

SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING
AND
HIGHLAND SPORT

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BY

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"DEER-STALKING," "THE DEER FORESTS OF SCOTLAND,"
"LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK," AND "THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND"

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PREFACE

FOLLOWING the example of the first volume of this series, in which my two books of *Deer-stalking* and *The Deer Forests of Scotland* have been printed as one, it has seemed appropriate that a similar course might be pursued greatly to the advantage of my readers if *Shooting and Salmon Fishing* and *Highland Sport* were dealt with in a like manner, for whereas the first-named contains advice, hints and suggestions for the tyro with gun and rod, the latter work gives examples of their practical application, and therefore I venture to hope my readers may find profit and pleasure in the perusal of these pages.

AUGUSTUS GRIMBLE.

January, 1902.

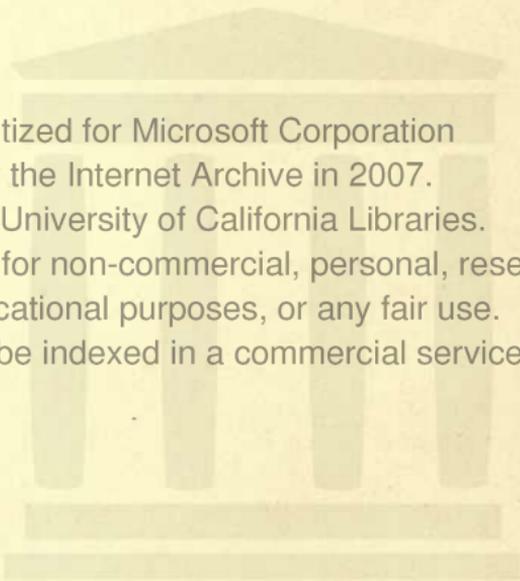
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SHOOTING
AND
SALMON FISHING

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SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL REMARKS

WE will suppose it to be the end of July, and then ever since the close of the previous season all keen sportsmen will have had periodical attacks of anxiety as to the prospects of the one to come. In our variable climate the weather of the past five months, coupled with the reports received from foresters and keepers in many a lonely glen, will have been the foundation of numerous happy talks between brother sportsmen; but by this date, whether it relate to Highland or Lowland game, each lover of the gun will be able to form a fairly accurate idea of the sport awaiting him; and, moreover, those who are to be afoot on "the twelfth" will already be smelling heather, though there are perhaps but few who will join in the fervent wish expressed by a City gentleman who had just made a fortune and meant spending it, and who exclaimed to his friends one sultry day at the end of July: "Well, thank goodness, in less than three weeks I shall be in Scotland on the moors and amongst the longtails!"

As in a book of sport the word sportsman must inevitably be frequently used, the author thinks it as well to begin by stating what in his humble opinion a "good man" should be.

Firstly,—In carrying and using a gun he should be absolutely safe for everyone with him in the field, himself included.

Secondly,—He will never count the pleasure of a day's sport by the number of head killed; and he should be able to derive keen enjoyment from the mere fact of having a gun in his hands with a chance of using it, if even only now and again; and it should ever be reckoned the greater the difficulties to be overcome, the greater is the pleasure to be had from surmounting them.

Thirdly,—He should be able to sleep in a shepherd's bothy and hob-nob with the fleas, while dining with their happy owner off porridge washed down with cold spring water; but likewise he should be able to "go nap" through sixteen courses of the best, while neither of the above-named events, or any happy medium, should affect his walking or his shooting the next day.

Fourthly,—He should be sound in wind and limb, untirable, undefeatable, and quick to take advantage of all chances presenting themselves; and in every shot there is ever the right and the wrong moment in which to pull the trigger.

Fifthly,—He should not be a jealous shot; he should not fire long shots; and in cover he should make it a hard and fast rule NEVER to fire low shots. What are long shots, each one must, to some extent, settle for himself; but using forty-three grains of Schultze and a full ounce of No. 5 shot, with "Field" loading and a very slight choke, the author tries to limit himself to shots that are not over fifty yards, and up to that distance he has satisfied himself at the plate it is entirely his own fault if misses be made.

In cover shooting or when driving it is easy to judge the chosen distance, almost to a yard, by fixing on some object on either side; and should game pass wide of these points, steadfastly resolve to let it go by unmolested.

Sixthly,—He should be punctual to a moment, and he should be quiet, and not raise his voice louder than needful. He should walk the pace his host sets, and pride himself on keeping *exact line*. The host should regulate his pace to one which he sees is pleasant to his friends, and if there be a very

slow man in a party walking in line, it can be arranged not to tire him, or make a funeral march for the more active ones, by placing the slow walker in the middle of the line, leaving the quicker goers to do the wheeling. This plan can of course only succeed in countries broken up by hedges, and would be useless on moorland beats, which often go straight ahead for a mile or more; but as fast walking is always against making a good bag, the slow man unwittingly does everyone in the field a good turn, and in all cases his company is greatly to be preferred to that of the fast, jealous walker, who is for ever racing in advance of the whole of the other guns.

Seventhly,—If fault has to be found with either guest or servant, the host should not furiously rage before the whole field; and a guest, except in cases of reckless shooting or dangerous carrying of guns, should never say anything unless directly appealed to.

Eighthly,—He should never “forget” to take out a shooting licence, or fail to “make friends” with all keepers, gillies, beaters, ponies, and dogs. He should take a good supply of cartridges wherever he goes, and if it be exhausted, then let him be punctilious to return what he borrows; for there are shooters who make it a practice not to take enough, and supply the deficiency by borrowing from the cartridge bags of their friends, and never offer to replace them. Such soon get known and laughed at for their petty meanness, and no one would wish to be classed with them.

Ninthly,—He should be willing to sacrifice his own sport, if thereby several others are benefited, and the following story well illustrates our meaning. Some seasons since, when on a visit to Sir Edward Lawson, at Hall Barn, in Bucks, it happened Mr. Archie Steuart-Wortley was one of a cheery party made up of six guns. In the course of the day we came to a beat near “the march” (even when writing of English sport, we prefer the use of the Scotch word), which held a great many pheasants, numbers of which would at times fly

back, and thus go right off the shooting. For this reason it was always necessary to have a reliable gun with the beaters. The post fell to Wortley that day, and as the cover about to be beaten was one of low gorse, bracken and broom, leading into Dipple Wood, the guns standing in front could watch the beaters coming from the very first start, and each saw their friend could have killed some sixty birds whilst advancing on them; but *not one single shot did he fire*, for that day a strong wind was behind the birds, each one flying forward as it rose, so, like a good man, Wortley sacrificed the poor pleasure of killing a lot of easy shots, and by allowing the birds to develop their speed, by the time they reached the shooters posted in front they had all become "tall" ones, offering difficult and exciting shooting. The guns out that day, besides our host, were the late Sir George Prescott, the late General Goodlake, v.c., Sir John Edwards-Moss, and the author, who all acknowledged Wortley's sportsmanlike forbearance as soon as the beat was over.

It is much to be regretted so many shooters never take the trouble to master the etiquette of good form, and often the most particular men in all other ways are the greatest offenders against the sportsman's code.

It is a mistake to assert, as one often hears, that those taking to shooting late in life cannot learn to be good men, so far as relates to their actions in the field; although it is quite correct that they seldom blossom even into fairly good marksmen.

Anyone who is really anxious to learn may, in the course of a few seasons, become well versed in all the courtesies of the shooting field; but unless broken in from boyhood, it is rare to see any short service gentlemen actually excel.

What happy days hundreds of us have passed with the friendly keeper, during our holidays, and before we were allowed to join in the pursuit of real game!—days resulting in but a few young rabbits to make a pie for the house, some

wood-pigeons, a jay, a hawk, and a stoat, but altogether making up a bag regarded with rapture. Poor as such sport may now seem, those however were the days that taught us to be good and careful sportsmen. We have often read that for the first few days the absolute novice should begin to shoot with powder only in the gun, but whatever the merits of the plan may be, we have never yet met with the lad of the period who would condescend to give this method a trial.

Perhaps the most common fault to be met with nowadays is the hopeless inability of so many to distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*. Numbers of these delinquents do not sin from jealousy, but from pure incapacity in the excitement of the moment to see anything but the object to be shot at.

At some Scotch grouse drives, where the boxes have not been more than fifty yards apart, we have had neighbours who have fired at birds passing them on the far side of our box! To mention this is often a matter of giving offence; but these sort of shooters are the ones of all others to pepper one, and as it is better to cry out before being hit than afterwards, it becomes wiser to risk the offence, and if taken in bad part, it can generally be put right over a glass of wine at dinner.

The author remembers being present at a grouse drive, where the conformation of the ground forced the boxes to be barely fifty yards apart. As soon as placed in position, on turning to the left, the welcome sight of an old hand met his eyes; on the right was a lad who had just confided to us that this was his very first grouse drive. However, he had been next us in an earlier drive that day, and appeared to handle his gun in good style, and to know where he was shooting; so our mind was made up to trust him, and as soon as the birds began to come we blazed away free from anxiety, till suddenly bespattered with shot, and turning quickly, it could be seen at a glance the unwelcome visitors had come from the gun beyond the youngster on the right. Wondering how the lad escaped being hit, we did not hesitate to cry the sinner by name.

At the end of the drive the culprit, whom we will call A., without even waiting to pick up his birds, came striding towards us, clearly very angry, and the following conversation took place :—

A. I say, G., dash it all! What on earth do you mean by yelling out like that? I vow I never even shot near you, and it's not fair to shout a fellow's name all down the line, and it's precious rough on me, as I'm nearly a stranger here!

G. Well, A., it's no good being in a rage. I'm sure you *did* fire right into us—ask Donald (the loader). However, no harm is done, but for goodness' sake do be more careful in future.

A. Good gracious, G.! you must have taken leave of your senses, for no one *can* be more careful than I am; and besides, my shots could not have hit you and missed C. (the lad), who was in a direct line between us.

G. All right, A., you keep your opinion; I shall stick to mine. So we will let the matter drop and say no more about it.

A. (still very angry and turning to C., who was placidly picking up his birds). Hi! C., come here a moment, will you?

C. (coming up). Well, what is it?

A. Why, G. says I shot into his box, and I could not possibly do that without hitting you, so please just say straight out if any shots did come your way.

C. Well, A., since you put it like that, as a matter of fact I have got five pellets in my back!—only flesh wounds though, and as they don't hurt it does not matter!!

A. collapsed and apologized like a man, and we all had a good laugh at his expense. C.'s wounds gave him no trouble, and he was richer by the five pellets and a very handsome cigar case A. sent to him to commemorate the event, and from that day forth A. could always be passed as safe. Poor C. afterwards confided to us, when asked why he had said nothing, that he was silent simply because he had always heard he must expect to be hit when grouse driving!

This story well shows how an excitable man, when fixing his

eye on the bird to be shot at, becomes absolutely blind to every other object around him ; and the author believes there are but few of us who cannot recall to mind some risky shots fired in youthful days.

Personally we are thankful to say that, with one exception, we never put lead into anything not meant to receive it ; but for all that, we are often haunted by the recollection of firing a dangerous shot, when quite a boy, which to all appearances ought to have severely peppered a very kind uncle. Nevertheless, few gentlemen who shoot hard every season reach old age and retire from their sport without having "pelleted" someone ; it is not that they have ever failed to exercise the utmost care ; it is *solely* to the wild flights and freaks of ricochet and glancing shot that their misfortunes are to be attributed, for well-authenticated and numerous are the records of these accidents—seldom serious in their consequences, but horribly vexing to those who have had the bad luck to cause them.

The only time we did hit that which was not intended was after an experience of twenty years, when we had the sad misfortune to wound a very good setter of the late Mr. Spencer Lucy's at Corroul.

Poor Belle ! it was one of the few faults she ever made, and nearly cost her dear. She crept on after a covey of running grouse, and following them round a hillock unsighted the shooter, her head coming into the line of fire fully thirty yards from the spot where she had last been seen, just as the trigger was pulled : the bird fell dead, and she was badly hit, but eventually recovered to set many more grouse ; but though she did not turn in the least gun-shy, her nose was never afterwards so good.

Recently we experienced another instance of far more inexcusable rashness than could be imputed to our grouse-driving friend. A gentleman invited us to shoot, whom we had only met the day before, whilst mutually visiting at a country house. In all other respects a most charming com-

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panion, he soon showed himself to be something uniquely dangerous in the field. No matter when or where anything rose, shoot at it he must, and did.

In the first beat he placed the author about forty yards away from him in a bare grass field, outside a small spinney; a hen pheasant shortly rose from the cover ditch, flying towards us, too low to shoot at, and barely even topping one's head. At that instant, to our horror, mine host was seen making ready to shoot, so discarding all ceremony, we fell flat on the grass, while both his barrels were discharged harmlessly. Astonished and enraged at his proceedings, we nevertheless jumped up and killed the bird as it was going away, and then, not being on sufficiently intimate terms to swear at him, a bolt was made over the stile, where, meeting the next gun, we told him what had happened. He laughed, and only said, "Dear me, how wrong of us all to forget there was a stranger out; we ought to have warned you. Well! *he always does it!* No good saying anything; but none of us who know him ever go near him, and DON'T YOU!"

This was not very pleasant hearing, the more so as the host shortly joined us, saying he hoped he had not fired a dangerous shot, but really he had not seen me in the least; and this was most courteously put, although we had stood in a bare grass field hardly forty yards apart!

He then invited us to follow him, saying there would be a good few birds this time, and we could again stand next to each other. Not knowing how to escape, we obeyed orders, soon reaching the fatal corner to stand as before. It was as plain as possible that if we did not mean to be hit, the only chance of safety was in never taking eyes off this dangerous host.

The beat began, and again a pheasant rose in front of us, but the first flutter of the wings was a signal for us to take a seat on the fallow. Again our friend wasted his cartridges, and once more we were up in time to make a

kill; and at that corner, in this style, some twenty birds were bagged. For the whole of the rest of the day we had to stand next this terrible man, who never once appeared to see us sit down or jump up, or in any way notice he was regarded as an undesirable neighbour.

Although the first few of these reckless shots had caused considerable anger, the excitement of having to keep such a very sharp look-out began to please us, until eventually the ludicrous side of the matter so grew on us that before the end of the day we were actually enjoying it. The other guests also drew near and followed the example set, and then anything more laughable than to see the two friends on either side of their host tumbling down when his gun went up and jumping up when his gun went down, could hardly be seen out shooting. Once, however, safely at home, "previous engagements" were always to the fore when further invitations arrived from that quarter.

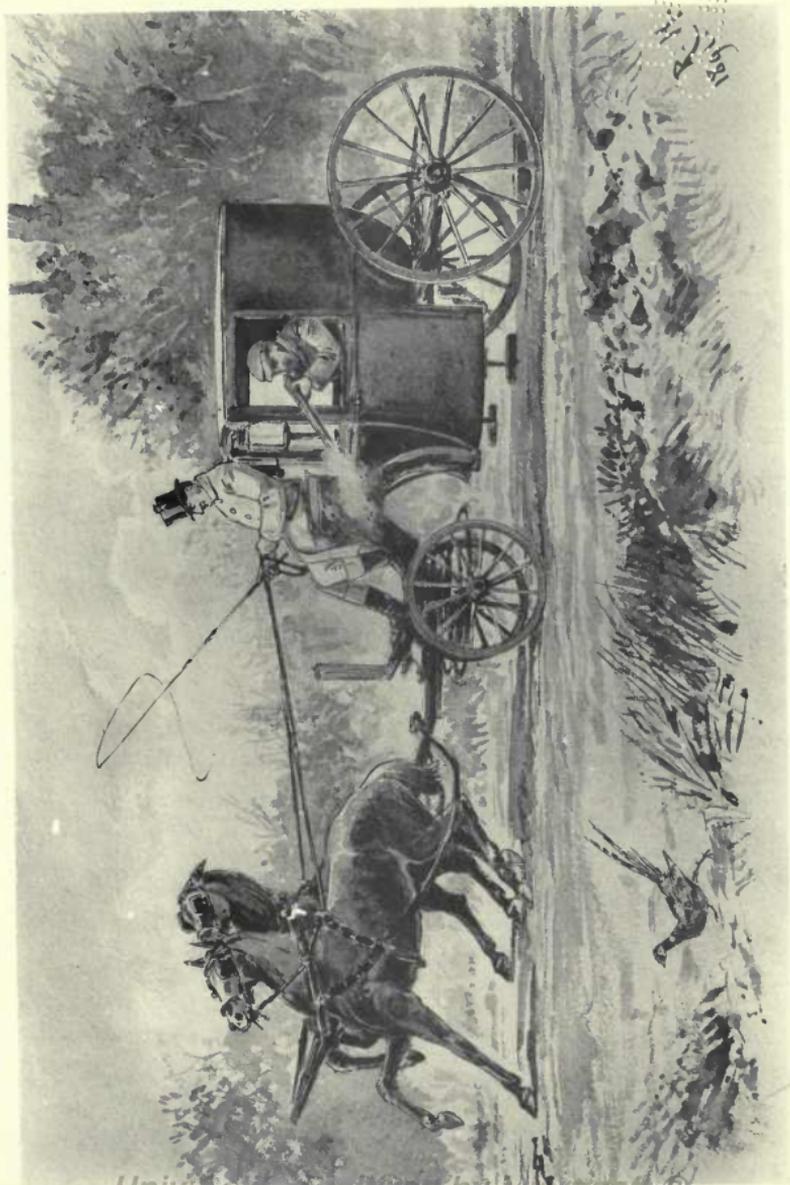
The inevitable end came at last—it was wonderful it had not come quicker—and our good friend has now retired from the world of sport—not, however, without at last having hit something, only it was a beater, not a hare, and the little mistake (a trifle of some seventy pellets in the poor man's thigh) having cost him about two pounds per pellet, he gave up in disgust at the stupidity of beaters in getting in the way; and the pheasants at any rate must be consoled with on the loss of a true friend. The moral of all this is, if out with a dangerous man *never take your eyes off him* if he is within shot, and also, go not forth with him twice, for such days as described are but poor fun, and unless short of shooting invitations, the first should always be the last. We cannot refrain from citing two more ludicrous instances of the untrained but too enthusiastic shooter. On the first occasion a keen but not young beginner was driving with a friend in a brougham to a shooting meet; on nearing the cover many pheasants were to be seen running off the roadside into the ditches, and our novice slipped a

cartridge into his gun and took a shot out of the window at a running cock! The bird escaped, but not so the brougham, which was speedily deposited in the ditch the pheasant had made for; no one was hurt, and as soon as the two occupants of the vehicle were got out of it the only result worth mentioning, in addition to a broken pole, was a somewhat animated conversation between them.

We also once watched a sportsman who, thinking himself unseen, potted some dozen birds just inside the cover as they were running down to the corner, and to give him his due, he rigorously followed the advice offered by Mr. Punch's Frenchman, and always "waited till they stopped"!

As each murder was committed he ran to the cover-side to pick up the victim, and returning to his stand deposited it complacently at his feet. Quite a nice little heap was accumulated in this way, and when the beat was over, as the rest of the guns came up, he proudly cried to the keeper, "Just send a boy to take my birds, please," and turning to us, "I've picked 'em all for myself, and there was not a runner in the lot!" Though this was true enough, we began to think whether such conduct should not be reported to head-quarters; however, as our friend was in all other ways quite an extra good fellow, nothing was said; but by sundry hints and winks he was made to understand there had been a witness of his atrocities, and we are glad to say he is now a fair sportsman and even a moderate shot.

It is impossible to help noticing the haphazard carelessness often witnessed at some large shooting parties: one moment the barrels of Mr. A.'s full-cocked gun stare you straight in the face, and quickly getting out of that danger, all seems safe till it suddenly dawns on you Mr. B.'s gun is covering your legs, and having promptly avoided any chance of being lamed for life, lo and behold! Mr. C.'s gun is found pointing steadily at your stomach, till at last, made half nervous and wholly angry, shooting well becomes impossible. The author has always



A LITTLE TOO KEEN.

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ANXIOUS MOMENTS.

noticed that those who have ever used muzzle-loaders are safer companions than those whose shooting career has dated from the day of the breech-loader; for every one who used a ramrod had to face a certain amount of danger, and though an indefinite number of fingers, thumbs, and hat-rims were annually blown off, the care each shooter was then taught to take of himself made him safer for his friends, and we think there were fewer people "pelleted" in the muzzle-loading days.

In our humble opinion there is far too much forbearance shown to dangerous men, and many an accident would be averted if those not knowing how to manage their weapons were politely but plainly told of their misdeeds. It is fortunate that shots are not bullets, for if everyone was killed or maimed who was hit each season, the fatalities would be counted by hundreds. We do not shoot with more careless shots than the average run of shooters, but rarely does a season go by but what we see one or two people wounded. That which takes place in one man's experience will repeat itself with others, and it only requires a multiplication sum to make up a long list of "peppered" ones each season. It is a very terrible matter to be shot at quite close quarters, for it usually entails severe and lasting after-effects, if not immediate loss of life, and it would be better for anyone to be hit by a solid bullet than to receive a charge of small shot at but a few yards from the muzzle of the gun. Provided, however, the victim is well away from the culprit, and that he escape the exact centre of the charge, there is nothing very painful or dangerous in being shot; and if only the eyes are undamaged, the rest of the body can take a "good few" pellets without being much the worse. At thirty-five yards rise we had thirteen pellets of No. 6 put into head, face, neck, and throat—the sensation was that of a heavy box on the ear (and for a perfect knowledge of that feeling we are indebted to a brutal schoolmaster); but after stanching the bleeding and washing in the nearest burn, we continued to shoot the day out, and on the following one we

went to the forest and killed two stags, so that clearly there was nothing much to bother about. The whole "baker's dozen" are still carried about with us, and no annoyance is ever experienced from them, and whenever shots are buried deep in the flesh, as long as no inconvenience is caused, they should not be disturbed. A lump of tobacco placed on a shot wound or some wool plucked off a coat and poked into it will usually stop any ordinary case of bleeding.

