



Painted for OUTING by Miss Lucas.

"I HAD NO TIME FOR HESITATION." (p. 223.)

BEAR HUNTING IN JAPAN.

By "Rollins."



AS we left the port of Yokohama, dropped slowly down the bay of Yedo, passed through the Uraga channel and crawled lazily southward on our way to Hiogo, no more efficiently equipped little schooner than the *Nimrod* or a more jovial and sportsmanlike set of fellows than her crew were to be found in the waters of Japan.

We were bound on a bear-hunting expedition to the hilly regions of Kioto, where Mr. Bruin has for centuries regarded himself as the principal inhabitant, specially reserving for the use of himself and family certain fastnesses among the rocks, whence he descends to levy such tribute among the vegetable gardens as the season and circumstances may afford.

Brown and the Major were old hands with the rifle, and beguiled the time with many wondrous yams of feats performed and dangers dared in the far West. To these Mackenzie, an Eastern veteran of mighty deeds among tiger-haunted jungles, replied with hair-raising stories of midnight shrieks and missing coolies, while Fitzgerald and I dropped appreciative or deprecatory remark, from time to time, as the exigencies of the competition required.

In this agreeable manner, with an occasional snap-shot at a passing gull, more for the purpose of getting our eye in than with any idea of actual sport, we sighted and rounded the point of volcanic Oshima, and eventually we found ourselves landed upon the wharf at the treaty port of Hiogo.

Our stay here was of but brief dura-

tion, and, having engaged the necessary men to superintend the conveyance of our luggage and act as guides and bearers in the drives, we bade adieu to the courteous consul and set forth.

We had the best carriages that could be procured, but the best, at that time, did not go very far in the matter of ease. They were made of rough-hewn timber, of triangular shape, mounted upon three wheels, each of one solid piece of wood, and drawn by lethargic bullocks. We had vainly endeavored to procure mounts of a more civilized character. We could have obtained ponies at fancy prices, but never a saddle was there to be had; and even our friend the consul assured us that we should find our uncomfortable conveyances to be best in the long run.

Numerous and exciting were the adventures we had on the road before we quite got on terms with our horned steeds. At one time the Major turned to converse with Brown, when his ox promptly stepped over to the low line of rushes marking the limit of macadam, to reach a pool of water; and the Major had to leap hastily from the rear of his machine and operate against the refractory "bos" from the bank. Later on Mackenzie and I were riding side by side, when, from some cause unexplained, our wheels became locked, and the animals set off at a fair pace. The sides of our vehicles tilted up in extraordinary fashion, while for some minutes our joint endeavors to pull up proved unavailing. Finally the conveyance spun around like a top and pitched heels over head into a ditch.

In due course we arrived safely at Kioto, where we were to leave the greater part of our belongings, and proceed some fifty miles further, to an outlying village intended as our headquarters. In a few days more we reached the wild mountainous regions of Omi, where we formed our camp at the dwelling of an isolated goat herd. From here we despatched scouts to

ascertain the latest movements of Bruin & Co., and report generally upon the prospects of sport.

In the meantime we were not idle, for the country around us literally teemed with game. We found antelope, deer and wild boar, and made many good bags of mallard, widgeon, woodcock, plover and snipe; so that when word reached us that traces of bear had been discovered at no great distance in the forest, we felt almost reluctant to leave camp. However, bear shooting was what we had come so far to obtain, and bear shooting we meant to have in spite of all the counter attractions.

We started the following morning, accompanied by some half score natives and as many dogs of the remarkable fox-like species peculiar to the country.

The weather was delightful; bright sunshine smiling cheerily around us as we pushed our way up a steep gully which led to the haunts of bruin in the higher parts of the forest. At first the pathway was easy and well defined, but gradually the ascent steepened and the track became more obscure. After an hour's work a brief halt was called and the supply of saké passed around. Saké, be it understood, is the national drink of the Japanese, brewed from rice, and the best qualities closely resemble pale sherry in appearance, but by no means equal that wine in other respects.

