of the year, and in all sorts of conditions, are the opposite statements in the case. The bear holes in the snow banks are very interesting little affairs, but the fact that they are only found after the cubbing season, and never during the coldest weather of winter, would show that they are not used permanently; unless it be argued the maker has too carefully secreted them to be discovered at this time. Lieut. Payer, of the Austrian expedition, was fortunate enough to see them occupying these abodes, though even the Eskimo seldom, if ever, have the opportunity. He says: "But almost immediately again the bear disappeared into the snow, and when we came to the place of his disappearance we discovered the winter retreat of a family of bears. It was cosily hollered out of a mass of snow lying under a rocky wall. The bear had shown herself only once, but resisted all our efforts to seduce her to leave the shelter she had chosen. Nor had we any special desire to creep on all fours into the narrow, dark habitation. Sumbu (one of the dogs) only was bold enough to follow her; but he saw too many things which led him to return very quickly. From the snow which had been thrown up at the entrance of this hole, we inferred that this had been the work of the bear in her efforts to close the approach to her abode. It was the first time we came upon a family of bears in their winter quarters, or had the chance of adding anything to our scanty knowledge as to the winter sleep

of those animals. Middendorff does not admit that they sleep during the winter. He considers the bear far too lean to be able to do so."

Dr. Rae, a veteran Arctic explorer in a good deal of the same region where my explorations were cast, says that an anecdote was once told him by a credible native eye-witness of the scene, of a polar bear killing a walrus with a piece of ice, which he gives in his own words as follows: "I and two or three other Innuits were attempting to approach some walrus, in winter, lying on the ice close to the water kept open by the strong current in Fox's Channel. As we were getting near we saw that a large white bear was before us. He had reached, in the most stealthy manner, a high ridge of ice, immediately above where the walrus was lying. He then seized a mass of ice in his paws, reared himself on his hind legs, and threw the ice with great force on the head of a half grown walrus and then sprang down upon it." The Eskimo then ran up, speared the bear, and found the walrus all but dead, thus securing both animals. Dr. Rae adds that the bear threw the ice as if he were "left-pawed."

While the *Hansa* of the second German expedition was beset in the ice on the east coast of Greenland, in September, 1869, a she-bear and her cub approached the vessel. The dam being killed, the young one was captured. It got away, however, but was recaptured in the water, and to make sure of its staying, chained to a huge anchor. The men then built a snow house for it, the floor being covered with shavings for a bed; but it despised these luxuries and bedded in the snow. Some time after it disappeared with the huge chain, and from the weight of iron there is no doubt where it brought up when it attempted to swim away.

When our stay of two dreary years in the Arctic came to a close, we bade adieu to our Eskimo friends and boarded the whaler *George and Mary*, of New Bedford, bound for home. The whaling season had not been good; one—only one—whale, a seventy-barrel fish—having been caught; so as we bent our course for Hudson's Strait, Captain Baker thought he would take a last hurried peep into Roe's Welcome, as we wended our way home, to see if a whale could not be raised. The 8th of August saw us entering its southern mouth. When squarely off Whale Point, the man in the crow's nest (the look-out

place on the foremast to watch for whales) reported a couple of polar bears off our starboard beam. The ship was hove to, and the mate's boat lowered and sent in pursuit, with myself in the bow. It was a she-bear and a three-months' cub we had sighted, who hearing us lowering the boat, immediately took to the water. The cub kept close to its mother and occasionally took a rest on her shoulders. As it became evident to the dam that in a fair race she could not escape, she crawled upon a large cake of ice, roaring furiously at us—not unlike the deep roar of a lion—and faced us for a fight. At about forty yards I put a bullet through her back, just behind the shoulders, which laid her *bors de combat*. Her efforts to back again into the water were ended by a shot from the mate through her swaying head. We were now left to face the little cub, which I was extremely anxious to capture alive. A lance-warps was procured, a running noose made, and the little fellow once lassoed was easily dragged into the water. From the ice-cake to the ship he rode upon the dead body of his mother. No sooner was he pulled up to the deck than we "triangled him" with three converging ropes, at which he bit with a spitefulness that kept us at a respectful distance. The Captain disappointed us all by ordering him to be shot, as he considered him too dangerous a passenger to have on board in the event of a storm, as he might break loose and create an uncomfortable consternation, as had been done once before. It was doubtless just as well that the mate put a pistol to his head.

The mate of the *George and Mary* had visited the Arctic regions on a whaling cruise some years before, and returning homeward had captured a polar bear cub, the dam being killed. The robe was stripped from the mother and placed in the bottom of a large cask, and in this the cub was imprisoned, the staves being bored full of auger holes for ventilation, and the cask lashed to a convenient part of the decks. During a fearful storm it broke loose from its fastenings and brought up against something that broke in one of the heads, and the cub escaped on the deck. The sailors took to the rigging, the cook deserted the Captain's "flap-jacks," and even the helmsman left the wheel to look after itself; and it was some time before Bruin, Jr., could be persuaded to relinquish command by a bullet through his brain.