When walking in line and the beat has narrowed so as to force the guns to be only about twenty yards apart, one is often assailed, as a bird rises, with a noisy "Why didn't you shoot? I waited *ever* so long for you!" the querist having just smothered a partridge not fifteen yards right in front of you, and which by all the laws of the field was strictly your very own to have first fire at.

With a neighbour like this, it is best to put the gun under one's arm and merely say, "It is of no use our both shooting at the same bird." The kill, such as it was, has pleased the duffer, and a good man can afford to laugh at being robbed of a few shots.

When, however, that sort of thing is likely to continue all day, it is difficult to know what to advise. If between two such guns, neither of them knowing their own birds (or that it is the accepted rule for the man nearest to whom the bird rises to have first fire), it is best to try and get shifted from your place in the line, which now and then may be accomplished by a mild ruse.

When the time comes to make a wheel, stop to light a pipe or fasten a boot lace, and thus get left in rear of the line, and in order to save time in waiting for your position to be regained, the host will often cry to you to fall in by a short cut, and thus at one *coup* both the two attentive friends may be got rid of.

Exasperated at this happy-go-lucky style of shooting, we have at times seen good men knock over ground game only a

few yards in front of the offender, and then staring hard while reloading, flash forth looks that are tantamount to saying: "There! take that, you duffer!"

If one cannot secure a change in positions and all hints are thrown away, a *modus vivendi* may be arranged by agreeing to take it in turns to shoot; this sort of work cannot, however, be called a pleasant day's sport, and of course in good company it could never happen; but two wrongs do not make a right, and we are of opinion that when a well-trained sportsman is placed between two duffers, he should not forget his code of honour, however great the provocation.

We have assumed in the foregoing cases that the offenders sin entirely from ignorance; but at times we have seen two good shots urged by a host to punish a jealous man who has established for himself a notorious reputation as a wilful offender and jealous shot. The sinner is placed between his executioners at a stand where there will be plenty of birds, when both concentrating their skill entirely on all game coming to the culprit, the double fire rarely fails to demoralize him, and by the time the beat is over he will have had his lesson, and a second one on that particular shooting will never be required. It is a disagreeable performance to have to incite friends to take part in, and it may be thought it would be better not to invite the jealous man at all; but occasionally it happens he is a neighbour with whom it is for many reasons desirable to keep good friends, and who is a real good fellow in all other ways.

There are numbers of gentlemen who preserve largely, and have numerous shooting parties, but who do not really care for the sport, and know but little about it. They are fond of a country life, and like to see their friends about them and give them some shooting; but they do not know their own "marches," and could not direct the beating of their own covers, or even place the guns, for they have no idea where all the various rides in a wood begin, end, or lead to. These are the gentlemen who are almost sure to over-gun their covers, for the more

friends they can entertain the better these kindly-hearted ones are pleased, so all details as to numbers are settled by asking the head keeper how many he will require for such and such a wood, and according to that estimate invitations are sent out.

Now, the best of keepers is but mortal, and if the shooting be on a large scale, each gun asked will represent a gold coin of the realm for his pocket, so a liberal view of the required number will surely be taken, and on these shootings ten guns are always asked to do the work of six or seven. As a general rule, to ensure a pleasant day's sport, the guests should be fifty or sixty yards apart; for if but twenty to thirty yards divide them, it becomes almost impossible for each to keep to his own bird, and under such circumstances a hot corner develops into an affair of indiscriminate banging, and first come first served and devil take the hindmost quickly becomes the order of the day.

On these occasions also the cry of "Let 'em rise!" is often heard, should there be one or two of the party who are known as "plasterers," and kill their birds fluttering on the top of the underwood—a truly horrible style, but one much practised by those who keep a score of what they kill. We do not say there are not exceptional circumstances where a score, if a scorer be sent out, may not fairly be kept; but as a rule we are certain it is a bad plan ever to think of such a thing. A score-keeping shooter is generally a shot picker, who may repeatedly be seen to refuse difficult chances for fear of spoiling his average, and thus lose a great deal of fun to gratify his vanity and enable him to say so many head were bagged for so many cartridges. The gentlemen who so liberally and kindly provide sport for their friends, although they themselves care but little about it, are also frequently those who make the great mistake of letting their keepers shoot when guests are present, and we have seen some very good keepers quite spoilt in this way, for they will generally be better shots and harder walkers than the ordinary run of visitors at such places, and speedily be-

coming elated at their own prowess, they become "too big for their breeches," whilst should one of the gentlemen chance to be both a better marksman and better walker, the keeper will become wildly jealous; and we once, in Scotland, saw a whole day's sport reduced to a match between the two, which the amateur won very easily. Indeed, as far as shooting goes, the gentlemen as a body are, as they ought to be, a very long way in front of the keepers. It is as well that a game-keeper should be able to shoot more or less, but some of the best are very moderate performers with the gun, relying chiefly on their traps for the destruction of all vermin.

Except under exceptional circumstances, such as a day's ferreting, where we have known both master and man for some time and are sure of the latter's training and good manners, we usually plead an excuse if asked to take the field with the keeper who is to shoot.

As a rule, each man thinks he kills more than he actually does, for if eight guns are called together after a hot corner, and each be asked what he has bagged and the total added up, it will generally be nearly double the number of head gathered.

During the course of a moderate day's sport—four of us tramping the fields in line—we once heard a very bad shot asked what he had killed up to luncheon-time, when, in perfect good faith, he claimed the whole bag!

Never count or let the keeper count the cartridges taken out; make sure there will be plenty, and at the end of the day do not look at the number remaining, for your own judgment will tell whether you have done well or the reverse; and, if anyone should happen to be in very good form and make a long string of kills, let him not on any account boast of it, or the first time he is a little "off" he will receive a lot of chaff and, worse still, render himself miserable by his own thoughts on his bad shooting.

The author trusts his readers will not think he is about to try and teach them how to shoot or to fish. Hints only are

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offered, as he does not believe it possible by pure and simple writing—no matter how long or minute the instructions may be—to teach anyone to kill a bird on the wing or to drop a fly neatly on a salmon cast at the end of twenty-five yards of line. The foundation of every good shot or fisherman must always be youth combined with an ardent love of the sport, coupled with plenty of opportunities for practice. Of course, some will by nature be more gifted than others, and these are the men who come to the front.

Let us recount our own experiences as a beginner with the gun, and we do so solely in the hope they may persuade others to persevere. At thirteen we were entered at rabbits and an occasional pheasant by our uncle, Mr. Rothwell Pounsett, who then rented the shootings of Mountfield Park, near Battle, in Sussex. As a beginner we did well, and friends and keepers were kind enough to prophesy a future for the schoolboy.

Then for several seasons the exigencies of education and army cramming did away with all chance of handling a gun, till, at the age of seventeen, an old school-fellow, Tom Powell, asked us to stay for a month from the first of September, at his father's place, Dorstone Rectory, in Herefordshire.

In those days Tom was a lively Oxford undergraduate, some few years our senior, and an excellent shot. That, alas! is more than forty years ago, and Tom is now the Reverend Thomas Powell, and lives at the Rectory and follows in the footsteps of his good father, who was then our host.

We arrived at the Rectory with plenty of powder, shot, wads and caps, and a fourteen-bore double-muzzle-loader by Forsyth; and in the smoking-room, on the eve of St. Partridge's Day, we hinted somewhat plainly that birds would be scarce by the end of the month! In this case pride did indeed have a fall, for during the month, in which we two killed two hundred brace of birds over dogs, incredible as it may sound, our individual share of that bag was but *five* partridges! Our friend gave us every chance, and we had more shooting than he had.

Gun, powder, shot and charge were all changed in turn, but to no good purpose, and at the end of the month, depressed and down-hearted at our utter want of success, we were glad when the visit terminated and our adieus were made, while mentally vowing never again to take a gun in hand. A feeling came over us that it could only have been to a muff as great as we were that the late "Ginger" Stubbs once addressed his damning praise. Said he to poor "Jones," who had been fishing for a compliment, "Jones, my dear fellow, you charge your gun well, you ram well, you cap well, you cock well and hold well," and here Jones was smiling all over his face, "but what the devil becomes of your shot is something no man can tell." Dearly as the sport was prized, sadly we were compelled to own that as a shooter we were a most thorough failure. A fortnight passed away, and during that time our discomfiture had to some extent been forgotten, when an invitation came from another good friend, the late Sir Charles Booth, asking us to stay with him at Netherfield, his place in Hertfordshire, and though our misgivings were great, we could not resist accepting. The first day of going out—distract, unnerved, and shy of letting off the gun—we were content to watch our host knocking his birds over, and killing cleanly at long distances with great precision. It *did* look so easy! Why, oh why, could we not learn it? and even while bewailing our stupidity a covey rose, when to our great joy the bird FIRED AT fell dead. "Well shot!" was called; but, better than that, it flashed across our brain we should yet learn to shoot. Coached by Sir Charles, rapid strides were made from that moment, and by the time the age of three-and-twenty was reached we could well hold our own at rising game.

Driving, which was then a sealed book (1857) to great numbers of sportsmen, also proved, when first joined in, nearly as disheartening as the earlier experience at rising birds. These not very interesting souvenirs are only recalled from the past to inspire beginners with confidence, and to show

that the greatest muff need not despair, if young, fond of the gun, and nothing is defective with his eyesight. The first and absolutely the foremost matter in shooting is to keep the eyes open. We think we hear our readers laugh and say, "Just as if anyone ever shot with his eyes shut!" Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly those who do attempt the feat. How do we know? Well, we will try to explain. All of us are acquainted with the shooter who, times without number and year by year, keeps on shooting at birds that someone else has already killed, and who does not let off his gun till the bird has actually collapsed and has commenced to fall; yet this style of shooter will continue, season after season, to claim such birds as falling to his own gun, and is quite happy in the firm belief he has shot them, and his claim is clearly put forward in absolute good faith and unblushingly. Now, we happen to have seen several gunners of this species, and as they were well known to be clever, modest, and honourable gentlemen, who would not dream of saying that which they did not believe to be true, it puzzled us greatly for some years how such men could possibly become, to all appearance, so silly when they had a gun in their hands. At last, one day during a desperate effort to coach one of these shooters, we left our own stand at the cover-side and went to load for him; every pheasant was missed clean, and, tired of seeing them go away, we turned close attention to the gunner, and at first we could hardly credit our eyes, for at each shot, just as the trigger was pulled, he tightly shut both eyes! Here, then, was an ample explanation of the habit of shooting at birds which had been killed the second before by someone else; for, as our shooter's eyes closed, the bird was killed, and as he opened them again after firing, and saw it falling, he naturally concluded *he* had made the kill; and if those who are notorious in this line be closely watched, what we have described will be seen to take place. It is a nervous habit and by no means so uncommon as might be supposed, and one of the hardest of all to cure.

The author is not an advocate of "taking a gun" on either moor or lowland, for although he himself has twice tried it with the happiest results, yet so many friends have told him of their unlucky experiences that it is clear great caution should be used before embarking on such a venture with a total stranger, while more often than not the money paid for "the gun," if spent on some small shooting entirely to oneself, would give far more pleasure to the disburser. There are, moreover, a few regular shooting "coopers" who advertise almost weekly; they have taken several different shootings on speculation, and needless to say these are the men to whom a very wide berth should be given. On one occasion two friends and the author each replied to three advertisements relating to three distinct shootings, and each received an answer from the same individual! Anyone taking a gun on a moor for a month or so should make sure his future host is a gentleman and a good sportsman, while stipulating that the party be a bachelor one; for the presence of a solitary lady shut up in a shooting box with four men is somehow or other depressing and undesirable. Moreover, if there are a plurality of guns and each brings his wife, and several ladies hitherto strangers to each other get boxed up together on a Scotch moor, ten miles from shops or neighbours, there are almost certain to be "ructions"; and small wonder either, for a duller life for ladies can hardly be imagined—botany, entomology, and mild trout-fishing are the only outdoor amusements open to them. Under such circumstances, ladies will at times take to the gun itself, and in the present day it is a fashion on the increase. Few of them, however, are "built that way," and the writer is convinced those who do shoot rarely find any real pleasure in the matter, and as soon as they have shown us poor men they can do it if they choose, and wipe our eyes as often as they please, most are content to rest on their laurels; and this view of the case is strongly supported by the fact that never yet have two ladies been known to rent a moor to themselves and take the field

day after day, and alone and unaided by male companions, endeavour to make a bag exactly in the same way that any two men friends would do. It must not be gathered from these remarks that the author is averse to the presence of ladies in shooting-boxes or in the field; on this head his sentiments, derived from very pleasant experiences, are quite of the order of the more the merrier, and the foregoing hints are only intended for the benefit of those taking "guns" with total strangers, which is a very different matter to being invited on a visit to form one of a large party of bright women and cheery men.

On the matter of guns and gunmakers the author does not intend to say much, for volumes have already been written about them, while doubtlessly there are still more to come; and therefore on a subject so open and so much disputed about, his impressions are given with great diffidence. He goes to Stephen Grant for his weapons, and did so after visiting the shops of all the leading London gunmakers; and, in his humble opinion, at 67A, St. James' Street the prince of gunmakers is to be found. Be that as it may, we strongly advise everyone buying a gun *not* to cut his coat according to his cloth. We are sure the so-called expensive guns are cheapest and best in the end. Why should they not be? for does not a high price in other articles ensure a superior quality? Is not a brougham by Peters better than a country-made one, or a watch of Dent's superior to a cheap Swiss or American one? and in the same way one may run through numerous other articles in constant use, and as the high-priced article is ever the best, why should guns be any exception to the rule?

Therefore, we advise purchasers to harden their hearts and "blow the expense," and have one or a pair from the maker they fancy. A gun by a good maker will easily last fifteen years, and fetch a fair price even then. The author is just discarding a pair of Grant's he had ten years ago for one hundred and ten pounds; they have had hard work each season, and

have been used with heavy charges for coast shooting as well as for pigeon shooting in the spring and summer, and between them must have disposed of upwards of one hundred thousand cartridges; but they have never been ailing, and shoot as well, and seem as sound, as the day they came out of the shop, and to all appearances are good for another ten years, and it may fairly be asked why they are parted with. The fact is, that at the end of last season, happening to stand next a friend (at a one-gun partridge drive) who carried a hammerless ejector, the author soon saw his neighbour could put in three shots for his two, and liking to keep touch with improvements established as such, he hardened his heart and ordered a pair of twelve-bore hammerless ejectors—Whitworth steel barrels; weight, six and a quarter pounds; price, one hundred and thirty pounds.

For the old pair an allowance of fifty pounds was made, and unless some further extraordinary improvement takes place—and as long as the present explosives are used such seems well-nigh impossible—these new guns will “see him out.” Let it be supposed they last fifteen years, and then the gun expenditure for twenty-five years can be added up, the total cost of the two pair, less the fifty pounds allowed, comes to a hundred and ninety pounds, or something under eight pounds a year for the use of a pair of guns for twenty-five years. Surely this is not a very great extravagance for anyone devoted to a pursuit in which safety and success depend so much on the weapon. This calculation, however, is considerably over the mark, as nothing has been allowed for the value of the guns at the end of the fifteen years.

Even should money be very tight, and with most of us it usually is, surely the comfort of a safe, reliable weapon is well worth an extra pound or two a year; while the difference in price between the dear gun and the cheap one can often be saved by a little self-denial in such trifles as cigars, cabs, etc. Pairs of guns should always be packed in one flat-shaped case

—it is but little wider than the single case, and when taken where it is certain but one gun will be wanted in the field, there is always satisfaction in feeling doubly guarded in the event of a breakdown. Such a mishap has only happened to us once—not with a Grant gun—and one frosty morning in Argyllshire a hammer flew in two, and having only the one gun, and no gunsmith nearer than Glasgow, to the village blacksmith it was taken, and between us we made a new hammer, which answered the purpose well enough, although not quite with the London finish on it.

Many shooters suffer from the bruising of the middle finger of the trigger-hand, and in most cases this is a matter of a badly shaped trigger-guard, which any good maker should easily rectify. The fault lies either in the length or the breadth of the guard, and can usually be cured by sloping it, so that when the recoil takes place, the finger slides forward instead of being struck; and yet with such simple remedies at hand many are content to go year after year in pain and discomfort, until at last a permanent enlargement of the joint, or an open wound, forces them to go to some gunsmith with a head on his shoulders, and there is hardly a case of this sort that cannot be cured.

On the matter of explosives the author thinks it also wiser to say but little. For the past twenty-five years he has used Schultze, and during that time has not had a dozen cartridges “go puff” and barely drive the shot from the barrel, as is often to be heard of. This he attributes to taking care not only that the cartridges have been properly loaded, but have also been kept thoroughly dry; and when going on visits, if an inspection of a strange gun-room has led to the conclusion it was a damp one, then the ammunition has been removed to the butler's pantry or some other dry place. Many first-class shots, headed, we believe, by Lords De Grey and Walsingham, still use the old-fashioned black powder,* and if to this be

* This and the following page was written in 1892, before nitro compounds had come into universal use for home sport.



No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



No. 4

UNIV. OF
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No. 5



No. 6



No. 7



No. 8

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CALIFORNIA

added the fact that all gunmakers test the shooting of their guns with that explosive, it must be conceded "villainous saltpetre" is in front of the nitro compound for giving absolutely more certain and uniform results. Judging from a great number of shots fired at the plate, I do not put the difference greater than three per cent. in favour of the black powder: *i.e.*, in every hundred nitro cartridges there will be found three which give unaccountably small results on the plate, while the whole hundred of black powder ones will be as nearly alike as possible. Thus, supposing there were two absolutely perfect shooters, then the nitro man would be a hundred and fifty head of game behind the "black" man by the time each had used five thousand cartridges. In return for this difference, which would be spread over many days of sport, the nitro man will have enjoyed freedom from dirt, smoke, foul smell, noise, recoil, and perhaps headache, and personally we would prefer to accept the hundred and fifty misses than face the ills we have enumerated. The foregoing is, however, based entirely on practice at the plate, but we think in the field matters would be more than equalized by the absence of smoke and the consequently greater number of good second barrel chances offering themselves to the users of the nitro compound.

So great, indeed, can the smoke nuisance become that we well remember, at a rabbit shoot in cover at Ragley Hall, being placed between two "black" men on a still, damp day, and the bunnies coming fast, in a few minutes all three of us were absolutely unable to see, and had to cease fire.

We also think the nitros send the shot up to the mark slightly quicker than black powder does, which enables many to make better shooting with the former than the latter, as this almost infinitesimal result often makes all the difference between shot striking the head or the tail. Whichever powder be used, *stick to it*, and do not try first a few cartridges of one kind and then a few of another, for such chopping and changing will surely spoil anyone's shooting. It is also certain that

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for one marksman who has remained constant to his first love there are ninety-nine who have discarded the black beauty for the blonde; and it cannot be too strongly impressed on waverers who wish to give the nitro compounds a fair trial, they should make up their minds hard and fast to shoot the whole season through with it, and never yet have we met any shooter doing this who has reverted to saltpetre.

When taking the field with a single companion, or in line with several, or in cover with an army of keepers, beaters, and stops, there are very distinctly right and wrong ways of carrying a gun, and an endeavour has been made to illustrate all the usual ways of so doing.

Nos. 1 and 2.—Neither of these positions is fatiguing, and both of them are very prepared ways of carrying; but unless out alone or on the extreme left of the line, neither of them is safe for others.

No. 3.—Is safe and pleasant when walking in line, or posted in cover, but not so in going from beat to beat in file or in groups; the hammers should then be reversed, and the trigger-guard turned to the sky as in No. 4. Unless this is done, the muzzle of a gun carried as in No. 3 will point full into the faces of those coming in the rear, and wherever there are several people together, No. 4 is absolutely the safest way of carrying.

No. 5.—Is safe and pleasant if walking in line or leading a file; but, needless to say, highly dangerous if thus held in a crowd, and the author knows of a case where a party passing along a narrow ride in a wood, and one of the rear guns carrying his weapon as in No. 5, the hammers were caught by a bough, and the gun was exploded, with the result of laming for life the unfortunate shooter in front.

No. 6.—Is an example of how not to do it, for should the foot slip, the shooter will have no power to keep the gun in its place on the shoulder, and a lurch to one side will send it flying, and bury the muzzles in the earth; and we have been



No. 9



No. 10



No. 11



No. 12

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LIBRARY

witness of two cases of bulged barrels from explosions so caused.

Nos. 7 and 8.—Both excellent positions, and the two best to take when advancing on game in line, and expecting at every moment to shoot.

Nos. 9, 10, 11, and 12.—These are what may be called fancy ways of carrying, and all are to be condemned. Nos. 9 and 10 are in our opinion most awkward ways of carrying, and if those who adopt this style will only allow their fingers to play about nervously over the triggers, they will have solved the problem of how to be specially trying to the nerves of their friends. Of Nos. 11 and 12, ladies have been heard to say, "Oh! doesn't Mr. Heartbreaker look picturesque with his gun like that?" But neither of these ways is safe or handy—two considerations which should outweigh all thoughts of the picturesque.

The drawing of cartridges at the end of every beat, or when having to surmount the smallest obstacle, is not advised. Many shooters, however, do this, and it is impossible to find fault with an excess of caution; but unless a very bad place has to be negotiated, where the gun has to be handed over the obstacle, it appears a somewhat unnecessary performance, and as if the sportsman were not quite sure of his ability to handle his weapon with safety. Whenever the cartridges are removed, they should either be kept in the hand or the breech left open, so that it may not be forgotten to reload, as may often be seen.

In the act of shooting, the weight of the body should always be thrown on the left leg, for it is impossible to shoot well with the right foot in front; and when game rises whilst walking, and the right foot is the forward one, let it not halt there while an attempt is made to shoot, but allow the left foot to follow on, and as it comes to the front, throw the body slightly forward and bring the gun to the shoulder in one motion.