Upon resuming the ascent of the hill-side we climbed in single file through the luxuriant forest, and about noon our guides informed us that we had reached the ranges of the bear, and that at any moment we might come across game. We therefore kept rather more on the *qui vive*, and were presently startled by a loud yell which suddenly burst from the unfortunate Major, who occupied the post of honor in the van. Hurriedly making our way to him, we were surprised to find him standing bare-headed in the path, gazing upward and furiously gesticulating at a small but active brown monkey which had seized and made off with the Major's cork helmet. I am afraid our relief at finding the matter no worse somewhat tempered condolences, but the Major was not the man to tamely brook such an insult, and a shot brought the poor

little author of the mischievous outrage to the ground. But the killing of the monkey did not restore the helmet, which remained up a tree for a good half hour, until discovered and restored by one of the natives, whose climbing abilities were only second to those of his cousin, the thief.

Soon after this incident one of our men announced his discovery of a bear track, and we quickly gathered around the spot for an examination. The Japanese bear, it appears, is, on the whole, a sociable kind of animal, and delights in taking his wife and family with him on his various excursions in search of sustenance or diversion. Thus, the track showed that three full-grown animals, and two at least of lesser development, had passed that way, and we looked for a lively day's sport. Nor were we disappointed.

We carefully followed the trail, which led in and out among the loose rocks and camphor-wood bushes. The dogs were sent to the rear until we should have need of their services if bruin declined to leave cover.

In a short time we came upon a small open glade of bright spongy turf, across which a small stream bubbled and sparkled. Directly in front was the opening of what appeared to be a large cavern. The open space before the cave was a veritable bear-garden, in which we saw no less than seven animals—five of them full grown and of the largest size—disporting themselves on the grass or on the margin of the stream. A hasty glance showed that we were in the wrong place for an attack, as the bears had an open retreat behind them in the cavern. We decided that the Major, Mackenzie and Jones should steal round to the far side with half a dozen beaters and the dogs, in order to cut off the retreat, while Fitzgerald and I remained on observation duty and in command of the only other means of escape. The signal for hostilities was to be the branch of a pine-tree thrown over an intervening rock to attract the bears' attention, and announce the arrival of the flanking party at the stipulated point.

While these preliminary movements were in progress, Fitzgerald and I had excellent opportunities to observe the animals. There were three males and

two females full grown, and two cubs evidently from fifteen to eighteen months old. While the youngsters disported themselves like a couple of ungainly kittens, and tossed and tumbled over one another after a stick or a loose stone, the more sedate elders lounged in the shade, occasionally varying this by a few refreshing leaves from the branch of a neighboring tree.

A large branch suddenly falling from overhead among the astonished bears apprised us that our friends were in position. I sprang through the screen of bushes and tired at the largest. To my delight the first shot brought him down, and at the same moment the Major and his party fired a hasty salute.

Two large ones and one cub fell to this discharge, but the remaining two adults and the cub made a simultaneous rush at us before we could reload. The situation was critical, and we promptly took to flight. Fitzgerald sped along the path by which we had come, while I

attempted a strategic movement which I hoped would enable me to join my comrades. I clambered up a rock, and, hastily reloading, was beginning to think well of my little scheme, when a panting noise and quick breath upon my ear caused me to turn rapidly and find myself face to face with a most active bear.

A second brute was a few yards below, and I had only time to discharge my rifle full in the bear's face and fly for dear life across the rock in the direction of the stream. Here, to my horror, I ran slap into a third bear, which was toiling painfully up the only road by which I

could escape. There seemed nothing for it but a hand-to-hand fight with three infuriated animals, for the beast in whose face I had fired, although severely wounded, was still sufficiently alive to account for me at least. I had already grasped my rifle to use as a club, when I noticed that the branches of a tree that grew across the stream swayed within a yard of my ledge of rock. Looking down I could see the water running merrily along some forty feet below. I had no time for hesitation, so, dashing my rifle in the face of the advancing bear, I made a rush and a spring, with arms outstretched before me.

Crash! crash! I went through the branches, and it seemed as if I should never stop falling, when I felt myself strike against a projecting limb, around which I clung desperately. Suddenly it snapped. I experienced again that awful sensation of falling, and then I lost consciousness.

I came to myself in time to receive the solicitous inquiries of my friends. Fitzgerald, finding himself unpursued, had retraced his flying steps just as the two bears clambered up to the rocky ledge where I had so nearly been trapped. He summoned the others, and an organized siege ensued, which resulted in the extermination of the bears, and then in a search for me.

We camped the night on the grassy field so lately occupied by our foes, and I was well enough next day to attempt the return trip to Kiôto, where in due course I arrived, not much the worse for my adventure.