CHAPTER II

GROUSING

THERE are five different ways of shooting grouse : finding them by dogs, walking in line, driving, kiteing, and stook-shooting, so let us suppose August has come.

Those having moors of their own will do well, if they can spare the time, to take up their abode in the North some time during the first week of the month, for thus they will avoid the crowded, late trains of the few days prior to the twelfth, and also get the chance of some good walks to condition them for the opening day. Long strolls over the heather with the keeper and the dogs, or a trip to a hill loch for a dish of trout and a flapper or two, all help to make the first dash at the grouse ten times more enjoyable than if quite out of condition.

Should the shooter incline to be actually "tubby," then a short course of Banting will do him good, and for ten days let him be a stranger to milk, sugar, potatoes, bread, butter, and beer, when, if taking strong exercise, he will lose about a pound a day ; but as soon as ten or a dozen pounds have vanished, he should relax his abstinence, and as long as he is in hard work he will not get fat again.

During the first fortnight of the season the weather is often very hot and close, and there will be plenty of shooters quite out of condition. Judges, solicitors, bankers, brewers, merchants, and Stock Exchange men are almost sure to be so if in a large way of business and of a certain age ; for from these lucky ones come numbers of moor-renters and

first-class sportsmen, and although someone sings "a merry heart goes all the day," the duration of the merriment must ever depend on the absence of fatigue; but whoever the shooter may be, let it be impressed on him not to overdo it at starting if he is not quite fit; best for him to begin late, or stop early, or rest for two hours in the middle of the day—and short rests are of but little use to the really tired man—than to come home beaten to a standstill, for likely enough that will unfit him for enjoyment for some days to come. No one can show his best form with the gun when really tired, for hand and eye cease to work as one, and plenty of birds, and easy chances too, will escape from an AI shot when he is leg-weary and exhausted.

For the first few weeks of the season take the moor in light marching order. A suit of thin tweeds, a flannel shirt with nothing under it, light shoes with plenty of nails, and thin spats over them, is the most comfortable attire, while the old-fashioned knickers are far preferable to the smarter-looking knicker-breeches, which must always tighten on the knee or the back of the calf in going up a steep hill-side. Blisters may be set at defiance by scraping some soap off a tablet and plastering it on the stocking over the spot where tenderness is dreaded;* if, however, a raw be once established which is not covered by the sole of the shoe, take a sharp knife and cut a good big hole out of the leather that covers the sore place, when with the pressure removed it will quickly heal, even while the wearer is out daily. In very cold or snowy weather some sportsmen smear the feet over with vaseline, and vow that the application keeps them warm all day; but those who are gouty or suffer from eczema should not try this, as it has a tendency to produce a rash. Personally we have never found any advantage in it, and the "coldest-toed" day we ever passed was when trying the experiment under wading trousers one February. Since it has become the

* Vinolia shaving cream is very good for this purpose.

fashion even in shooting-shoes to wear pointed toes, soft corns between the joints have become very common, and they may be cured, or, at any rate, kept in order, by placing a pinch of Matthews' Fuller's Earth between the toes every morning before the season begins; but it is no use doing this if the feet are likely to get wet. Do not be tempted to dress up in a kilt, as it is a difficult garment for a Sassenach to manage with propriety, while on still days the attentions of those little pests, the midges, will soon make the unaccustomed wearer wish himself better covered. The bulk of the Scotch gentlemen, excepting for evening dress, have discarded it in favour of the less picturesque but more serviceable knickerbocker. A London chieftain or a Manchester highlander when in company with other Saxons not attired in the garb of old Gaul quickly becomes an irresistible object for jokes, and we often laugh at the remembrance of going to a ptarmigan beat one day at the end of October with a gentleman clad in tartan. He was a great friend and favourite with us all; but, in spite of that, a lot of fresh-fallen snow having covered the hill-top, the same idea seemed to suggest itself simultaneously to the whole party, and the moment a fair chance offered, not one of us was able to resist the temptation of chucking a snowball up his petticoats; and in toiling up to the steep haunt of the ptarmigan plenty of chances were offered.

In most parts of Scotland—always provided it be dry and sunny—grouse are very easy to shoot during the first ten days of the season, and if no shooters ever grew tired the bags would be even much heavier than they are. On a really wet day it is wiser to stay at home, even if it be the twelfth, for wild birds and wild weather ever go together; also all game killed in a downpour is more or less spoilt for the table, while for sending away by train it is absolutely worthless. A grouse beat properly worked should be shot all day with the view of sending every covey flushed towards

the ground on which a finish is to be made in the afternoon ; and if that be thoroughly done, then the two hours before dusk will give the best sport of the whole day, for the birds will be feeding and no longer in coveys, but in twos and threes, and young ones will lie close even while their more canny parents are put into the bag as they rise alongside of them. A beat should never end close to the march, but always finish as much as possible in the centre of the moor, for grouse driven over the march late in the day will stay to sup and sleep and breakfast, and thus any neighbours who may hunt that way on the following day will bag many birds that do not rightly belong to their ground.

Unless with the special purpose of making a big bag, very early starts are not advisable, but if a record performance is to be attempted, it should only be undertaken by those certain of being able to last out the day, as it is clearly useless to start two men off at five o'clock on the morning of the twelfth if they are likely to be dead beat at midday.

When writing of record bags, those made in 1843 and 1846 by the late Colonel Campbell of Monzie still remain the largest scores ever put together over dogs ; and in these days of record breaking, high preserving, and big rents, it is remarkable no one has been found to surpass them. This we attribute somewhat to the rage for driving grouse, for there are certainly a good few shootings on which the attempt could be made with every chance of success. Mrs. Campbell of Monzie has kindly sent me copies of the Colonel's letters, which he wrote in reply to several enquiries about his large bags. Here they are, and may they inspire some of our crack walkers and shooters to try and beat them :—

“MONZIE CASTLE,

“21st August, 1843.

“My actual bag, carried off the moor by the ponies and creels on the evening of the 12th, was 184½ brace of grouse,

6 hares, and 5 snipes, all to my own gun. I walked all day to my points, and only once, and that was an accident, killed two birds with one shot."

"MONZIE CASTLE,

"4th September, 1846.

"On the 21st August over seven dogs I bagged 191 brace of grouse, 24 hares, 1 blackcock, 1 snipe, 1 duck, and 1 rabbit—in all 205 brace of game. The birds were very wild and strong, and I consider this bag was fully equal to 300 brace on the 12th August."

There is also to be found a statement in print by "Harkaway," that one year Monzie shot 222½ brace of grouse in a day, the writer stating:—

"He was told by Colonel Campbell's keeper, who handed him his muzzle-loaders, that all these birds were killed to points in the true old sporting way."

Taking, however, Monzie's best day of 205 brace of game, as vouched for in his own hand, and estimating that he was twelve hours at work, exclusive of rests, this would be at the rate of seventeen brace an hour all through the day—a really wonderful performance; and, after all, it is perhaps not so very extraordinary it has never been beaten.

Eat and drink sparingly at lunch time, and remember that salt edibles, though very appetising, cause great thirst. If the weather be hot and the shooter not fit, the temptation to take a cup of water at every crystal spring will be very great, but if resolutely resisted the thirst will go away by degrees. If very hot and tired, then kneel at a spring, and, holding the head well down, let the keeper take the cup of *his* flask—it will usually be the biggest out—and pour cold water on the nape of the tired one's neck; and to those who have not tried this, it can be strongly recommended as a wonderful refresher and eye-clearer.

When grouse are shot over dogs, the sport is usually shared by two guns only, and if they perfectly understand each other, it will make a great difference to the total of the bag at the end of each day. Two thoroughly trained men, shooting side by side, will never both shoot at the same bird; should a single one rise, it is instantaneously recognised whose bird it is; if two get up, then usually each takes one; and if several, then those on the left belong to the left-hand man, while those on the right remain for the other gun. Now, all this reads very simple and easy to carry out, but so rapidly do birds move, and when in coveys so quickly do they shift the order of their going, that it takes long practice, coupled with much smartness of eye and brain, for each shooter to stick to his own birds. In this style of shooting two good men—except when coveys rise—will never both be unloaded at the same moment, so thus no lazy birds escape, while each covey will generally yield three if not four birds to the rise. Shooters who do not know or observe these rules may often be seen both to fire at the same bird in a covey, and then can be heard a conversation somewhat as follows:—

A. I got a brace! What did you do?

B. Oh! I got a brace too.

A. That's good—let's pick 'em up and get on.

B. (to *A.*, who has picked up a brace.) Thanks; those are my two you've just picked up.

A. Oh, no! these are *mine*—yours must be further out.

B. Not at all; I'm certain I killed that brace, and I haven't taken my eyes off the place! Sandy, where did Mr. *A.*'s birds fall?

Sandy. Weel, sirs, I noticed but just the twa, and I'm thinking baith o' ye shot at the verra same each time!

The result is, ten minutes is wasted, and the chance of getting two brace instead of one is entirely thrown away. It is clear if this happens repeatedly during the day, two trained men will bring home nearly double the bag that will

be made by two who are merely shooters and not well-broken sportsmen.

Notice also the great number of double shots a finished gunner will kill, for he will always try for the bird rising farther away from him with his first barrel, and thus he secures an easy chance with the second, at the one that has risen nearer him. The duffer, however, will kill the nearer and easier bird first, and so allow the wild rising one to become a long and difficult shot, and usually it flies off unhurt. The author has always looked back with pleasure to a score made in 1881, whilst on a visit to his old friend the late Mr. Henry Spencer Lucy, at Corrou; shooting side by side and over dogs, "in twenty-three days, eight of them very wet and only half days," so says the game-book, we bagged 902 brace of grouse, 26 brace of ptarmigan, and 117 various, or 1,973 head, and during that time neither of us shot simultaneously at the same bird. When dogs are pointing, do not go up to them faster than your companion; many shooters will do this, and then stop and wait. If birds are sitting well, this proceeding will have no other effect than to make your friend come up panting, and thus, when the birds rise, he will not be able to shoot his best. If, however, the birds are wild, they will be off at once to the single gun, and so the companion will get no shot at all, while in each case the bag suffers. We have often heard this racing up to a point apologised for by the excuse of "Young dogs, you see, and they are not quite steady"; but if you are out to shoot grouse and *make a bag*, dogs ought to be steady, and continually racing up and shouting to them will hardly make them more so. Of course, if one goes out with the avowed purpose of schooling young dogs, that is quite another matter, for then you are dog-breaking and not seriously shooting grouse, and the circumstances are entirely altered. Try to mark the birds that fall, reload directly, pick up quickly with as little noise as possible, and get to work again at once. On large moors

capable of taking three parties each day for the first three weeks of the season, there will often be twenty or more couples of dogs in the kennels, and in establishments like this it would be really impossible to do away with that true friend to the grouse—the keeper's whistle. On small moors, however, where two or three couples of dogs with one keeper will do all the work, it is an easy matter to abolish it, if insisted on, though but few keepers will at first like being deprived of their favourite instrument. For three seasons we had the small shootings of Ardconnell at Oban, and broke and worked our own dogs. One brace of setters was the whole strength of the kennel, so therefore they had an amount of time and attention bestowed on them which it would not have been possible to give to some fifty or sixty dogs. The whistle was never used, and rarely even had the voice to be raised, as these two dogs were broken to work entirely to hand; so thus even when grouse and blackgame became very wild, in November and December, a certain number could yet be killed over them. It is well known dogs are so clever that as soon as they know their master they understand his very look, and we know some "doggy" men who can actually FLOG their dogs with their voices.

Speaking of small moors recalls to mind an experiment tried at Ardconnell, apparently with considerable effect. For a small shooting there was a good head of game; it was only 2,300 acres, and Sir Charles Booth with the author had it in the years 1868-69-70. The second season it yielded a hundred brace of grouse, a hundred and twenty-five brace of blackgame, and a hundred and seventeen brace of partridges, with a considerable head of various; but it is only on the three first-mentioned varieties of game that the experiment had any bearing. Happening to be at Oban in the middle of January, 1870, there was a very heavy fall of snow following on a hard frost, and thus it lay longer than usual on the West Coast. During this period it was impossible not to notice how pressed

for food were grouse, blackgame, and partridges, and thinking that if the severe weather continued the birds would become very poor and weak for the approaching breeding season, an inspiration came to try to feed them; so, purchasing some unthrashed oat stooks from a farmer, the author and his keeper chose a place on the moor they knew to be a favourite haunt of game and railed off a small square with rails high enough and strong enough to hinder cattle or sheep from reaching over or pushing them down, and then driving a stout stake in the middle of the little enclosure a whole stook was impaled on it, ears downward, and bound tightly round with cord to hinder the wind from scattering it. It was wonderful how quickly both from far and near the birds discovered the initiation of these "penny dinners," for when they had been going but three days we stalked the place one evening and found it crowded with game of all sorts. Seeing the appreciation was so great, as the stooks became exhausted some maize was brought and strewn round the old stook daily, and the birds soon learning to know the food-bearer did not fly more than a hundred yards away, and perching on a hillock would watch their meal put down and begin to return even as the keeper departed.

Donald Macdonald, who was then our keeper, always stoutly maintained this food supply, which was kept up till the middle of March, made the birds healthy and strong for breeding, and in consequence of it our birds were a little earlier in nesting that season than those on adjoining moors, while also we had more nests and each nest had more eggs. The result was, we killed one hundred and fifty more grouse, seventy-two more blackgame, and eighty-five more partridges, or a total of three hundred and seven head in excess of the previous season. Ardconnell was sold in 1871 to Mr. Houldsworth, so that we had no further opportunity of continuing the experiments; but, though it is possible the increased bag was due to a very good breeding season, we did not think so at



PENNY DINNERS.

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the time, as none of our neighbours did extra well, and certain it is that no one can do any harm by giving this a trial.

Most of the good moors are let on leases, and as soon as one becomes vacant it is at once snapped up, and thus any one renting a place that is yearly in the market can hardly expect to find a large head of game on it. Yet there are numbers of such places let each season, and the continuous change of occupants totally fails to make fresh comers shy. The demand is in fact so great that the renters of this description of moor are almost forced into shutting their eyes while hoping for the best; and numerous are the stories that are told of bitter disappointment. There are quantities of very moderate shootings in Scotland not really worth two-thirds of the money paid for them, and these are the places the shooting agents do well on; for with the advent of each season comes the renewal of the letting commission. Not that we wish to write hostilely of the shooting agents, for having had dealings with two of them—Paton and Stephen Grant to wit—it can be testified they are honourable, businesslike people to deal with. There are, however, agents who, to put it mildly, lay the paint with no niggard hand on all places put on their books to be let; and only recently, from one of this sort, we had details sent us for a friend of a very moderate deer forest, and were boldly informed seventeen stags were got in the past season, *nine* of which were splendid "Royals"!

Anyone taking a moor that has been yearly in the market, and liking it well enough to secure a lease, should at once commence to wage war against winged and ground vermin; both dwell in plenty, and too often in safety, in the North. Until winter comes the latter make but little show, and having passed the first two months of the shooting season on his moor, the lessee will often depart in the belief that for him ground vermin hardly exist. Let him, however, return when the snow is on the ground, and he will be grievously surprised

at the numerous fox, stoat, and weazel tracks all over his shooting. To ensure a successful attack on vermin, it is a good plan to give a small sum per head to those concerned in trapping, which will often make a great difference in the number destroyed. We refuse to believe that English or Scotch keepers exist who would play their employers the dirty trick—thank goodness, we have only heard of it—of asking others to send them vermin killed elsewhere to enable a claim to be made for the head price, and show it as if killed on their own ground by their own skill. It may be urged that trapping is as much a part of a keeper's business as any of his other duties, and therefore, as a matter of principle, it is wrong to pay him extra for merely doing his work. This aspect of the case we will not discuss, but anyone who finds the so much per head system ensures a greater destruction of the marauders should stick to it, and not bother his head about the right or the wrong of offering this small bribe. To trap well is a matter of great skill, and no one can be very successful who has not an intimate knowledge of the senses, habits, and weaknesses of the animal to be circumvented. One man will spot a stoat, and in twenty-four hours it will be nailed up, while another will take as many days to accomplish the same end.

As showing what may be done under the most favourable circumstances, we will relate the experiences of two of our friends on the same ground. Each had the shootings of the Island of Raasay; one, some twenty-five years past, found that if two guns on any August day killed twenty brace between them it was regarded by the natives as a remarkably good bag, and the score did not average anything like that—from ten to twelve brace being much nearer the mark. Some years afterwards—we think in 1876—Raasay was purchased by our old friend the late Mr. Herbert Wood. He well understood game preserving, and at once commenced a crusade against all vermin, which was so thoroughly



A DEATH TRAP.

Univ Calif - U.C.

prosecuted that two years afterwards he killed on the two opening days of the season over a hundred brace to his own gun each day, while two friends staying with him also killed large bags during the same time. The total for the season was twelve hundred brace killed off ground which till then had never been known to yield more than three hundred brace; and there can be no doubt that this splendid result was due to hard trapping, and not to any succession of extra good breeding seasons.

Anyone who is anxious in August to see what vermin there are on a moor can arrive at some sort of an idea by risking the loss of a little game, and if a dead grouse be dropped every few hundred yards when shooting by the side of any long stone dyke, and a return can be made some hours later and the birds picked up untouched, he is to be congratulated.

The best way to get up a head of grouse on a newly leased moor is to forget the first year's rent, and a good deal of the sport; during the first season adhere strictly to shooting no bird that does not crow; and then, as soon as this policy is rewarded by a fair head of game, let driving be commenced—no matter if the keeper dislikes it, or the ground seems to forbid it, some birds will certainly be bagged each day. Experience will show how to get more, while those that are killed will be principally old cocks, and then the season following more birds will be found than ever were there before driving was introduced. There are still large tracts of West Coast shooting to be leased for something about four hundred a year, and we know of more than one which, we believe, could be made to yield fully a thousand brace in lieu of the traditional two hundred and fifty.

Wire-fencing is a most certain and deadly grouse destroyer, for if following the valley of two long slopes, and the fence does not come into the sky line, a great number of birds will annually dash themselves to pieces against it.

Telegraph wires, carried across a moor, are also very

destructive. In the case of the sheep fence, it should be bushed with bunches of heather tied to the top wire ; or, better still, between each post should be hung a board about eighteen inches long by six wide, and though more troublesome and expensive to put up than the heather bunches, they last longer, as they are not blown away by a gale. The whole length of every wire fence does not require doing in this way, as it is only in certain positions that it plays great havoc, and perhaps in several miles of fencing it will only be just here and there that the skeletons show where the fatal places are.

As illustrating how destructive a wire fence may be in certain positions, the author remembers walking by the side of one in Dumfriesshire, when in a quarter of a mile he counted more than fifty grouse skeletons ; and though this fence was fully a mile and a half in length, it was only in one part that all the destruction took place.

In the matter of telegraph wires the Post Office will, if requested, hang boards on them *at their own expense*, their liability being established in a court of law at Edinburgh, when the late Sir Donald Campbell, of Dunstaffnage, brought, fought, and won an action against the Post Office on this very matter.

Grouse driving, originating in and at one time confined to Yorkshire with a few other English counties, has of late years become almost universal in Scotland, where hardly a moor is to be found on which it is not practised more or less successfully.

Although not agreeing with an enthusiastic Yorkshire friend, who vows there are more grouse in that county than in the whole of Scotland put together (and it is a fact that, on one small Yorkshire moor, *not a thousand acres* in extent, six guns in two consecutive days' driving killed 600 brace), it must be admitted the Scotch bags do not come near the English ones in their totals. But for all that, there are often very nice scores made in the Highlands, and on several occasions we have seen over a hundred brace a day scored

to six or seven guns, as witness Glentromie by Kingussie; Invermark by Brechin, and Huntly Lodge, Aboyne; and that which has been lacking in quantity has ever been made up for in quality by the more difficult shots offered; for it is undisputed that driven grouse are harder to kill in the Highlands than in the Lowlands; they fly faster, while offering a greater variety of shots, thus putting the shooter to a more severe test of skill, and that fact alone is hailed with pleasure by every good man. This arises from two causes, high winds and the broken, hilly nature of the ground driven, which frequently forces the butts to be so placed as to render continuously accurate marksmanship very difficult; for though there are boxes in the North from which a good shot will kill a large percentage of grouse sent to him, there are likewise many more from which on a windy day he will not account for one in three, and often not even that. On the occasion of a grouse drive one September at Invermark, where, as soon as breakfast was over, we always drew lots for our boxes, the author pulled an unlucky number, and the wind being very high, the birds not only came at a great pace, but flew in any direction they pleased, and but very few in proportion to what were seen came to the guns, so to pass the time we counted the shots, and it took 186 cartridges to put 60 birds into the bag. Since then the number of shots fired at other Highland drives has repeatedly been counted, and in *windy* weather it has always cost 30 cartridges to put 10 grouse in the bag. Driving is rarely commenced in Scotland so long as the birds will lie to dogs, which will usually be till the end of August. During the ten years that have lapsed since this was written grouse driving in Scotland has made giant strides, for on many shootings days of two to three hundred brace are not uncommon, while this year the Moy estate of The Mackintosh, in eight days of driving, yielded the wonderful total of 3,372 brace, of which 914 brace were killed in one day. At that period of the year, although it may appear quite calm at the

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shooting lodge in the valley, by the time the *hills* are reached a strong breeze will be found blowing over them, and assisted by it the grouse fly down it at a great speed to dash past the boxes at double the pace they attain on flat, lowland moors. In England also, the shooters can usually see the grouse on the wing for some distance, while they come pretty much in the same style of flight; but on the Scotch moors the range of vision is usually limited, often so much so that the shooter does not sight the game till within shot, for at times he will be so placed that low-flying birds will actually not be visible till but a few yards in front of him; or again, he may find himself posted at the foot of a steep knoll, over which the birds suddenly come without the least warning. All these drawbacks, however, combine to make the shooting of driven grouse in the Highlands difficult and exciting work.

When the ground is very hilly, many packs and coveys turn out of the beat; for when flushed in such ground while yet a long way off the boxes, they quickly vanish out of sight of the beaters, and as they cease to feel their pressure, turn to either side just as they list, in spite of a well advanced flanking line.

As soon as placed in his box a shooter should take the bearings of those standing to right and left of him—generally there will be some stone showing above the heather, a burnt patch, a “spot of water,” or a bunch of rushes—and fixing on some such mark on either side that is well clear of the adjacent butts, he should resolve on no account to shoot inside the imaginary line thus formed. Having done this, he can measure what he judges to be fifty yards on all sides of him, and this, duly impressed on his mind, will prevent him taking absurdly long shots. In firing, he should be particular either to raise the muzzles of his gun to the sky or lower them to the heather, should he wish to cross the line of either of the guns next him. For his part, the author prefers to lower the gun, as when again putting it to the shoulder from the depressed

position everyone is more likely to hold well over the mark than if the gun, having been raised, has to be dropped on to the object, such movement naturally tending to make the shooter aim low. Having already expressed an opinion on the hopelessness of trying to teach shooting by writing, it only remains to advise the novice at a grouse drive *never to hesitate*. When the birds are yet between sixty or seventy yards away, let him single out one, and at once bring the gun to his shoulder and fire. As quickly as possible let the other barrel follow, if even at a bird only a few yards in front; for as long as it is not sideways or has not passed him, it will not be "blown" by being killed at such close quarters. Anyone shooting in this style will have time to get his second gun and repeat the performance behind him, when, even if he misses with all four barrels, he will have shown better style than the man who, putting his gun to his shoulder, keeps shifting his aim from bird to bird till they are on him before he has made up his mind at which to fire, and who has eventually to turn round and shoot behind him. At times the high winds play havoc with the top peats of the butt, and if it be necessary to build it up a little taller, then be careful to go to windward before commencing work, or the eyes will be filled with peat dust, which will effectually prevent shooting if the birds begin to come before they are rid of the visitation.

Most Scotch keepers have still a good deal to learn in the art of making comfortable boxes, for they are usually neither sufficiently wide nor high, and there is no doubt the circular box is the best of all, as it hides the occupant from all birds coming sideways. The author remembers being out with a very fine shot who stood six feet five and was broad in proportion, and the small boxes, or rather little walls of peat, completely put him off his shooting, both from their being too small to conceal him and from the cramped attitude they kept him in. At last he complained of this to the keeper,

whose master happened to be of slight build and medium height, and therefore fairly well suited to the small butts. At first the keeper listened in silence to the big man's complaints, in the meanwhile closely eyeing his tormentor. Other drives took place, and still the grumbling continued, till at last the tortured one said, very humbly but without a trace of rudeness, "Well, sir, in these parts we just make the boxes for gentlemen and not for giants"; and for a long time he could not be made to understand what had been said to make the big gentleman laugh so much.

Should a good few cartridges be used in any one drive, and result in but little to pick up, do not stamp them into the peat to try to hide them, for quick Scotch eyes are sure to detect this, which will only cause more annoyance. Mark each bird dropped, and take care none shot in front of the butt strike you in falling, as the blow is severe; if watched, they are, however, very easy to dodge. On no account leave the butt when once the drive has begun; then as soon as it is over, try to gather runners before looking for those that are certainly dead; also see that all picked up are handed over to someone who will add them to the bag, for we have seen gentlemen helping to pick up who, having collected several brace, have thrown them down in the butt, where they have been left.

It is of little use trying to drive grouse up a strong wind, and in arranging a drive overnight it is as well, and makes all the difference to the result, if it be understood between master and man that the beat selected is to be driven according to the direction of the wind on the following morning; it may cost the driving party a longer walk to get to their places, or perhaps make them an hour later in commencing to shoot, but it will be trouble well taken. In some places it is the custom the day following a grouse drive to send keepers with dogs to range the ground driven the day before to pick up wounded birds, but as far as our experience goes, and we have many

times been one of a party on this mission, the result has never repaid the trouble. Of course, this would be different if the total on the previous day had been many hundred brace.

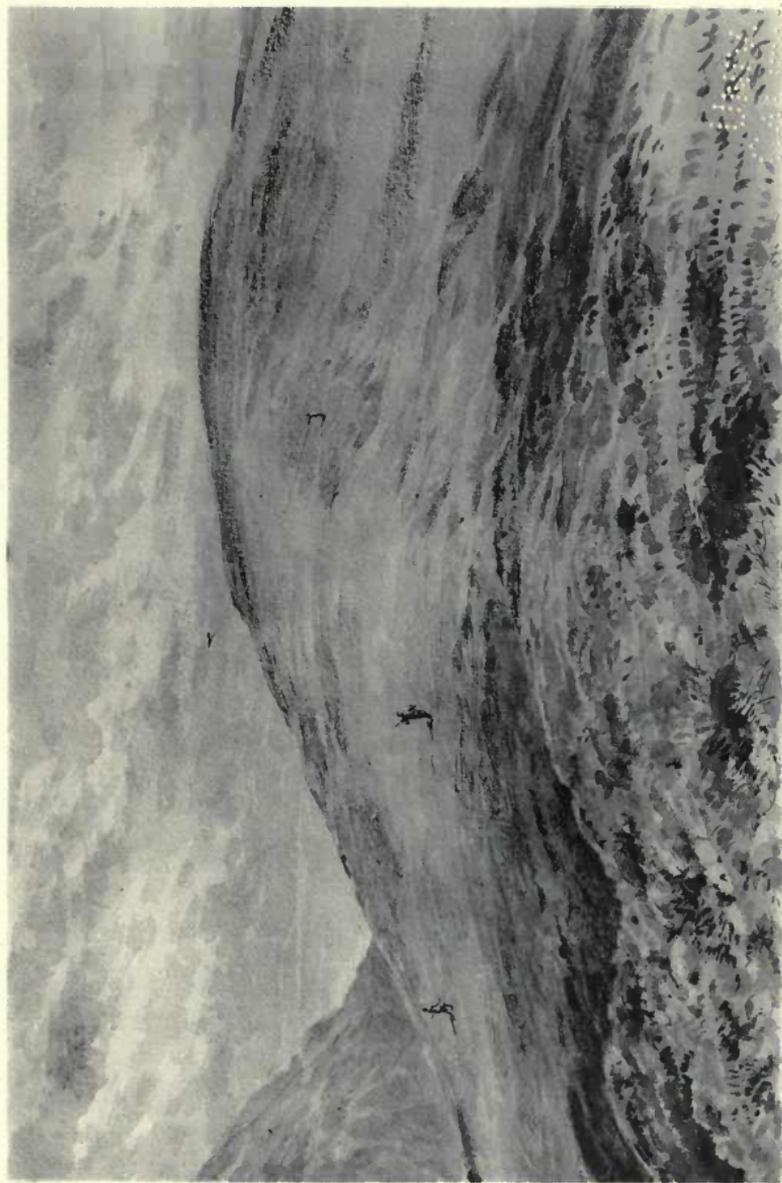
There can be no doubt that driving in the Highlands has had a similar effect as in Yorkshire, viz., it has done the birds good, and caused them to increase, as witness especially the Glentromie shootings, where, before this was practised, the total bag of all sorts used to be considered good if it reached fifteen hundred head, whereas the same ground now yields of grouse alone close on six thousand head. As soon as driving is resorted to, numbers of old cocks fall to the gun which could not be taken off the moor in any other way; and also coveys, which would otherwise never be introduced to each other, are brought together from long distances and thoroughly mixed up, by which an entire change of blood is assured to the whole moor. The very best of shots have at times their bad days at driven grouse, and excuses for poor form are ever ready and numerous; as a guide to any novice needing such, the following forty are given, all of which have been heard to be pleaded in mitigation of bad workmanship:—

1. Dust, sun, and wind in my eyes.
2. They swerved as I pulled.
3. Could not see them till they were on me.
4. Never saw them till they were past me.
5. The light is so horridly bright.
6. Such a beastly dull day.
7. The box was too high.
8. The boxes are not half high enough.
9. A new gun.
10. Cartridges damp.
11. Had a letter from my wife this morning.
12. Sleepless night; horrid small bed and really not room for wife and self.
13. Cartridges too heavily loaded.
14. So cold I could not swing to them.

15. Never can shoot well if forced to *siz* in the box.
16. Caught a chill yesterday.
17. Biliary this morning.
18. Took two pills last night.
19. All the fault of that glass of port after champagne.
20. It's drinking that silly lemon squash.
21. Fingers so cold could not feel the triggers.
22. Rheumatics in my elbow.
23. A lady in the but!
24. The loader got in the way.
25. Birds out of shot.
26. Pipe on the wrong side of my mouth.
27. 'Bacca smoke in my eyes.
28. The driving seat broke.
29. Too many cigars last night.
30. That whiskey of old Smith's is not good.
31. The cook gave notice this morning.
32. Flo refused me yesterday.
33. Boots too tight.
34. Coat cuts my arms.
35. Never can shoot when Smith is next me.
36. Got a dunning letter this morning.
37. Been threatened with an action for breach of promise.
38. The eggs were hard boiled at breakfast.
39. Lost every rubber last night.
40. Thinking more about my host's sister than of his grouse—going to pop the question this evening.

Where from a scarcity of neighbours or drivers it is difficult to muster enough guns or beaters for driving, and the birds have become so wild as to be unapproachable with dogs or by walking in line, then the kite may be resorted to with considerable effect by one or two friends.

Some there are who despise this method of making a bag, maintaining it is unsportsmanlike and does harm to the moor



KITEING.

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by driving the birds off it. The first point is one that must ever remain a matter of opinion, but suffice it to say there are plenty of good men by whom a few days under the kite is most thoroughly enjoyed. As to the question of harm to the moor, it may be taken for granted there is nothing in the plea, provided the kite be moderately used, and not more than a few times on each beat, with an interval of fully ten days between the occasions. How often has everyone who has been much in the Highlands seen an eagle sail across a grouse beat, to scatter packs and coveys in all directions in mortal terror. But, nevertheless, that beat, though cleared of birds for the day, will be found stocked again on the morrow. Why, then, should an artificial bird—not so large as the dreaded eagle—have the effect of driving birds ENTIRELY off a moor if shown to them but two or three times in a season?

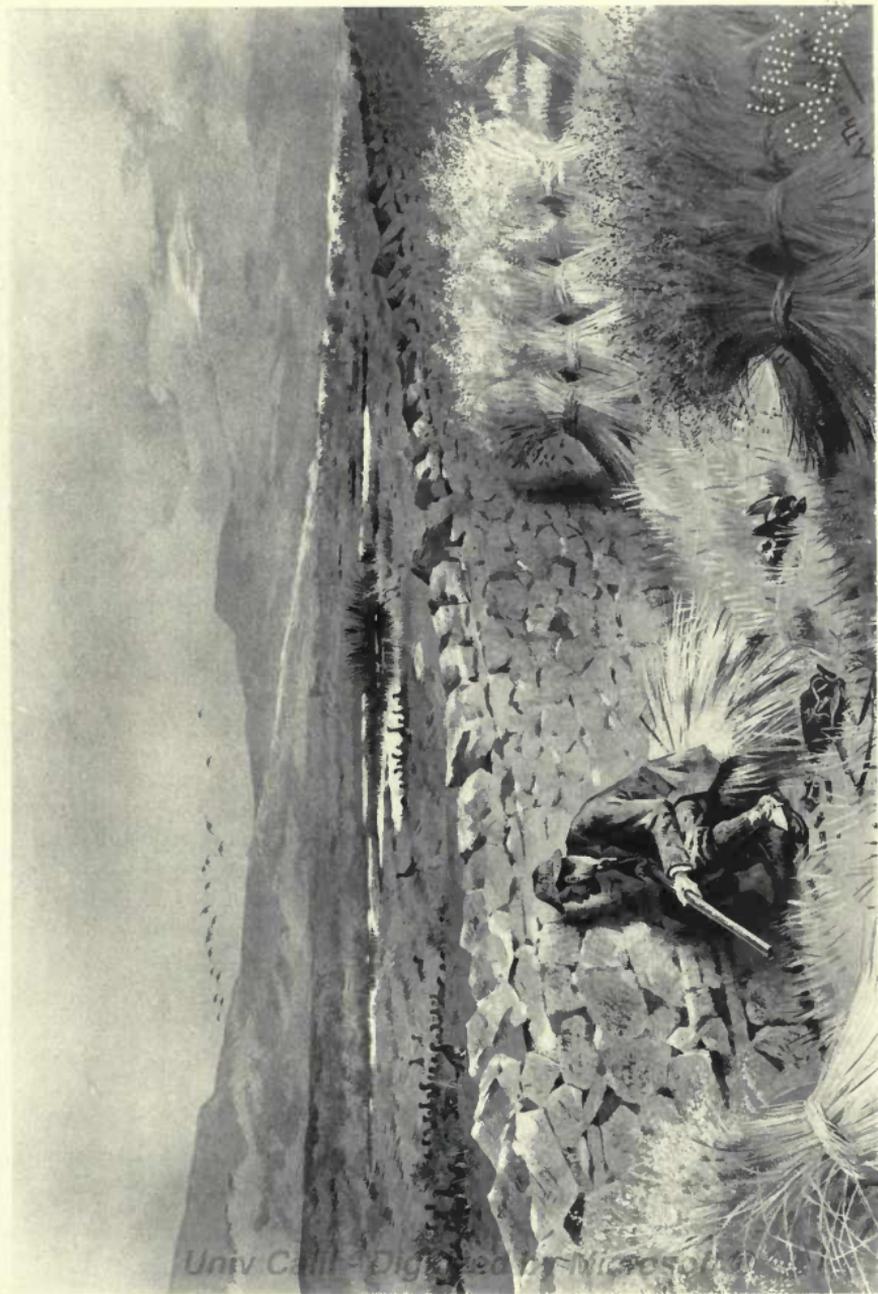
Absolute silence is the first essential for successful shooting under a kite, for grouse are not so stupid as to fail to comprehend that men and hawks do not agree, and should they see the kite and the shooting party at the same time, they will not be long in putting two and two together, and off they will go. Indeed, so great is the intelligence of the grouse that we think if a kite were worked daily in one place for but ten days at a stretch, the birds would soon learn the difference between the sham and the real foe, and in a short time would pay no more attention to the spurious one than rooks do to a scarecrow. The smaller the party engaged in this sport the better, and if two guns are out they should not walk wide apart, while the man who is carrying the game should keep well behind; with more than two guns the sport is generally unsatisfactory.

The most favourable plan of working the kite is on a hill-side across which the wind is blowing at right angles. Supposing it be coming from right to left, then, when near the top of the right side of the hill, send up the kite and let out line enough to allow it to be carried over the top of the ridge to show on the left side, the whole party meanwhile keeping out of sight and

silent. The kite-flyer should then advance slowly till he is some three hundred yards in front of the shooters, when he should come to a halt, leaving the kite to swing as the wind takes it. If this has all been well done, then the birds on the left side of the hill will not have seen or heard anything to make them put their heads up till they suddenly catch sight of the mock foe, when all single birds and coveys will steal quickly into cover and crouch. This we have often actually witnessed by crawling to the top of the hill and passing the spy-glass over patches of short or burnt heather. The guns can now silently cross the sky-line, and with one steady old dog the whole party can advance. Suddenly a brace of birds rise at the very toes of one of the shooters, and if this is his first experience under a kite likely enough he will miss them both, for they will dash off, rising and falling, twisting and turning in terror, and not till they have flown some yards do they resume their natural flight; so thus, to make a good score, it is best to treat them like close rising snipe and let them get well out before firing. Large packs never sit to the kite, but rise some way off, when, if the man with it is well in front of the guns, and working quite out of sight, often in their anxiety to escape the hawk the whole of the lot will fly back directly over the guns to offer splendid rocketing shots.

No matter which way the wind blows, such a ridge as we have described can be found every day on all large moors having a square formation; but, whatever the nature of the ground, the great art of working a kite is to allow the birds to have a good view of it some time before any chance is given them of seeing or hearing the shooting party. That being done, then from twenty to fifty brace a day may be taken off ground which would not give five brace if walked in line or shot to dogs.

Stook shooting is the poorest form of killing grouse. It is a method rarely resorted to continuously, and, more often than not, it is the result of a double desire to kill



STOOK SHOOTING.

time on a wet day (the best for the purpose) and to please the farmer whose stooks are suffering. A high-lying cornfield on the edge of the moor must be the scene of operations, and it is quite good time to arrive there by one o'clock in the afternoon. Seats are made behind the stone wall of the field, and placed so that their occupants cannot shoot into each other. A stone or two is pulled from the top of the dyke, some bracken or a sheaf of corn on the top of these, with a game-bag over all, makes a dry and easy seat to shoot from, which however must be built of such a height as not to show the shooter's cap above the wall. Places being arranged, each gun takes a seat, one keeper makes a détour and retires to the moor to one side of, and a long way behind, the cornfield, while if there is a second man out, he goes forward to some hiding-place in front of the guns. Should birds settle near either of them, then by showing themselves they can try to put them back to the guns under the dyke, who should keep ever ready for chances. For the first half-hour the gun will probably lie across the knees while a pipe is smoked, and of course at the first moment attention is relaxed, a covey comes over the wall to pass by unshot at. Annoyed at losing the chance, the culprit now sits at the ready, and suddenly a gentle rushing sound is heard, and in a moment he finds himself literally smothered in grouse flying barely a foot over his head. It is easy enough to take a brace out of this lot, for they are slowing in their flight, preparatory to settling on the stubble; and often after two barrels have been fired, a pack will yet alight, and then fluttering up on to the stooks one by one, will commence to feed. As this takes place the keeper on that side will quit his hiding-place and move gently towards them, and as they take flight they will usually return to the moor by the way they came. This time, however, there will be more satisfaction in taking a brace, for they are now driven birds and, coming best pace, often rise very high.

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Thus for several hours they will come to the corn in twos and threes, and coveys and packs, till at last the shooting scares them, and instead of coming with confidence they will stop short on the heather. Then it is indeed a pretty sight to peep through the chinks in the wall to watch the movements of a big pack at quite close quarters. Clearly they are holding a consultation as to the wisdom of again seeking the tempting food; but if absolute stillness be maintained, the corn will usually win the day, for presently the old cocks begin to strut and erect their scarlet combs, jerking their heads up and down and giving a low sort of chuckle the meanwhile, till all are standing at attention with their heads up, when with one accord they suddenly rise and recross the fatal wall.

When once seated, no one should on any pretext quit his place or stand upright; while winged birds should promptly be stopped by another shot. Mark where each falls, and look them over now and then, for one that is only winged will drop and lie for a considerable time to all appearance dead before making a bolt to hide under the nearest stook; and even though it has been seen to do this, one stook is so much like another that it will be difficult to remember the right one after the lapse of an hour.

CHAPTER III

CAPERCAILZIE—BLACKGAME—PTARMIGAN—ROEDEER

OF capercailzie shooting the author has had hardly any experience, and the little he has seen was during a visit to the late Mr. Herbert Wood, at the time he rented Meggernie Castle "by" Aberfeldy; the said "by" meaning twenty-two miles from the railway station. In two seasons we had but four days' sport at this game and but three shots, to one of which fell a fine cock of nine pounds weight. The manner of our sport was as follows: at the back of the castle was a steep, densely-wooded hill which was inside the "policies," as the Scotch call a stretch of park-like grass; this wood was some two miles in length by one in width, and there were neither paths or rides in it. The bottom was one mass of big boulders hidden by bracken higher than one's head, so that the going was about as bad as could be; and on a warm day, oh! how stifling it was, and how the flies did bite! In this thick cover, in a seldom-disturbed seclusion, the capercailzie dwelt, in company with a few blackgame and some deer of all sorts.

When it was beaten, a certain number of guns were told off to come through with the beaters; others kept forward at the foot of the hill, while other two armed with rifles went to the extreme end and top, on the chance of deer breaking out. The capercailzie were usually found sitting in trees near the summit, and when disturbed would throw themselves off their perches with a great stir, and instead of flying forward would launch themselves down the hillside and pass

over the heads of the guns at a pace astonishing for so large a bird, and thus offering but snap shots; and, helped by the thick foliage and bad footing, everything was in their favour. In this way we saw an old cock draw the double fire of four good men and yet pass on untouched. Having gained an impetus and secured the full use of their wings as the low side of the wood was neared, they would provokingly begin to circle upwards, and swinging back behind the beaters, would again mount to the heights they had been disturbed from. Those who have never tried it may think the missing of so large a bird must be very bad shooting, but when flying as described they will often beat the gun, so let no one engaging in the sport for the first time set out with the idea that this bird is a very easy victim; likewise, let him be very careful not to cover himself with disgrace by killing a hen instead of a cock, for it is a far more serious offence than when an "accident" happens to a hen pheasant or a grey hen.

Let us pass on to a more plentiful description of game, viz., the black grouse, as it is described in books, although across the Border it is ever called blackgame. A tender, weakly bird when a poult, it easily succumbs to bad weather at that stage of its existence; and even when the twentieth of August arrives, they are still but poor fools and flutterers, and so they remain till the corn is cut. For about the first three weeks from the twentieth, depending on the harvest, they afford but the poorest sport, often having to be almost trodden on before they fly, and no skill is required to kill them. It is undoubtedly the case that in many places these fine birds are getting scarcer each year, and this arises from their great stupidity and the killing of them in the month of August. At that time, and before they have grown their tails, even the old cocks are nearly as silly and sit almost as close as the young broods, and it would be a good thing if their day of doom were put back till the first of September, or even a fortnight later.

As the corn ripens every brood flocks to it, and on the generous diet they quickly attain maturity, the young cocks turning nearly as black as the old ones. In the early part of the season they are to be found in mixed covers of bog-myrtle, cranberries, bell-heather, juniper, bracken, rushes, long grass, and birch-trees; then as harvest approaches they seek the turnip-fields near the edges of the standing corn, and a very easy prey they then are. A change, however, quickly comes, and as soon as the crops are cut, lo and behold! the cocks are changed into the most wide-awake of all game; and now, without great trouble, it is no longer possible to get within range. The hens always remain more or less confiding, and when the stock is poor they are always spared. Where it is very good, then a certain number of old hens ought to be killed, and the best way of doing this is to shoot them early in the season, when flushed with their broods; for at that time no one experienced in the matter can make any mistake between a young hen and an old one.

Blackcock stalking with either gun or rifle is a very poor amusement; but the author thinks that when driven they offer the very finest of sport. For many seasons we had the opportunity of seeing a large head of blackcock annually put into the bag on the Loch Nell and Kilmarnaig shootings near Oban, then rented by our good friend Mr. James S. Virtue. Situated between the Bridge-of-Awe and Connal Ferry, they extended over fifty thousand acres, of which some twelve thousand was wood; and as in those days there was no disturbing railway through the property, the whole shooting yielded some of the best all-round sport in Scotland. With the exception of red-deer and ptarmigan, every other species of game was in plenty, and flapper and snipe-shooting could be commenced on the first of August, and sport carried on every day till the first of February. The blackgame were then a noted feature on this estate; but as we are writing of the seven years from 1870 to

1877, we cannot say how matters now stand in this respect ; for, at the expiration of Mr. Virtue's lease, this shooting was split up into four or five smaller ones, which increase in the number of tenants may not have tended to keep up the same fine stock of game. During Mr. Virtue's reign no blackcocks were killed till the woodcocks made their appearance some time early in November, when day by day a fresh cover was beaten, and, oh! the fun of finding oneself right in the path of a big pack of blackcocks about to break cover! From tree-top to tree-top they come fluttering along till, at about a hundred yards from the end of the cover, all perch and sit listening to the cries of the beaters. Shortly, three or four old cocks, the acknowledged leaders of the party, take wing and come dashing forwards ; but now is not the time to open fire if a score is to be made—for, if the leaders are shot, the rest of the pack will assuredly turn back ; so let the shooter keep concealed and allow the first few cocks to pass by unmolested, when as soon as the main bulk of the birds have had a lead given them by these few old stagers, they will all follow in small lots, when, no matter how hot the fire may be, nothing will then deter them from following each other. Now is the time to keep cool and make each barrel tell, for the chance that is passing so rapidly away may not again present itself for many a day to come. These packs were often very large, and all over this shooting there were plenty numbering from fifty to over a hundred in each. At one stand we once had the luck to secure twenty-two old cocks out of a pack coming as described, and on another occasion nineteen ; but these were the only two chances of that sort in seven years, or in some two hundred days of sport.

If the covers were wet—and as we are writing of Argyllshire, it is needless to say such was often the case—then the blackcocks would be found sitting out on the heather to escape from the dripping of the trees. In this event the beaters were sent round to drive in a large tract of ground

in order to force the birds back to the woods, when the usual sport began, always resulting in a variety of nine or ten sorts of game each day. Driven blackcock make very deceiving shooting for those who are unused to it. Flying silently and weighing between three and four pounds, they convey no impression of their great speed, and it looks impossible to miss the large black lump coming apparently steadily overhead; thus most of the uninitiated are tempted to shoot too much at them, and two gentlemen, both holding good names at partridge drives in Norfolk, each came home the first day they joined in the sport vowing the blackcocks bore charmed lives or were armour-plated.

For this shooting we prefer No. 4 shot, but No. 5 in the first barrel and No. 4 in the other is also very good. On any shooting offering chances at many sorts of game, a cartridge-belt is most useful; those with metal clips are the best. The buckle will divide the "fours" from the "fives," and a pocket can hold some "sevens"; and thus prepared, cartridges can easily be kept unmixed and quickly changed as often as wished. Also, in a wet country, the belt worn under the coat and vest certainly keeps ammunition drier than any other way of carrying it ready for use. When first visiting Kilmarnaig in 1867, there were large flocks of blackgame close to the lodge, and it was within half a mile of it that the score of twenty-two was made.

Pheasants were, however, introduced into what were called the home covers, with the result that the long-tailed cocks drove those with the curly ones right away, and two years after the pheasants appeared it was rare to see a blackcock. It was on this beat the author once saw a cock pheasant in rising break its neck against the bough of an oak, while some few minutes later from the same wood flew a covey of bewildered partridges, and coming at him so low that he dared not shoot, he jumped up and caught and held one of the covey with a high left-handed catch, while a little chorus of "Well fielded!" was

cried from the other guns. Whilst on the subject of curious shots, we will also tell of two others—and in thirty years these four are the only out-of-the-way shooting events happening to us. When out one autumn day on the Ardconnell shootings at Oban, we spied with a field glass a pack of some hundred blackcocks sitting in a turnip-field, so sending off the keeper to go round to try and put them over us, we crept into position. The pack came well, so picking out the two leaders, we killed and gathered them, and walked slowly on to allow Donald to come up. A cry from him called a halt, when, on coming within hail, to our great surprise, we heard there were a “lot more down.” The dog eventually gathered seven others; but, even then, Donald maintained there were still some left. With the exception of the first two, we had seen no others drop, and to this day it puzzles us to know how that could have happened. However, there were the nine old cocks to the two barrels, and although the result of an accident, we accepted the matter without any great grief. The last of the oddities that happened took place in recent years, whilst shooting with the late Mr. Benjamin Way at Denham Place, Uxbridge. We were posted by the side of an osier bed bordered by a trout stream, across which the pheasants were coming, and the first shots we fired resulted in an odd right and left—a cock to the first barrel, a pike to the second.

Since those happy Kilmarnaig days, although plenty of blackgame have been killed in other counties, never again have we seen such a fine show of these splendid birds, or such successful driving, so continuously carried on.

For beauty of scenery and variety of sport, there is no part of the bonnie North better able to hold its own than the country lying between Oban, Ardrishaig and Dalmally. Were it not for the weather, it would be perfection; but, if once it begins to rain, there is no telling how long it may last. Once we saw it fine every day for a whole month; but, during a ten

years' experience, it has several times rained every day for four or five weeks in succession; and, to make this the more provoking during these moist periods, the nights have been splendidly starlight, and so regularly so that speculation was rife as to whether this would be accounted for scientifically. Rain is fatal to all sport—blackgame and woodcock desert the covers; partridges remain crouched close together in shelter, which they only quit for the shorn stubbles as food is required; grouse sit on bare, burnt ground, and are totally unapproachable; the accumulating waters flood the marshes, causing the wild fowl to swim so high in their haunts that the advancing gunner is detected from afar; even the rivers become so flooded as to be unfishable—and, in long mackintosh, the mournful sportsman is driven to the boat on the loch, only, even there, to find the trout rising in a washed-out fashion, and nothing can be more depressing than a month of this sort of weather. The shooter sadly makes a choice between a wetting without a mackintosh or a stewing in one. Probably he tries both plans, and even then cannot make up his mind which of the two processes is the less hateful. For his part, the author prefers a short, thin, roomy mackintosh, which will keep out rain from neck to hips; for any amount of wetting below these joints is quite immaterial when taking exercise, but chest, shoulders, and back should be kept dry.

It is often stated that those taking exercise in mackintosh coats will soon become rheumatic; that, however, is not our experience, for during the past forty years we have always shot in one on wet days, and up to the present we are absolute strangers to that painful malady. If only heavy showers are passing, the coat when not worn is best carried across a thin leather strap passed over the shoulder, and unless going through thick cover, this is quicker for pulling off and on than the rolling-up plan, while if the strap be put in one of the pockets of the mackintosh as soon as it is done with for

the day, it will always be ready and never get mislaid. As to articles that cannot be found when wanted, we would advise those who do not indulge in the questionable luxury of a valet, to have all such things as boot-trees, spats, cartridge-bags, gun-covers, etc., plainly marked with their initials.

The worry of a struggle with a sticking cartridge may usually be avoided if the chambers of the gun are well oiled at starting, and the dose repeated once or twice during the wet day, for which purpose the keeper should always carry a small bottle of oil; but if none is in the field, fat or butter will do nearly as well. A really pulpy, frayed, and swollen cartridge is a melancholy object to look at or handle, and when once reduced to such a state is best thrown away, as no efforts to dry it can restore it to its pristine smoothness.

To many sportsmen, the author among the number, the pursuit of the ptarmigan is of all others the most fascinating; it is the deer-stalking of the shot-gun, for it takes the shooter to the same rough heights and the same wild scenery the stalker delights in, and anyone who can walk a ptarmigan hill need never fear for his powers if offered a day with the deer. These hardy birds are seldom found in any quantity below an altitude of 2,000 feet, and where the heather and the grouse cease to exist, there they thrive. Ptarmigan! As the word is penned, what pleasant memories are recalled of stony hills in Sutherland, Inverness, Ross, Perth, and Argyll—visions of rocky peaks, of dull grey stones patched with black and yellow crottle—some flat, and standing out at right angles to the hillside, look like the giant slates of giant schoolboys; others, nearly round, seem barely able to keep their places, and appear as if a push would send them crashing to the valley; rocks of every shape and size, stones by the myriad, from the tiny ones that run away in thousands from the tread, to the great lumps as big as small cottages, round which a careful way has to be picked. Rocks and stones on every side, some shining and sparkling in the sun, others looking black in

shadow, while prevailing over all is a cold, dull, melancholy tint of grey. Deep below lies the sombre valley of dark heather, flecked with white streaks of running burns, and dotted here and there with lochs that look like little ponds. No visible sign of life and apparently nothing growing that could support it; and yet, on these sterile altitudes ptarmigan exist and thrive and hatch their young. If the day be still and warm, with birds plentiful, it will not be long ere a sharp, harsh "cr-r-aik" is heard, and again and yet again it sounds; but, if the shooter be a novice, look as hard as he may, nothing living will his eyes detect, and he will turn to ask Donald what is making that queer noise, and get for answer: "It's just ptarmigan, sir! I've been minding them some time. Do ye no see them sitting right in front?" Then suddenly a stone appears to be alive, and lo! a ptarmigan is sitting not forty yards away; then another and another gradually dawn on the uneducated eye, for as yet they have not changed their mottled, stone-coloured plumage for the whiter one which Nature provides for them to match the winter snow; but even in the depth of the Scotch winter the hen usually retains more of the grey plumage than the cock. The uninitiated may think it must be very tame sport to get within visible range of birds sitting on the ground, and that therefore they must be very easy to kill; but, close as they occasionally sit, and prepared as the shooter is, he will yet have to shoot well to get a brace, for of all game-birds ptarmigan are the quickest off their feet, for their bodies are light, their wings are long, and, accustomed to fly against the mountain gales, their flight is extremely fast. As the shooter arrives at the heights where the grouse end and the ptarmigan begin, both birds may at times be flushed together, and, though the former is the heavier bird, it can then be seen the wings of both are as nearly as possible of the same length, which will average about twenty-five inches. At various times the author has cut open the crops of ptarmigan, and has always found the contents to consist of the small

oblong evergreen leaves of the crowberry, mixed with a few whole leaves of the blaberry. Those killed early in the day have had their crops only partially filled, while those shot in the afternoon have been brimful, and this even when deep snow is on the hills; for on steep faces there are always snowslips—miniature avalanches, in fact—which leave their food exposed, and in such spots on well-stocked grounds it is not unusual to see fifty or sixty of these beautiful birds all feeding together. It is of little or no use going after them on stormy days. The wind is the great enemy to success, for if high and cold, it will make the birds unapproachable, and, rising out of shot, they will take long flights often right across the valley, and so in a few minutes they will safely alight in some sheltered spot, to reach which would take the pursuer fully two hours' hard walking. If these birds can be seen to settle it should be borne in mind they always run forward some distance on alighting. On many of the high hills of the North they are not plentiful, while even if a large stock be left, they never increase in a proportionate degree, and the best bag we have helped to fill was made at Corroun on a bright, hot, still day on the 2nd of September, 1881, when the late Mr. Henry Spencer Lucy, his cousin, Mr. Charles Williams, and the author killed twenty-two brace and forty-six white hares. But far larger scores than this have been recorded, though we believe that forty-eight brace is the highest. It is needless to say they will mostly be found on the sheltered side of the hill, but their haunts are often so steep and stony that it is not safe to walk with the gun at full cock. In places of this sort and with a good stock of birds, it is almost wiser, if out with but one keeper, not to fire at those launching themselves into space, and where it is evident a kill must drop the bird several hundred feet ere it strike the ground. When gathered it will generally be smashed and not worth taking home; and with only one keeper out, a little restraint of this sort will save the loss of much time in waiting for him while he clammers down



PTARMIGAN ON SNOW SLIP.

A. Thorburn

and toils up again. Should, however, the attacking party be in force, then there is always some one told off—usually a ponyman—to keep round the base of the hill being beaten, on purpose to gather birds thus falling.

Ptarmigan driving we have never seen tried but once, and that was on Mal Huich, at Glentromie, with the result of sixteen brace; but what we then saw leads us to think that there is nothing to hinder successful ptarmigan driving, providing their flights are carefully studied by the keepers.

Roedeer are common throughout Scotland wherever there are woods to shelter them, but as soon as the novelty of the first few shots has worn off, their pursuit, when driven to the guns in cover, soon ceases to be a sport in which much excitement is to be found, as they are very easily despatched, while but little pleasure can be found in shooting animals so beautiful. In August and September they are so poor as to be almost unfit for the table—their coats are yet thin and red; and it is not till November and the two following months that the livery of condition is donned, as shown by the blue-brown colour of the hide and the thick mat of hair covering it. Even when at their best, if the assistance of a good cook is lacking, they are most moderate eating; but an *artiste* being forthcoming, then a *filet* of roe *piqué* and *mariné* is by no means a dish to despise. They are easy victims to a charge of No. 4 shot placed behind the shoulder, and the best buck we ever secured fell to a few pellets of No. 6. It is a cruel thing to fire at these handsome little fellows if they are over thirty-five yards off, and this even though they be broadside on; but sad to say, this is a matter often disregarded. In the opinion of the author the best form of sport to be had with roebuck is to be got by going out alone, armed with a small-bore rifle; then, by sneaking about in the woods, a shot can often be had, while as they are very quick at hearing, seeing, and winding danger, anyone getting a few bucks in this way may be fairly proud of success. If the cover where they are sought for be one having

open spaces of bracken and heather in it, then an ascent to any higher ground should be made, when by the aid of the tell-tale spy-glass the pretty little quarry can often be found to become the object of a genuine stalk, which usually ends in the defeat of the stalker. In August and September roe will leave the covers to live out on the moor, and twice when stalking deer at Corrou the author has spied them fully three miles from any wood, but on each occasion our polite attentions were fairly baffled by their superior sharpness. In Gaick Forest we have also often seen the same thing, only with the difference of making an abominable miss at a nice little buck. In places where they are not shot they become very tame, and when fishing last spring on the Wester Elchies water of the Spey, they could daily be seen by the river-side, while allowing us to pass and even to stop to look at them when standing within shot. If caught when young they are easily tamed into pets; but the bucks with their sharp little horns are dangerous ones, as they are liable to be suddenly treacherous, and a stab is a serious matter. Writing of pet bucks recalls to mind the experience of a friend, who, happening to read an advertisement of some South African deer—two does and a buck—for sale at Liverpool, purchased them to turn out in his park. He himself was away the December day of their arrival, but the head keeper let them loose, and hearing of the event, the lady of the house started off with her daughter to inspect the new comers. They were soon found, and having eaten bread thrown to them and behaved in quite a friendly way, the ladies turned to leave, when the buck instantly charged, first one and then the other, and rolled them both over on the grass, grievously scaring them, though luckily, owing to the then fashionable dress-improver, this cowardly attack from behind was rendered harmless, and scrambling to their feet they fled to the house. The next morning further news came that an old woman crossing the park had met with like treatment, so out sallied

their purchaser and would-be acclimatiser to see what it all meant. Nothing took place; the buck came to him to be patted, and acted like a perfect gentleman, so for the moment it was supposed the ladies had contrived to irritate him. The next day a labourer's wife was knocked over and two other women threatened, and it became apparent this depraved little wretch held the sight of petticoats in abhorrence, and always "went" for their wearers.

Determined to try and effect a cure, our friend donned some borrowed garments, and dressed up as a woman and armed with a stout stick, he walked up to the buck, to be promptly charged. The attack being met right stoutly, after two rounds victory rested with the flounces. It was hoped this would work a cure, but it only resulted in the little monster quickly learning to distinguish a dressed-up man from the real article, so as the case seemed incurable, the Liverpool dealer was persuaded to take them back, though not exactly at the price paid for them.

The following remarkable extract from the *Times* of 29th May, 1891, will show how highly the Germans prize roebuck shooting:—

"FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

"BERLIN, *May 28th.*

"The Emperor returned to Berlin this evening. His Majesty has had very good sport in East Prussia, having brought down a score of roebucks. But then deer-stalking is a very different thing in Germany to what it is in Scotland."

The last remark is clearly penned by a cobbler who has *not* stuck to his last, for evidently red deer and roedeer are thought to be one and the same animal, and we cannot help thinking the writer had seen neither sport in either country. But be that as it may, the inhabitants of the Fatherland have a not very commendable way of shooting them in the rutting season by imitating the call of the doe. When residing as a youngster

at a private tutor's at Runkel on the Lahn, in Nassau, many a one the author has thus "potted." The Germans call it "Die blat zeit," or the bleating time. The chief difficulty to the beginner is the bleating, and though there are now wooden calls made which anyone can bring into play by merely blowing through them, in the days that we write of the only known way was to produce the bleat by means of a birch leaf, and to do this properly required long practice. Our old Jäger Wilhelm carried a pair of scissors to cut off the rough edges of the leaf, and then doubling a small piece of it over the tips of the two first fingers, he would apply it to his lips and produce the bleat steadily.

Many a day did we tramp to the forest in July and August, and some place having been silently found where a buck had recently been, as evidenced by the torn-up moss and barked stems of the undergrowth, the performance would begin. Selecting a spot near this, as open as might be in front, but yet offering good concealment, and having the gun at the ready and at full cock, the bleat would sound through the silence of the wood. Oftener than not nothing came. At times, however, a stick would be heard to crack, followed by a "bump, bump, bump," when the buck would come bounding and capering and showing himself off with the most fantastic springs, and then stop suddenly short to look for the charmer. That was the fatal moment for him, for a steady hand and a charge of No. 3 shot in an Ely wire cartridge could hardly fail to lay him low. Poor sport indeed, and an ignoble way of circumventing the quarry. Yet, withal, it had its charms—the novelty, the absolutely motionless attitude the shooter was kept in, the study of the wind before taking up position for the bleat—which, when commenced, had to be continued in one uniform tone; not a falsetto note to begin with and a diaphon the next—all combined to make excitement. The shooter was almost bound to avail himself of the first standstill the buck made, for if he could not see the doe he would often frisk off

end on. Also the bites of large, voracious and innumerable gnats had to be endured stoically, as the smallest movement made to dislodge them from face or hands meant certain detection.

The forests of Germany are most beautiful in the summer months, for lilies of the valley grow wild in profusion, making the air rich with their perfume; wild strawberries are in plenty; the golden oriole is a common bird, and the timber is superb. Old Wilhelm was the reputed best bleater of the district, and certain it was he called up a greater number of bucks than any of the other keepers; but as during the whole of our stay in Nassau we never once heard a doe bleat, we are unable to say how closely he imitated Nature. We have not heard of this plan of shooting roebuck being tried in Scotland, but can see no reason why it should not be carried on with success by those going up to their shooting quarters early in the season. The novelty would make the first experiments exciting, and if pursued alone and the victim, if there was one, had to be carried home on the shoulders of his destroyer, it would at any rate ensure a real good conditioning for "grouse day." A good buck will scale from fifty to sixty pounds as he falls, and we remember staggering some eight miles under one of about this weight, and arriving home well beaten at the old Castle of Runkel on the Lahn. What with falling in love with a very charming *fräulein*, keeping a pack of dachs hounds for badger-hunting, and getting a shot at something almost every day in the season, it is to be feared the tutoring part of the business was somewhat neglected. It was on the River Lahn we first shot a sea-pie or oyster-catcher. Not knowing in the least what the *rara avis* was, and no native having previously seen a similar one, it was sent off to the nearest bird-stuffer in the neighbouring town of Deitz; and proud were all when it was returned with a long German name, and a statement that it was a *very* rare bird only at times met with —*not* on the coast of Scotland, but on the West Coast of

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Africa ; and until a return to England was made, followed by a visit to the Clyde, we were in happy ignorance that our prized bird was almost as common as a seagull.

It was also at Runkel that the author was fined for taking a hawk's nest ! One spring day we had inadvertently strayed over the march of the large shooting we had permission to range over, and had climbed a tree for a hawk's nest ; on descending we found our only and much-valued gun in the hands of an old man, who, after roughly explaining he was the keeper of the shooting on to which we had strayed, peremptorily called on us to follow him.

Finding explanations of no avail, as he commenced to move off with the precious weapon, we had no option but to follow, learning while so doing that the town of Limburg and a magistrate—both quite seven miles distant—was the point the old jäger was making for. He had the gun and carried a stout stick as well, so there was no help for it, and we trudged after him in a rage. The forest path was narrow, the old man of the woods going first with our gun over his shoulder, which we soon noticed was safely at half-cock, and that he had no firm grip on the butt, so with one dashing spring forward the barrels were seized, and possession of our treasure was regained, almost ere the would-be captor understood what had happened, while a hasty bolt at once disposed of any chance he had of recovering it. Convinced by a few futile efforts that it was hopeless to try to catch us, he turned and went his way with many strange oaths, in spite of some pressing invitations in our very best German to follow us to Runkel. Three weeks went by and the matter was forgotten, when a smart gendarme appeared one fine morning, and handed in an invitation to come before the magistrate of Limburg to answer a charge of assault and poaching ! Accompanied by our tutor, an appearance was duly made on the day fixed, when a fine of two hundred gulden—or twenty pounds—was the unsatisfactory result of a brief interview with the

local beak. Fifty gulden were for the poaching and the rest for the assault; and then, worst of all, we were made to understand the half of each fine would go to the cunning old prosecutor. Having given notice of appeal, we returned home somewhat crestfallen, and at the end of another month the same well-turned-out soldier again presented us with a polite missive requesting payment of the little account. He was handsomely treated in the matter of *schnaps*, and was the bearer on our behalf of an equally polite letter saying remittances had not arrived from England; but as we had not ventured to make the matter known to our home office, this was not to be wondered at. To our young, unfledged ideas a fine of twenty pounds for taking a hawk's nest was a cruel tyrannical wrong, and thus our great object was to gain time, for well we knew our stay at Runkel would be over in another ten days; then before further applications were received, *perfidie* Albion had once more welcomed us to her shores, and to this day, rightly or wrongly, it rejoices our heart that neither the Limburg magistrate or that rascally old jäger have ever received any of that monstrously unfair penalty.

CHAPTER IV

SNIPE AND WILDFOWL

MOST sportsmen, if offered the choice between an opportunity of killing a hundred pheasants in a day or twenty couple of snipe, would unhesitatingly declare for the time on the marsh, while many maintain there is a charm in the pursuit of this twisting, fast-flying little bird that places it in front of every other sport to be had with game rising to the gun. In the opinion of the author, it does not make much difference whether snipe be approached up or down wind; the latter is the orthodox method, as then they "hang" for a second before making off, and so offer easier shots. Yet if there be much water about or thin ice, the breeze will carry the noise of splashing, crackling feet a long distance, and thus cause birds to rise out of range. Should it be raining or snowing or blowing very hard, then the down-wind plan is certainly the better, as it keeps the eyes clear from all drifting particles. Snipe should be killed with No. 7 or No. 8 shot—the latter for choice; while to a good marksman at other game, an easy road to success is to wait if they rise near, and to almost "snap" if they do this far out.

Should a bird that has risen singly fall to the first barrel, then before reloading it is best to remain for a few seconds ready to use the other one; for often the rise of the "singleton" is but the signal for a companion to do likewise, and if reloading be commenced immediately after emptying one barrel, more often than not this rise will take place before the fresh cartridge is in position, and the bird will get off scot free. We have

seen drawings of snipe and woodcock in which they are depicted as flying with the bill held straight out in front of the eyes; and even Ansdell himself, in his picture of "Cocker and Woodcock," falls into this very error. Both these birds, however, invariably fly with their bills pointed to the earth, at about an angle of forty-five degrees. The author has also read, in a newspaper devoted entirely to sport, some hints on how "to seek the *silent snipe*"; but, so far as his experience goes, not one in ten flies off without uttering its wild, sharp cry of "scape, scape."

In working very soft, boggy places, slow walking should be the order of the day, for it is impossible to shoot well if the feet be not firmly set; and, should it be doubtful if the ground will carry the shooter, then the dogs should be sent to hunt and splash about in places deemed treacherous. As a rule, a quaking bog is safe walking; while wherever the common green rush grows the going may be trusted.

The best days for snipe shooting are often those offering but little inducement to leave the library or the billiard-room. Raw east-wind days, with soft snow or drizzle falling, are usually extra good ones, especially if they come just before a hard frost or follow a rapid thaw.

Old fishing stockings, not quite waterproof enough for the river, will yet make good wear for marsh work, provided there be neither brambles nor furze-bushes to encounter, and these two prickly shrubs are often enough in plenty on marsh land where it is interspersed with hillocks. The leaky old stockings will still keep one fairly dry, while they are not so heavy as long boots, are more quickly dried, and take less space in a portmanteau.

Snipe may be encouraged to come to certain marshes, and even induced to remain there longer than usual, by placing heaps of manure in wet places, so that all round the edges of the heap there is soft ground for "billing." This is not an entire waste of manure if it be done on marshes which are

grazed in summer; thus we once saw quite a snipe preserve formed, as for several weeks each heap held them round the edges of it, doubtlessly tempted to remain there by the good feeding; for it seemed as if the animalculæ they subsist on were bred in the manure and passed by filtration to the wet ground surrounding.

When seeking for snipe in long straight ditches, it is best to walk somewhat in the shape of the letter **S**,* and only to approach the actual side of the ditch every fifty yards or thereabouts; for if the shooter walks along the whole length of it he can clearly be seen approaching from a long distance, and thus all wide-awake birds will rise out of shot. In a few places snipe are driven to the guns, and then, although they do not fly as fast or as "twiddling" as when first flushed, they offer very pretty high shots, and any one who has been grouse driving will probably have recollections of a few shots of this sort.

Under the wing of every snipe will be found several long feathers with black and white bars, which are useful for the wings of salmon flies. They can be used as they are or dyed to any colour, and make a nice addition to the long mixed wing tied on the large hooks so much used on many spring rivers.

The best snipe bags we have seen have been made on the shootings of Kilmarnaig by Oban; the Laggans by Campbellton (a hundred and fifty couple to one gun by the tenth of December), Carim by Blackford, Raehills by Moffat, Glentromie by Kingussie, Carnanton in Cornwall, Langley Park near Norwich, and Netherfield Park in Hertfordshire, and on this last-named estate, though not twenty miles from London, on a very cold winter day we once killed twenty-three snipe for twenty-seven cartridges. On all these places there are at certain times great quantities to be met with, but they are

* A critic has expressed a wish to see the author walking in the shape of the letter **S**; but that I cannot do. The type should have read, "It is best to make one's walk in the shape," etc., etc.

ever birds of passage, passing to and fro with the changes of the weather, and in accordance with the migration from north to south, or *vice versa*. Thus, when found in quantities they should be gone at with a will, and it is of little use inviting a friend to come and help "next week," for the chances are the bulk of the flight will by then have passed on.

The same ground that holds snipe will usually be visited by ducks of all kinds, and these should invariably be looked for up-wind, as their sense of smell is very keen. When ducks of any sort are flushed, it is often difficult to remember to hold the gun well over them, for at first they rise nearly straight up in order to gain an altitude for their flight to another and quieter spot. Duck and widgeon rarely return and settle near the place they have been disturbed from, but teal seldom make long flights, and will generally alight in the marsh they have been moved from; and, if the shooter keep hidden, they will even at times return to pitch in the very place they started from, so that plenty of shots should be got before they are driven quite away.

The marsh attached to Mr. E. Brydges Willyams' shootings of Carnanton is as fine a piece of wildfowl ground as could be desired, for anyone having the good luck to get a day on it will be nearly sure to use the best part of a hundred cartridges; and the last winter time the author tramped it, on a very bad day for snipe owing to quantities of "cat ice" and the clatter it made in breaking, his bag was, five wild ducks, twenty-four teal, and sixteen snipe; and had these latter not been made so wild by the noise of the breaking ice, the number could easily have been trebled.

This marsh has quite an historical interest, for during the last two thousand years almost every foot of the large acreage has been dug up for "tin streaming" purposes. The Phœnicians, the ancient Britons, and the Romans worked on it, and to this day the industry is still carried on, while the incessant digging has rendered some parts of it so treacherous that the

most practised bogtrotter could hardly walk it for the first few times without a guide. Every dangerous hole in it is, however, well known to the two keepers, and when placing himself in the hands of old Tullum or his son, the visitor can "go forth," as they put it, fearlessly. The former is a man of extraordinary broad build and of herculean strength, who in his younger days was a most redoubtable wrestler.

Our home bags of snipe are, however, quite put into the shade by some of the foreign ones; and in the early parts of this year, 1891, my friend, Mr. Frank Lawson, wrote me from Cairo, as follows:—

"We (Captain Stewart, Gordon Highlanders, and myself) killed and picked up 1,170 snipe in twelve days' shooting. We had one extraordinary good day of 217 birds, of which I personally accounted for 134. The next best days were two of 114, and in the three best consecutive days we got 431 snipe."

Permission was once given us to shoot wildfowl on the water—it could almost be called lake—separating the Island of Easdale from the mainland, and lying some ten miles below Oban. The north end of the island is so close to the Argyllshire shore that they are not thirty yards apart, and are brought into communication by a single span bridge. Below this the two shores, each receding from the other, formed a splendid bay, the edges of which on the Easdale side were fringed with reeds, and a favourite haunt of widgeon when the autumn migration began. Just across the bridge was a small inn, but the one room it possessed was so stuffy, and the little bunk let into the wall was so short, so hard, and so full of visitors; the sheets were so damp, and when thrown overboard the blankets were so scratchy; the chops were so tough, and the ham and eggs so dirty, that it was voted preferable to make early starts from Oban and drive there and back.

On the present occasion, one day in the last week of November, some thirty years ago, having heard a great flight of widgeon had come in, I had driven down accompanied only



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by a boatman. We were early afloat and spent the day in beating the reedy shores, and having thoroughly disturbed the birds while securing a few, the boat was forced into a bed of the tallest reeds, from which concealment some more were bagged as they returned to their favourite haunts. Thus we remained till it was no longer possible to see, so poling our way out of the mud, we began to row back to the inn. Having done about half the journey, a breeze sprang up, the parting clouds disclosing a nearly full moon coming over the tops of the Ardmaddy hills, and offering a fine chance of a little flight-shooting. Now, it had been noticed during the day that almost all the widgeon disturbed from the reeds had passed close to a rock about a quarter of a mile from the Easdale shore, so for this the boat was headed, and jumping on to it, I found it smooth and flat, well above high water mark, and about as large as a dining-table for eight; so the boat was sent off to return to the reeds and keep the birds moving, but before parting, it was settled I was to be called for at the sound of my whistle. A brilliant moon soon shone out, and the birds coming just as anticipated, there was plenty of shooting. My retriever having lamed himself badly a few days previously, I was unable to gather them as they fell, so trusted to pick up some with the boat and to secure others by sending out a man at daylight. As it was freezing very hard, no great regret was felt when, after the lapse of some three hours, fresh clouds came up to put an end to the sport; as the whistle sounded shrilly across the waters, shortly could be heard our trusty man working the oars towards the rock. As the boat was painted grey, it was not until she was about a hundred yards off that she could just be discerned, but though the oars were working with heavy thuds against the rowlocks, she did not seem to come any nearer; then there was a good deal of splashing, and John could be heard muttering, and suddenly his voice rang out, "I'm fast aground, sir!" "Shove off, then, and try from the other side," was the reply. This was done with the like

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result. Numerous attempts to reach the rock were tried from other directions, but all were equally failures, when it began to dawn on me the tide had gone down, and till it rose again I was a prisoner! This was soon ascertained to be the fact, the light of sundry matches showing the water had fallen considerably since the landing was made. A pretty state of affairs this, and rather than wait in the frost till the tide rose again, I determined to leave gun and cartridges on the rock and wade or swim to the boat, but no sooner was the intention cried to John than it had to be abandoned, for he shouted back, "For goodness' sake stay where you are, sir; the bottom is just nothing but mud, and the oar sinks in up to the top!"

Therefore, there was clearly nothing for it but to grin and endure; flask and pipe were with me, while John stood by with the boat, and we conversed occasionally. The frost grew keener and the night darker, till at last the boat was invisible, while it was no longer possible to distinguish the edge of the black little rock from the surrounding water; it became unsafe to stamp about, and the wretched prisoner was reduced to squatting, while keeping himself warm as best he could; and not till two o'clock in the morning, after an imprisonment of some eight hours, was the boat able to get near enough to take me off that odious rock, and never again am I likely to be so trapped.

The driver of "the machine," together with the people at the inn, were greatly alarmed at our absence, but they had kept up a good peat fire, and some poached eggs—dirt and all—with hot toddy, soon produced a thaw; then driving home, we were none the worse the next day for the dark and cold experience, the recollection of which was somewhat softened by the boatman at the inn sending up seventeen widgeon which he had picked up dead the next morning. The moral of this little adventure is to warn others who may go in search of wildfowl not to land on rocks in tidal waters, unless certain of being able to get off again at their own sweet will.

In wildfowl shooting we have experimented with guns of various calibres, from a single-barrel four-bore down to the ordinary twelve. The above-mentioned single gun weighed fourteen pounds, and the labour of carrying it was so great that, except for boat work, it was quickly discarded for a double-eight; this weapon just turned the scale at twelve pounds, and had all the disadvantages of the single-barrelled four-bore, so again descending in the scale, we come to a double-ten; but between this and the full choke double-twelve we found so little difference, that eventually we have remained content to use one of these, with four drams of black powder or fifty-four grains of Schultze and one and a quarter ounce of A.A.A. shot; of these there are thirty-two to the ounce, which gives forty pellets to the charge; and with full-choke barrels this, we think, is the best sort of shot to use at any fowl larger than duck, for they are effective up to seventy yards and even further, but beyond the first-named distance they begin to fall very much. We have tried various devices for keeping a charge of large shot together up to long ranges when fired from a twelve-bore gun, and we are quite sure, if it be a *cylinder*, that nothing can beat an Ely wire cartridge. If, however, it be a full choke weapon, then we have found a cone of the *thinnest* tissue paper help to the same end. Make it nearly the size of the shell, gum up the end, drop the shot in, invert the cartridge case and push the filled cone gently home, so that the fastened-up end is outwards; put on the usual shot wad and turn down, not too tightly, but there is always the fear of a charge balling and damaging the muzzle of the gun. This plan, however, gives very uncertain results, and we beg to propound a problem for the gunmakers to solve, and that is, how to make a twelve-bore shoot A.A.A. shot so that they do not spread excessively at eighty yards. In some marshes we have often got a few snipe, and then had to try for wild geese, so we should indeed like to have a twelve-bore capable of doing justice to

both. S.S.G., of which sixteen go to the ounce, with the two sizes of shot above that, the largest only going five to the ounce, will of course kill at longer ranges, and the last mentioned would do so at fully two hundred yards, but unless firing into the midst of a *very* large flock of birds, the chances are infinitesimal that any of these little bullets will ever reach its billet.

CHAPTER V

LOW GROUND SHOOTING—PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS, HARES, ETC.

THE sport to be had with these descriptions of game has already been so well and so voluminously written about, and the habits, rearing, and preserving of partridges and pheasants have been so closely entered into, that it only remains for us to approach this part of our amusement in a superficial way. There yet remain a few parts of England where partridges are shot to dogs, and in Cornwall and Devon the sport is still carried on in the old style, and the code holding good for the grouse-shooter over dogs applies equally to this sport. The author, however, is of opinion that, if the owner of any shooting is really keen at seeing dogs work, and will be satisfied with a small bag, then there is no county in England in which a certain number of birds cannot yet be killed over them during the first ten days of the season.

Though nowadays the stubbles are bare, and the shooter to dogs is thus robbed of fully half of his old cover, there still remain turnips, rape, clover, etc.; and as when once birds are driven into such cover they sit close and offer easy shots to a party walking in line, it is certain they would do the same to thoroughly broken dogs working without being whistled to or shouted at.

The sport over the dogs can, however, be shared but by two guns, who would make nothing like the same bag as five or six others walking in line; but, to state that merely because

stubbles are shorn, therefore dogs are useless nowadays, has always seemed to us a weak argument.

Four guns walking in line will cover about twice as much country, and kill nearly treble the quantity of game, that can be accounted for by two sportsmen shooting to dogs; so, we rather think, the pointers and the setters have been sacrificed in some degree to the wish to make large bags, and of being able to invite more friends to join in the sport.

Walking in line is capital fun when properly carried out, and if the shooters are at a pleasant distance apart, say not nearer to each other than forty yards. The number of friends asked should be strictly determined by the character of the beat, for it will make poor sport if four are bidden to walk a country of small fields which hold no great quantity of birds; albeit, the same ground would give a pleasant day to two, or at the most three. In counties where the fields are large, and vary in extent from thirty to even a hundred acres, as in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, then even six or eight guns can be walked in line with pleasure to them all; but, in our humble opinion, a party of four is the pleasantest to be out with; add to this four beaters and two keepers, each with a good retriever, and there are but few fields that cannot be taken in twice or thrice; but even if some of them are so large that it takes half a dozen turns to cover them properly, this sized party is easier to work and keep in line than any larger one. For our own part, we prefer to walk turnips or other cover right out from end to end, and then to shift the guns at right angles to the beat, till the field is finished; by this means "the wheel" is done away with, a performance which is seldom well executed by a party of ten. It is quite extraordinary the number of shooters one meets who seem apparently wholly unable to keep in line. Those who are for ever in advance of the line are great sinners against the rest of the party, and they should be told off to walk on one of the flanks, as in that position they will do less harm than if in the middle of it, which they

at once make convex or wedge-shaped, a formation that forces plenty of game to break to right or left, and so to escape quite out of the direction of the beat.

In many parts of Scotland partridges are shot to dogs, for there the root-crops rarely fail, while at times they are even too strong; in addition, there is such a quantity of other cover in the shape of whin, bracken, etc., that birds will lie to dogs right up to the end of December. Owing to the lateness of the harvest across the Border, partridge shooting is rarely in full swing until the middle of September, and more often than not it is even a fortnight later before the birds can be gone at systematically; indeed, on the Carim shootings by Blackford, in the autumn of 1877, we well remember watching corn being cut on the first of November!

Great numbers of partridges in the North nest on the heather, and even though they will come to the corn and turnips for food during the day, they return nightly to the heather to "jug"; and for a true and realistic idea of such sort of ground one look at Millais' beautiful painting, "The Fringe of the Moor," will tell my readers of what is in my mind better than anything that can be penned. Birds thus bred are of a much finer flavour than purely lowland ones, and gourmets have been heard to maintain that a young heather-bred partridge is the best of all winged game for the table.

As a specimen of a good Scotch bag, I may state that in this past season of 1891, on the shootings of Pitfour, in Aberdeenshire, now leased from Colonel Ferguson by Mr. Frank Lawson, he with three other friends, of which I had the good luck to be one, commencing on the first of October, bagged in the open in ten short days of walking in line—7 grouse, 77 pheasants, 685 partridges, 203 brown hares, 615 rabbits, 6 snipe, 8 ducks, 17 various—total, 1,618 head.

A spaniel is preferable to a retriever for recovering any "little brown birds" that may be winged, as in high turnips or other thick cover the former will of necessity have his nose

closer to the scent, which must be stronger below the turnip tops than above them; and we have seen several well-broken spaniels that would fairly beat any retriever at this, the most difficult of all retrieving. Owing, however, to their headstrong, excitable natures, spaniels are very hard to procure perfectly trained.

It is often hotly debated as to whether a driven grouse is easier to kill than a driven partridge; for our part we have ever found the stubble bird far the easier to stop, for the very good reason that they do not fly as fast as grouse do, as rising nearer to the guns they have not time to get up full speed ahead; furthermore, as they approach the shooter they much oftener show up against the sky, and any mark viewed in such a light is always an easier one than if it be flying low, against a background of the same colour as itself.

In partridge-driving, as in grouse-driving, numbers of shots are missed from the shooter allowing them to get too close on him, and if anyone will fire a few shots at a plate at fifteen or twenty yards, he will be surprised to see what a very small space the shot will cover, and how slight a margin is left for him to "come and go on."

As to "Frenchmen," they are not to be named in the same day as presenting either the variety of shots or as flying nearly as fast as grouse or English birds. They come to the guns low and slow, often singly or in twos and threes, offering the easiest of all driven shots; many a laugh has been had by those watching someone proudly knock over five or six in succession, only to have the conceit utterly taken out of him by several coveys of English birds coming nearly twice as fast as the Frenchmen had done. There is no greater test of a good shot than a few slow birds followed by some very fast ones, and if all alike are cleanly stopped, the shooter may at once be put down as "useful." A moderate shot, finding himself in much better company, will often have his shooting improved; for the knowledge that his friends are better than

himself will serve to make him rise to the occasion, and he will also be certain that all birds that are his will be strictly left for him to deal with. When driving partridges at the end of the season, the author on several occasions has been asked to shoot cocks only. At the first moment it seemed an impossibility, but we soon found, if all thought of making a "double" was discarded, that then the matter was by no means a difficult one to accomplish, as with a good light the horse-shoe of the cock shows out very clearly; and we know several friends who, if asked to do this, will kill a cock bird out of a covey almost every time, though, of course, at times they will be deceived by an old hen, who will have almost as good a horse-shoe as a young cock. Five or six guns working in this style for the last few days of the season will be doing no slight service to that shooting ground, for cock birds are always too numerous, and the old ones, asserting their territorial claims tyrannically, drive younger cocks away, and do all they can to hinder them nesting anywhere near.

In the home counties birds are often extra plentiful in dry seasons which produce no cover to shoot them in; in such circumstances it is a good plan to walk over the manor just before harvest commences in search of a corn-field or two that are failures, and the crop of which would not pay the expenses of cutting, and having found them then enter at once into negotiation with the farmer and buy them as they stand; and this accomplished, so leave them till the end of September. It will not be money thrown away, as cover will be provided to drive birds into, and we have often seen two fields of this sort add fully two hundred brace to the bag during the first three weeks of September; then as soon as the cream of the bird-shooting is over, the keepers can cut what remains of the crop, which can be carted to the covers to be used for pheasant food; while should such fields be near well-stocked covers, so long as they are left standing they will greatly help in keeping the longtails from straying.

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In placing guns for a partridge drive, it helps the bag if the shooters are all well known to their host, for if he be an observant sportsman, he will have a very good idea of what each can do best; some will excel at high overhead birds, the strong point of others will be side shots, while there will be those who are experts at low birds flying straight in their faces. Now, if the host has a thorough knowledge of his shooting, he will know where to place his friends so that each may get the sort of shots he is cleverest at. Wherever we go, we like to see the host placing his guns for himself, and not leaving it to the keepers; for it is usually a guarantee he takes a deep interest in the matter, and knows his ground thoroughly. Owing, however, to the constant change in the cropping of the fields, the shooting-ground is always different every season, and requires a fresh study each year.

As to shooting lunches, we have seen too much provided, and also too little, though there is always a happy medium which many of our friends have attained to perfection. Champagne, with hot substantial solids, capped with *foie gras*, cake, old cognac, and big cigars, is not calculated to improve anyone's shooting; but all the same it is preferable to cold tea with dry biscuits, which fare we once saw five guns asked to sit down to, at a white hare drive in November, at an altitude of two thousand feet above sea-level!

We consider champagne is fatal to good marksmanship or stout walking, and have several times felt (only just to see if it really was the case) how it spoils the eye, and have witnessed the same effect on many others. We especially remember the occasion of a ptarmigan day early in September on a hill-top which was absolutely springless, so thus it happened that two bottles of champagne were put into the panniers, with beer for the men, to save the waste of time in descending and remounting the steep hill to find a spring for luncheon. Now, two bottles between three was not a very extravagant allowance after five hours' hard walking in a hot sun, for we had made

an early start; they were fairly divided, and yet on one of the party his share had the effect of causing him, an old deer-stalker, to mistake mutton for venison on a sky line not a quarter of a mile distant, while for about half an hour after lunch we all three shot very badly; so "'ware" champagne in the field is our advice.

The best lunch cart we ever saw was invented by our friend Sir Edward Lawson, of Hall Barn; it started in life as an Irish car, only to be developed into something much better: it has a place for eatables, an ice-well, and two seats and benches, which take to pieces and pack into the car. When in use the usual seats are the buffets, the boards on either side on which the feet should rest are tables, at which the benches enable the shooters to sit and eat in great comfort.

Partridges shot under a kite do not give anything like the same sport offered by grouse; but the imitation hawk is worked as much as possible in a similar manner, allowance being made for the different nature of the ground to be kited. When well done, the birds usually seek refuge in hedgerows, from which they rise in great fear, while offering the easiest of shots, but unless birds be wanted for the larder and a drive cannot be arranged, it is not a sport to be commended, although one or two days in a season do no harm, and are all very well if just two friends want some birds, which can be got in no other way.

Come we now to the pheasant, and in emulation of that wonderful scribe so mockingly yet so pleasantly told of by the late Mr. Bromley Davenport, let us "seek the rocketeer in his lair"; were it not for his unimpeachable authority, it would be well-nigh impossible to believe such nonsense could ever have been penned or printed. Editors of provincial newspapers are, however, often of a confiding turn of mind, and we remember a good laugh our party had years ago, at the expense of a local journal in Scotland. One of us

had shot an eagle, but as none of us had ever before handled one, we were all uncertain whether it was a golden-eagle or an erne; three were in favour of the victim being the true king of birds, and but one was downright certain it was a sea-eagle, and to that opinion he adhered with considerable warmth; he was also an irrepressible joker, so to establish his theory, and confound the rest of us, he wrote an account of the exploit to the local newspaper, which wound up with a flourish, stating that "Gould, Morris, and Yarrell having been consulted, the bird was undoubtedly a splendid specimen of the *aquila sedum sidum*," and to his great joy this appeared in big type. Our friend was, however, right in his contention, for after all it did turn out to be a sea-eagle or erne. We have at times thought the writer of "seeking the rocketeer in his lair" may perhaps have been a scribe as irreverent as our merry friend of years gone by, and penned the article by way of a joke. A rocketeer, to our mind, is a bird flushed some way off the gun, and which, topping tall trees, comes to the shooter down wind very high up in the air. This, at any rate, is, we think, the most difficult shot a pheasant can offer, much more so than when the bird is seen to rise from the edge of the cover, doing its best to attain an altitude as it flies to the gun, for the former mark will be going at a much greater pace than the latter one. Also, our ideal rocketeer will frequently come with outstretched wings, which do not beat the air, and when moving in this way we have never met anyone who could make a good score, while often a bird of this kind will take the fire of several guns, and pass on untouched; and we believe the only way to make even fairly good shooting at birds thus flying is to take a snap-shot. The great object of all pheasant preservers is to make the shooting of them as difficult as possible, and to send them to their friends flying high and fast. Where there are hanging covers, there should be no difficulty in doing this, while if wooded hill-sides are both

steep and high, it becomes a hard matter to beat them in such a way as to keep the birds within shot.

At Balls Park in Hertfordshire, Carnanton in Cornwall, Kilmaraonaig in Argyll, Langley Park in Norfolk, Hall Barn in Bucks, and Tillingbourne in Surrey, we have repeatedly seen quantities of pheasants pass over the guns out of shot. It is, however, quite possible to send one's friends a stream of rocketers from absolutely flat covers. Masters, the head-keeper at Charlecote Park, Warwick; Hammond, at Langley Park, Norwich; Mathews, at Balls Park, Hertford; and Norman, at Cowdray Park, Sussex, are all past masters at this and every other detail of the keeper's business; and though doubtlessly there are many men quite as good, it would be a hard matter to find four better ones. At Langley Park some of the covers had no hedges, and were merely fenced off with a shallow ditch dividing them from the adjoining fields, and in such covers the undergrowth was cut back for about a hundred yards, while the guns being placed a similar distance away from the fence, the pheasants could see them, and so naturally ceased to run forward when the undergrowth failed, when, as the beaters approached, they would at once fly up through the tall trees to pass over the shooters; that they did come both high and fast may be guessed when at one stand, out of some four hundred birds put over six guns, but one hundred and twenty were laid low. This cutting back of the undergrowth is an excellent plan for giving rocketers, as it also provides plenty of shooting for a couple of guns standing back behind the beaters.

We have read it is advisable to kill cocks only the first time of going through well-stocked preserves; but having seen it tried, unless the manor is a large one with plenty of other covers on it, we are dead against the proceeding. Wherever it is done there should be an interval of fully a fortnight to allow the birds to come together again before the same cover is beaten afresh. On small shootings where

there are but few other covers for the hens to escape to, it is a suicidal policy, although one much appreciated by owners of adjoining spinnies should they not be preservers. Guests invited to a *battue* should never be told the number of birds turned down or reared on the beat they are to shoot. Hosts have been heard to say at breakfast, "Well, seven hundred birds have been reared in the woods we are going to beat to-day, so at any rate we shall have something to shoot at."

Forthwith guests will set to work with a rule of three sum. The birds turned down, plus the wild ones, will make at least a thousand in the cover, and, therefore, fully six hundred should be got, while all start on the day thinking they know what the total of the bag is going to be, a fact which of course spoils all the pleasure of anticipation; while, should but four hundred birds be picked up, all will return home absolutely disappointed with a splendid day's sport.

If making an attack on thickly-stocked covers when perhaps some hundreds of cartridges may be wanted, it is wise to have the reserve ammunition under lock and key. By so doing, one will be sure of getting one's own cartridges when it is needful to replenish the bags, which in these days of Schultze and E.C., and numerous other powders is a matter of no slight importance. There can be no harm in always taking out plenty of cartridges; but even if the reserve be not touched and there be no lock, it will often be found short of the full complement at the end of the day; for, apart from the friends who may help themselves, there is a great deal of cartridge pilfering carried on, and we know of one instance in the vicinity of a village, the inhabitants of which turned out in numbers to watch the shooting, where the boy in charge of the game-cart carrying eight unlocked magazines was fairly caught selling ammunition by auction on the roadside. It is certain that since taking care to have locks (the "Yale" padlock is perhaps the best) on

our bags and magazines our cartridge bill has decreased, although the amount of shooting has remained the same.

If several guns are told off to come down a ride, each keeping equi-distant in front of the other as the beat advances, and if more guns have been posted ahead, then it is not good form for those who have been walking to leave the cover as they come to the end of it, and place themselves between those who have been posted outside. Those who have been moving will have had shooting the whole way along the ride, while the stationary ones will hardly get any sport till the beaters are nearing where they will perhaps have been standing idle in the cold for some time; therefore, it is not right for those who have already had their share of the sport to come forward to take a double allowance. Those who have been shooting their way to their posted friends should either stand still, one behind the other, waiting for chances flying back, or, should they be meant to come forward, the beaters should be halted while they gain the open, where they ought to be placed well in the rear of those who have been waiting.

During the rearing season, young pheasants have many enemies in winged and ground vermin, and even "the harmless necessary cat" is often a great culprit; but that ducks should be classed in the black list and done to death on that account will perhaps be read with surprise. Nevertheless, at Kilmarnaig during one breeding season not a day passed but what one or two young pheasants vanished, and for many days the keeper could not discover the thief; until one evening, while lying up on the watch, he saw an old drake from the farmyard waddle towards a lot of young birds; then looking them carefully over, he quickly snapped one up and swallowed it whole. The rascal was shot on the spot and brought to the house, where his crop was cut open, when entombed therein were not one but two young pheasants, and this was at a time of year when they were nearly as big as tennis balls.

Keepers vary very much in their ability to rear pheasants. Some will lose very few each season, while others will lose many hundreds, and it is not uncommon to hear of gentlemen who, buying five thousand eggs, yet get no better result than others who have purchased but two thousand.

In order to give a keeper every chance, all bought eggs should be delivered before the end of the first week of May, and the slightly higher price paid for these is money well spent if the yield they give is compared with that of the later laid eggs.

To the mind of the not very enthusiastic shooter a *battue* is to some extent associated with the "tip" to be disbursed at the end of the day; as dusk comes on, the heads of guests are to be seen close together in whispered conversation, the tenor of which is: "How much shall you give? I vote we all do the same." This is a question we rarely ask of anyone, for as the day finishes and the total of the bag is called out, we settle in our own mind what is the right thing to do, from which we rarely swerve. Where there is not a very large staff of keepers, we usually remember the second in command as well as "the head." A friend of ours who is a good judge, and annually does a great lot of pheasant-shooting in the home counties, tells us he has a fixed tariff—ten shillings up to two hundred birds; a sovereign from that up to seven hundred; while from that up to a thousand, or even double, the maximum of two sovereigns is reached; and he finished up by saying: "And, thank goodness, as I'm a poor man, there are more days under seven hundred than over!"

This tariff is, however, one evolved by a Londoner, shooting chiefly within a radius of fifty miles of Pall Mall; beyond this distance, in counties situate farther away from clubland, tips are rightly not so large; for, in a society not depending on London gunners, where the greater number of guns at every shooting party are made up of county gentlemen who shoot with each other many times every season, it would be

unreasonable on the part of the keepers to expect large, oft-repeated tips from the same hands, and moreover they do not do so.

In fixing on the amount of a tip, we always take into consideration the number of guns out, and should be more liberal to a keeper on a shooting where five gentlemen had bagged a thousand head, than if a like total had been realized by ten. Also, we think the keepers on small shootings, where the staff is not strong, and the difficulties of preserving great, and all for but two or three days' cover-shooting in the whole season, should receive more liberally than the keeper who has seven others under him, with twenty to thirty days at the longtails each season.

We have heard of a tip being given *before* the shooting began, so as to ensure a good place all the day; but sincerely glad are we to say we have never known of such a disgraceful thing being done. The few words said on the subject must not induce our readers to think we object to or would curtail tips to keepers, for that is not at all the case; we do not even regard them as a necessary evil, ever having "parted" with pleasure, as a well-deserved acknowledgment of many days and many nights of hard work. The only tips we ever do grudge are those bestowed on idiotic footmen, who put out some other fellow's black trousers for us to dress with, or send us off from a country house with the kit of a stranger packed into our portmanteaus.

I cannot refrain from relating a piece of unexpected luck which happened to me one day when shooting with Sir George Faudel Phillips at Balls Park, Hertford. We had had a first-rate day up to lunch time, so much so that I had got rid of all my cartridges, something just over three hundred. On resuming work, I found my reserve-bags had missed the ammunition cart, and that I was quite cleared out. Sir George Prescott kindly came to the rescue, by lending me a hundred to go on with; at this moment, my host, who is a very old friend,

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came up and whispered me that he feared one or two of his guests had not had quite their share of sport, while asking me if I would mind taking a stand in the ensuing beat which at the best would yield but a few shots. Cheerfully consenting, he placed me himself in a spot to which we both knew pheasants never flew, so quite contentedly I watched the birds running past me to the forward guns. I was placed in an open space, while on either side, some forty yards off, two large thick oak trees shut me out from the guns to right and left. The beaters drew level, and had passed me some distance, when of a sudden all the birds in the beat began to fly back over me, directly between these two trees. I had a very good loader, so at them we went with a will, while in rather less than seven minutes the whole hundred cartridges were disposed of, while hardly anyone else fired a shot. This was "taking a back seat" with a vengeance, and I could not help feeling rather shy about the matter, yet the birds were all returning to a part of the cover we had already beaten, where they would have been lost, as far as that day was concerned. My loader said I got seventy-four; but the firing was so fast, I had no idea myself what the score was, although sixty-nine were picked up there and then. At the end of the beat, it turned out a stop, who should have kept in a ditch outside the cover, had left his place and taken up a position inside it, so that every bird could see him, which fully accounted for their all being, most unexpectedly, headed back to me.

There is one matter on which keepers are often careless, and that is gun-cleaning, for we find but few who will take the trouble to do this properly, or to see that it is well done by their assistants. It is, indeed, unpleasant to be handed a gun, the stock, grip, and fore-end of which are almost dripping with oil, while an examination discloses that the insides of the barrels are not half bright, while incipient rust is forming on the extractors, triggers, and breech-ends of the barrels.

Hares give very poor sport when killed in cover, as they



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rarely go at any pace, while many also assert that that which they offer in the open is but little better. With this, however, we cannot agree, for shooting them when bowling full speed across the fields is one of the highest tests of marksmanship, and only a really good shot will kill them well; that is, laid out stone dead with no squalling, kicking, or wounds to be found more than a few inches behind the shoulder; and wherever anyone standing at a cover-side, out of which the hares are being driven across the open, is seen to bowl over a good few in this style, he may at once be put down as a good shot.

We well remember the laughter which arose one evening in the dining-room of an old house in Perthshire, after a long day's tramp in line for white hares. The ladies having joined us at lunch, two of them insisted on walking with the guns. Each lassie selected her laddie, and off we went; but an hour of it soon satisfied the two ladies, so that the whole party did not meet again till dinner-time; then, to break a deadly pause in talk, one of the ladies innocently said to her host, "Oh! do tell me why all the hares Mr. A. shot kicked and cried so piteously, while all those Mr. B. killed never even moved." A. was a guardsman with a large fortune, and B. was only a subaltern in "the common army"; but A., a thorough good fellow, was the first to break the silence, to lead the laugh against himself, which, as the whole party were close friends, could not be suppressed.

A hare shot at broadside on should be kept in view as long as possible, for, like deer, they will sometimes run a good distance though shot through the heart. As for shooting at them running off end on, a good man will not make the attempt if they are over thirty yards away; but the bad one always tries this sort of shot at any distance, a broken hind leg being frequently the result, and a long chase with the retriever may or may not add it to the bag.

And, oh! for the retrievers to be met with in the field. Certainly, seven out of ten are worthless, except for picking up

dead birds off bare grass, for which purpose a two-legged one is preferable. It is quite wonderful the number of "Neros" encountered each season, who run in, are shouted at, and flogged, but who never by any chance retrieve a running bird, yet dash helter-skelter into "corners," scattering the pheasants in every direction, the while calling forth anathemas of "Shoot the brute!"—which, by the way, of course, no one ever does. It is little short of wonderful that men should be content to take such dogs about, under the delusion that they are of any use. How pleasant it is to be posted in a good place in the best partridge drive of the day, and to have for a neighbour a friend with a "Nero"! The moment the first shot is fired he is off at full gallop. Then what shouting, what whistling, and what yelping when he comes back to be thrashed; then by the time this is over, every bird on the beat is well acquainted with the position of "Nero" and his master, so that wherever else they may fly, timely warning has been given them not to venture that way. Thus, where one ought to have had twenty or thirty pretty shots had no noise been made, the drive will come to an end, while the owner of "Nero," and the friends to right and left of him, will hardly have used a cartridge.

An unpleasant adventure happened to an old friend of the author's, who now, alas! has joined the great majority. Some years ago he was presented with a "Nero," and the first time he had the dog in the field he was "all over the place," till at last our friend catching him by the ear, stooped low to give power to the lash, and proceeded to try the effect of a flogging.

At the first touch "Nero" howled loudly, and on hearing his cries another retriever promptly went to the rescue of his unlucky brother, and stealing up behind "Nero's" master pinned him deeply in the seat of honour. Then indeed arose a din—"Nero" yelping, his master swearing, the attacking dog growling, while his owner shouted himself hoarse, with all the party running up to beat the brute off. The combined

attack soon set our friend free, but only to find himself badly bitten. As good luck would have it, a doctor was one of the party; and no sooner had the injured man announced his intention of making tracks to the village medico, with a view to cauterization, than this gentleman nobly came to the rescue, by suggesting a retirement behind a haystack hard by, where he gallantly sucked our friend's wounds. As no harm ensued from the bite, as soon as the wounds were healed, many was the laugh we all had about the affair.

No mention has hitherto been made of one of the shooter's best friends—the humble bunny; that nimble little creature which the late Lord Derby wittily described as being “three inches too short.” In addition to puzzling many very good shots, their engaging little habits have taxed the brains of some of our most learned judges when summing-up in trials on the question of damages caused by them. They have put thousands of pounds into the pockets of all members of the legal profession; they have set by the ears landlord, shooting-tenant, and farmer, while they have been the cause of millions of words both spoken and written; but, in spite of all, the rabbit yet remains a staple article of our food supply and sport. A rabbit smothered in onions is still a good dish anywhere, and so, likewise, is the sport they offer.

Sometimes very easy to kill, at others very easy to miss, all sportsmen are ready to engage in the fun of a rabbit day. Enormous bags have been made in warrens, but the best performance of all, to our mind, was that of Sir Victor Brooke, who describes his day as follows:—

“My bag of the 28th September, 1885, consisted of 746 rabbits. I shot with two guns, my cousin, Major Brooke, loading for me. All the rabbits were walked up in rushes and ferns, and I had a keeper with four beaters on each side. The bag was made in the deer-park at Colebrooke, County Fer-managh, and the bunnies were real wild ones, in contra-distinction to warren rabbits. In a warren it would be easy to beat

this bag, but with bonâ-fide wild ones it was a good score. I shot exactly ten hours, using 998 cartridges, loaded with 43 grains of Schultze and $1\frac{1}{8}$ oz. of No. 5 shot, the little squib cartridges used in big warren days being, to my mind, useless with downright good rabbits if you want to make a certain bag. My cousin walked with me the greater part of the day and kept the count, and while he was with me the average was 92 out of a 100; second barrels and long shots account for the disparity between this and 746 out of 998 cartridges."

In coming to the end of the shooting portion of this book, the author wishes to state he has tried all he could to avoid touching on matter mentioned in books of sport that he has read. Hints and recollections illustrating the same are all that he has intended to venture on, and he will be thoroughly well pleased should either the one or the other have been of service, or interesting, to any of his readers.

CHAPTER VI

SALMON FISHING

YEAR by year it becomes more difficult to secure a really good salmon fishery, for even indifferent and downright bad ones never lack tenants. Those who have leases of good ones rarely give them up, and, should they do so, some favoured friend is put in, and the water never comes into the market. The moderate fisheries are tightly held on to by those on the look-out for something better, whilst the bad ones never fail to find fresh victims each season. In renting a stretch of river, it is common to learn from the agents that in a certain season two hundred spring fish were captured up to the middle of May, and no matter if that good take has been made ten years past, it is for ever dinned into the ears of enquirers; thus the scarcity of spring fishing, added to the desire of the angler to secure something, will tend to make one who is young and enthusiastic argue to himself that what has been done before may be done again, while, trusting he is to be the fortunate mortal, the lease is signed, with the rent fixed at a price representing at least a repetition of the much-vaunted score of years gone by.

When the new tenant commences fishing, he soon learns that the fortunate gentleman—a first-class performer with the rod—who killed the boasted two hundred, paid but thirty instead of two hundred pounds for his season, and that, at the time it was made, his take was considered little short of marvellous. Furthermore, the new man may find the pools from which the large score was chiefly put together have ceased even to exist,

and that owing to changes in the bed of the river, caused by heavy floods, the very one which ten years ago was the best of all may now be occupied by a thriving colony of rabbits.*

In writing of a good fishery, we mean one which shows a fine average for many years past, for it is impossible to insure a uniform good take, and all anglers will be able to recall cases of large rents being paid for fishings yielding next to nothing, though for many previous seasons the catch has been large and renowned. Our idea of a good fishery is that each rod on it should get from fifty to a hundred fish during the two months of the best season, and any piece of water showing this amount of sport before the middle of July is worth twice as much as one offering the like attractions in autumn.

In writing of a downright bad fishery, we mean one that has had ten fresh tenants in as many years, and in which the two best months have averaged fifteen fish a rod, while the rent asked has been from a hundred to two hundred pounds. Of this sort there are always some in the market, and nothing will ever deter rash anglers from taking them; so that it appears to be useless to repeat the worn-out caution of advising fishermen never to rent any water from which they cannot get a return of the sport had on it for several years.

The weekly reports published by many of the Scotch daily papers, and by the *Field* and *Land and Water*, are generally very correct, although, personally, we are not much in favour of them, as it has ever seemed to us rather absurd one cannot kill a stag, or a few brace of grouse, or a salmon, without the same being duly chronicled in print. In the *Field* we have read of eighteen salmon in a day being credited to a gentleman who had killed but one eighteen-pounder, and though the matter was probably a printer's error, or the mistake of a telegraph clerk, which was promptly put right in the issue of the following week, there may yet be plenty of anglers who read of the capture of eighteen, but who did not see the

* This was actually the case in a fishing once rented by the author.

correction; therefore anyone seeing the first statement, and failing to notice the correction, would rest convinced that the stretch of water on which the great score was reported to be made was of far greater money value than it really was. Whilst writing of mistakes made in sending wires, we cannot refrain from relating a somewhat costly one that occurred to ourselves. On the morning of the day that Zoedone won the Grand National Steeplechase at Liverpool, we wired from a Scotch village to a London commissioner: "Zoedone, ten pounds to win," which we handed to a red-haired Scotch lassie before starting out to fish. On returning, we were glad, indeed, to learn we had won a hundred and twenty pounds, and duly sent off a request, asking that our cheque should be sent to the north on the Monday following. The reply to this was a letter, stating our wire had been received, but minus the word "Zoedone"; so nothing had been done! Then the father of the red-haired lassie, who was our gillie, was at once sent to the Post Office to ask for an explanation, and returned to tell us: "Weel, sir, she thocht the word was something indeecent, and so she joost left it oot"; and dearly as the stupid mistake had cost us, it was impossible to help laughing. We remember, in the spring of 1884 or 1885, *Land and Water* credited the author and two of his friends with a catch of about a hundred spring fish more than they had taken in the month. On demanding, instead of humbly pleading for, a correction of the damaging misstatements, the editor curtly refused to alter his published returns; a decision he adhered to, although the author's fish-book, kept day by day, with letters from each of his friends, with extracts from their "logs" absolutely contradicting the published accounts, were all laid before him! As one of our friends was his own landlord, while the other had a long lease of his fishing, and we ourselves were giving up ours, the matter was not considered worth further powder and shot. Later on, we ascertained the gasconading reporter was a bank clerk

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at Aberdeen; but as bank holidays are not more plentiful across the Border than in the south, while as on all other lawful days this scribe must have been on his office stool, it has ever puzzled us why he should have been selected to report the doings of many anglers many miles distant from his honourable occupation. His employers are indeed to be congratulated, if he gave them as much for their money as he offered to the editor of *Land and Water* for his. This reporting is, however, the fashion of the day, and retiring sportsmen have to submit. It is much encouraged by some proprietors or their factors, as it is a good gratis advertisement for them; while no great harm is done as long as reports are really accurate, for most shootings and fishings are certainly rented at their very highest value. When, however, their yield appears in print greatly exaggerated, then the tenants may fairly say that such misleading statements are likely to cause a rise in their rents.

There is one small fault in these reports of which we have heard many complain, viz. that gentlemen and keepers are usually all alike dubbed "Mr.," so that unless an angler well knows the river mentioned, it is impossible for him to tell who is who, or to ascertain if it be fished by amateurs or keepers; and if the greater part of a big river be not fished by gentlemen, then it may be taken for granted the angling is not worth much.

The nets on the Scotch coasts, and in the rivers themselves, work so closely and incessantly that the spring fishings coming up to our ideal standard are few and far between, and none of the English rivers, and but few of the Scotch or Irish ones, approach it. Of the Scotch rivers that can yield such takes in the spring, in Aberdeenshire there are fishings of Invercauld, Glen Tana, Cambus-o'-May, the Aboyne Castle water, Ballogie, Woodend, Cairnton, and Blackhall Castle, all on the Dee. In Inverness-shire, there is Lord Lovat's part of the Beaul; also the Garry of Loch Oich.

In Forfarshire there is the Kinnaird Castle water of the South Esk, the Brora, Helmsdale and Naver in Sutherland, and the Thurso in Caithness. From this it will be seen how scarce is really good spring fishing. The Tweed, Tay, and Spey are all three so closely netted in the spring that on none of them, on any particular beat, can our standard be nearly reached, although in the autumn months it is easily exceeded. The Earn, the Deveron,* the North Esk, and the Don are perhaps the worst of northern rivers that yield plenty of spring fish to the nets while hardly giving one to the rod; in all four of them it is quite a rare event to kill a spring fish, for these four streams are all very easy to work with the nets, and hardly a fish escapes till they are taken off on the 26th of August; but from that time till the end of the rod-fishing season, the three first named are quite at the top of the tree for autumn sport, the Earn, especially, often yielding splendid autumn sport.

On the Dupplin Castle water, the late Lord Dupplin once took twenty-one fish from the Dyke Pool in a short day, while the Earl of Hardwicke, Colonel Oliver Montague, with many others, have had their dozen daily. In October, 1891, we stayed a week with Mr. Brydges Wilyams, the then lessee of this water, when, as bad luck would have it, the river ran bank high and dirty the whole of the time; but though the rod was nearly useless, it was still a great sight to see the fish passing up Dupplin Weir, for between two and three thousand passed up during the seven days of high water. Indeed, I have never before seen fish run so plentifully and so continuously for such a long spell. On the Dyke stream in the season of 1890, Mr. Wilyams and Colonel Cornwall Legh, his lucky visitor, fishing opposite each other, had in a short day twenty-five good fish between them.

Only the largest of the Scotch rivers have been alluded to, but there are many smaller ones which give good sport, and in

* Owing to the recent removal of obstructions, these two first-named rivers are likely to improve. See my *Salmon Rivers of Scotland*.

Sutherland alone there are some half-dozen miniature Speys and Dees running through glorious Highland scenery, each requiring very neat, if not very long casting. Of these, notably, are—the Shin, the Inver, and the Kirkaig; and there was a time when each of these rose to the level of our ideal. There is hardly a county in Scotland that does not own a salmon river; but it is the larger ones that are sought by the angler, for there can be no doubt a twenty-pound fish, struggling for its life, can make a more resolute and dashing effort for freedom when fighting in deep, rapid, and broad waters, than one of the same weight, doing its utmost, in a small river only some twenty-five yards across.

Nothing can be more exciting in the way of fishing than a prolonged tussle with a big, game fish determined to go down one side of the stream while the rod is on the other, with some seventy yards of water separating them. In such battles, victory often rests with the salmon; but even if worsted in a combat like this, the angler will not feel half so angry as when a break takes place just as the vanquished one is quite close to the gaff. In the latter case, he will have little sympathy with the fish wishing him an abrupt good-bye, whereas in the former case disappointment will be tempered with a feeling of respect for the foe that fought so gallantly, for many a good angler has been heard to exclaim when broken in the heat of the fray, "Confound it! he's off; but such a plucky fighter deserved to escape."

There is no more annoying way of losing a fish than to do so when it is fairly beaten, and has once been brought within reach of the gaff. The inexperienced gillie has had two tries, only to miss it each time; and then, by running wildly up and down the bank in pursuit, he has repeatedly scared the captive back to the stream and deep water, till at last, just as it is again towed to the bank, the long-enduring hold breaks, and he is gone! Numbers of fish are thus lost each season, which is a matter to be easily avoided

by the fisherman taking absolute command of a nervous or ignorant gaffer.

Should the pool have a shelving beach of sand or shingle, then, as soon as the fish is exhausted, step back some twenty yards from the water, ordering the gillie to keep in the rear, when with a little coaxing the fish will allow itself to be hauled into shallow water; as it grounds it will begin to splash and turn on its side, and then, if a gentle strain be kept up, it will soon kick itself ashore, when the gillie can go quietly forward and tail it.

Should the angler be alone, as soon as the fish is lying on the bank with tail clear of the water, he can lay the rod down with a nearly tight line and the reel handle uppermost, and go down and lift it out for himself; in doing this, a slight détour should be made, so as to avoid walking straight to the head of the fish, while also the first grip should be a good one, for as soon as handled, kicking will commence with all the life that is left. A small fish is naturally more difficult to hold than a large one, as the tail of the former offers but a small grasp to the hand.

In this way we have landed hundreds of fish, and believe it is quite as quick as gaffing, certainly more so than one would be with an unskilled attendant, while it has the advantage of not spoiling any part of the fish for the table.

Even where the water is deep to the banks, fish can be landed in this manner, but of course it takes a longer time than where there is a shelving bank, as the fish now has to be played till he is utterly and entirely exhausted.

If the angler wishes a fish to be gaffed, and knows his attendant is not a great hand at the process, he will do well to call him behind, and keep him there till the fight is virtually over. When that time arrives, select the easiest-looking place for gaffing and point it out to the gillie; then lead the fish away from it, head up stream, and as soon as it can no longer see the chosen place, send the gillie to the spot, make him

kneel down and put his gaff into the water as far as he can reach, while keeping motionless. The fish can then be floated down over the gaff, and will see nothing till too late; and the greatest duffer could not want two strokes at such a chance.

By this method the fish will be gaffed from underneath, which will not be such a pretty or dashing stroke as when the gaff, in the hands of a skilled man, is stretched out over the captive and passed through the back; but when this is done, the fish must always see both gaff and gaffer, a sight which will cause it to make bolt after bolt into deep water, and sudden rushes with a short line in shallow water are always dangerous.

Over and over again, we have seen a nervous gillie prolong a struggle fully ten minutes more than needful. He will perhaps scratch the fish at the first attempt, and so make it extra wild, and then, by running up and down to meet it each time it comes near, he will be the cause of so many short rushes and head and tail splashes, that unless the hold is very good the fish is too often lost at the finish; and under such circumstances the fisherman is fairly entitled to a good growl.

If the angler is alone, the same plan—*i.e.*, that of getting the fish above him and floating it down over the gaff—can be practised; one of the heaviest fish we ever killed, a thirty-eight pounder, was secured in this way one August day from the Long Pool of the Taynuilt Hotel water of the Awe. We also once, when alone, lifted a forty-two pound hen fish one February from the Mill-stream Pool on the Crathes water of the Dee; but as she was on the point of spawning, we returned her to the water, hoping that there might be a mate about, although it was of course very late in the season.

The heaviest fish we know of, and saw landed with our own eyes, came from the Awe; it scaled fifty-four pounds, and was captured by the schoolmaster at Taynuilt, in October.

The Awe, indeed, annually yields many big fish, both to the net and the rod, and annexed are the weights of some of them, vouched for on unimpeachable authority. Colonel Murray, of Polmaise, writes as follows from

“FANNANS, TAYNUILT.

“July 2nd, 1891.*

“The fish weighed 42 lbs., a male, and measured $26\frac{1}{4}$ inches in girth, $47\frac{1}{2}$ in length, and was killed in the Bothy Pool, 25th July, 1879. A ‘Thunder and Lightning’ took his fancy, and I had him out in about ten minutes, and before he was nearly done. The next in size that I have killed in the Awe was 38 lbs. There was a large *salmo ferox* hooked by Mr. Mure in the top pool of the Awe, and killed in the loch some way up the Pass of Brander, which weighed $39\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., and this I should think the heaviest *ferox* ever killed, certainly with the fly.

“I may mention a curious case of a fly I had, which killed eleven salmon in two days, and was lost in the twelfth fish, on the third day, which went over a fall in the Conon and cut the line. Two other anglers were fishing the river at the same time and never got a fish, and I could not kill another after losing the fly, although I had several of the same pattern dressed by the same man at the same time that the killer was tied. Was this some chance, or some combination of colour?”

Mr. Thorpe, of Ardbrecknish, who for many years rented the Inverawe water, also writes to me he got one in his cruive that weighed 52 lbs., but that he has never got one with the rod that was quite 40 lbs., though several times close to it. Sir John Bennett Lawes, who for many seasons rented the upper water of the Awe, which at present Lord Breadalbane keeps

* Since this date the Colonel has had several fish of heavier weight. See Awe in Vol. I. of my *Salmon Rivers of Scotland*.

in his own hands, tells me he caught, in Pol Veri, a fish weighing $54\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.*

While on the subject of big fish, we believe that Mr. Arthur Prior's monster is still the heaviest authenticated capture to the rod, and he writes me as follows on the subject :—

“The big fish was carted up to the Castle (Floors) with his fourteen companions, and it was then weighed by His Grace in the presence of the Duchess, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Kensington, and the late Lord Lovat, and was declared to be just over 60 lbs. The next morning at 10 o'clock, the shepherd, bringing in mutton, re-weighed it, and made it but $57\frac{1}{2}$. The *Kelso Mail* the next day described the fish as being 60 lbs., so also did ‘Steel,’ the fishmonger at Kelso, where it was exhibited.”

Mr. Prior has been very lucky in getting big fish, as he also had a forty-pounder, in addition to the big fish, during the same month of November, 1886, and later on in November, 1888, another forty-pounder.

Never permit a kelt to be gaffed, for more often than not the wound will be fatal, and personally we would rather lose our tackle than put steel into one. On many rivers it is, however, a common practice to land all kelts in this way, and then to fling them back to the water. With a little more patience they can be lifted out and returned unhurt, beyond the exhaustion of the fight, which of itself frequently proves fatal. When replacing a heavy, thoroughly beaten kelt in the water, it should be held by the tail for a short time till it has recovered strength enough to swim. While strongly objecting to any law enforcing the carrying of a landing net, which would absolutely necessitate the services of an attendant, we should yet like to see a penalty placed on gaffing a kelt, and then leave

* Since this was written never a season has gone by without fish of over 40 lbs. being got.

fishermen to their own devices. The law is the avowed champion of their lives, and inflicts a penalty of five pounds on anyone keeping a kelt, but yet it sanctions their destruction by the gaff, and so long as the destroyer throws the poor wounded creature back to the water, and does not keep it in his possession, the law is content; but, surely, this is an anomaly our fishery law-makers should attend to.

At times unclean fish are landed so well mended, and looking so like the real article, that for a few moments even old hands may be deceived. A peep into the gills will settle the matter, and if there are any white maggots clinging to them it is for certain unclean. From the Dee, the Spey, and the Tay we have landed hundreds of kelt, and have never yet seen one without some of these white parasites, while we have never seen a fresh-run spring fish with any of them.

The eyes of the kelt are usually not quite wide open, while in a clean fish the eye is full, round, and prominent. This, however, is not an invariable rule, as we have seen quite fresh-run fish with this peculiarity, and we think it possible this drooping of the lid may be caused by the fatigue of the fight against the rod.

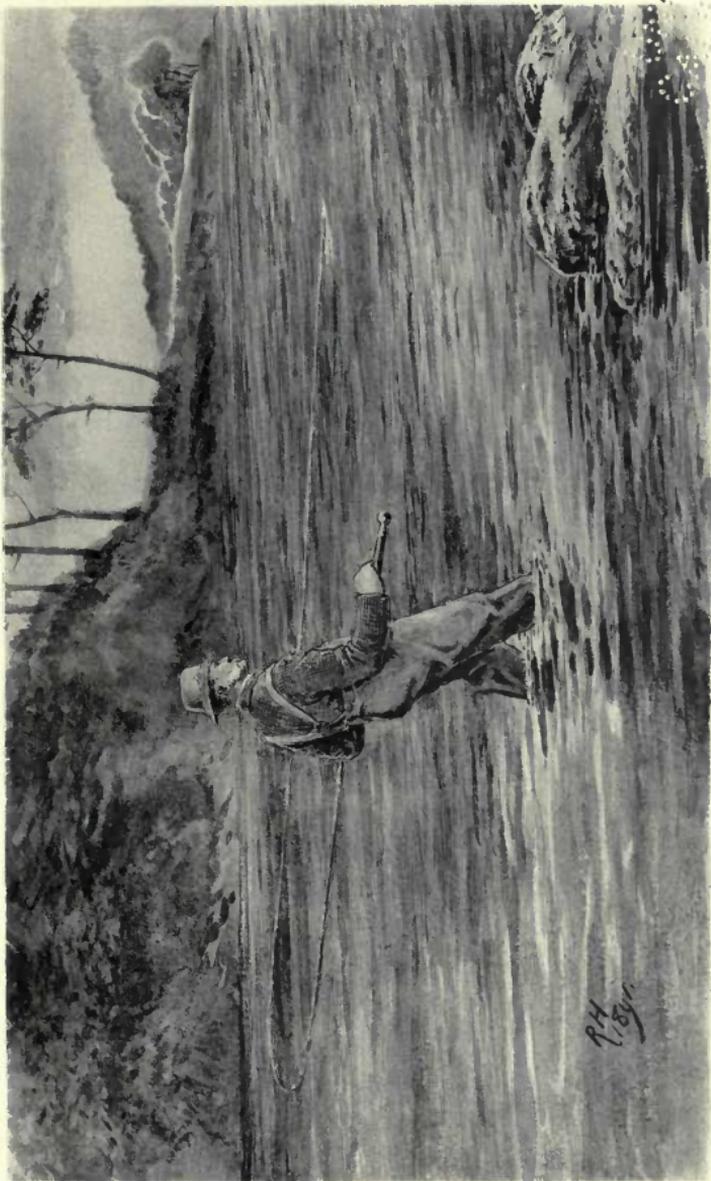
If rivers get very low in the spring diseased kelts may easily be seen, and as at such times there is very little real fishing to be done, an angler may often get a bit of fun for himself, while, by taking such fish out of the water, he will be doing the bailiffs and the river a good turn. A white and diseased fish having been found in an accessible position, cut a long, straight twig, something like the top joint of a rod, wrap the line already attached to the rod a few times round it, bring the hook to the end, and there fix it tightly by a half hitch, so that thus a miniature gaff is formed. Keeping the rod in the left hand, stick the hook into the kelt wherever fancy dictates, and let the twig go. It will soon be pulled clear of the line, and the diseased one can be brought to

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bank, knocked on the head, and duly buried. We once saw a big kelt so covered with fungus that he was absolutely as white as the paper this is printed on; but notwithstanding his ailments he made a splendid fight for his life, and took us down several hundred yards of water. This fish we laid hold of by the side of the pectoral fin, as we think a fish thus hooked shows harder fighting than when fouled in any other part of his body, and as the water was low and bright, his long white form showed every movement, so that from start to finish every detail of the struggle could be seen. On the Crathes water of the Dee we once landed three kelts, which had all been recently gaffed and survived the barbarity; but in the same water hardly a day passed that we did not see dead kelts lying in the pools, which had mostly been killed by the gaff in the fisheries above.

We did not see all there were, for a colley dog was in the habit of hunting the banks and pulling out the dead kelts for himself. The dog was fat and sleek to perfection, and would take a regular header when the dead fish was in deep water, and would pull it out from a depth of fully eight feet. He knew his business well, never hunting the streams, but trotting from eddy to eddy he searched the backwaters till he found his breakfast, for which when it lay in a deep place he would often have to make many dives before securing it.

As to what is good time in which to kill a fish, it is an accepted law by many old hands that a pound a minute is smart work. It may be prolonged by a sulky fish; but with the rod in good hands, we hold such an event as a long sulk should not be permitted to happen, unless indeed it is impossible to get below the "sulky brute," for on such occasions all fish at once become "brutes." We have never met with one that could resist, for more than a few minutes, the weight of a long line and a steady pull down stream from the middle of the rod. Out from behind the sulking place it must come,



PUTTING A STRAIN ON A "SULKY BRUTE."

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but look out for squalls, as a rush down stream may drown the line; but never mind if it does, and laugh even if the hold be broken, for anything is better than standing still, pulling steadily at a fish for an hour or so; it makes one feel and look like a fool. Therefore, do not be afraid to go even fifty or sixty yards below the sulker, all the while paying out line step by step, while keeping up a heavy strain, with the rod held low, and nearly parallel to the water. As the strain begins to tell, the fisherman will get warning of the impending move by feeling a tug or two as the captive endeavours to keep his place; as he gives way, then upright the rod and get in every inch of line possible. Go up to meet him, if he will let you, and try to get opposite him, a position which once attained should soon end the combat. At times a fish will sulk in such a position as renders it impracticable to get below him, and then indeed he is almost master of the situation. Costly messages may be sent him down the line in the shape of a valuable bunch of keys, which we once saw done, without producing the least effect; the gillie may throw any amount of stones, but when sulking occurs in deep, sluggish water, and there is no boat to be had so that the surly one can be poked out of his lair by oar or sting, and unless the angler has seen he is in an extraordinary large fish which it would be a glorious matter to take, then it is best to put on a severe strain for twenty minutes or so, gradually increasing it till either the fish moves or something breaks.

We are of opinion that when a fish makes a furious dash down stream in heavy, broken water, and if the going be very bad, then it is wiser not to try to keep level with him, but to pick one's way quietly with the rod bolt upright, and so follow on behind him, even if the reel be nearly bare. A time will come when even the wildest fish will be forced to rest for a minute or so, in which short time one can get in some line and be nearing him preparatory for a fresh start.

If an attempt be made to keep level with a mad fish making a rush down white water, when the footing on the bank is very bad, it is nearly certain the rod point will be lowered, which is usually the signal for good-bye.

An angler should remember that in pools on which a boat is used that, when watching it from the opposite bank, it will always look to be more than fairly half way across the stream; a knowledge of this will do away with many uncharitable feelings, and save even downright wrangles. It is, of course, annoying to see a boat appear to come more than fairly across the stream, to fish one's favourite catch, but the opposite neighbour may have been forbidden to wade, or perhaps the pool can be reached in no other way. Under such circumstances make the best of the matter, for if the banks were changed the chances are the grumbler himself would do precisely the same thing. If the boat be rowed, it does less harm than if a sting be used, which causes greater disturbance by the noise it makes in striking the bed of the river; but in either case, if there be plenty of fish, a pool that has been "boated" can be cast with confidence half an hour afterwards. Indeed, we have come down our side of a pool immediately behind a boat fishing from the opposite bank, and have hooked fish so close to it that the party afloat have had to pull out of the way to let us down. In some fisheries the march will begin or end in the middle of a pool, a matter that is often productive of unfriendliness between two anglers, both good fellows who should be the best of friends. The old-fashioned plan was for the owner of the upper part of the pool to come to the march, when he fished over into the next water as far as he could cast. On many rivers this has been altered to the fairer method of placing a stake twenty-five yards above the actual boundary, below which mark the angler on the upper water is in honour bound not to put his feet.

There are two sorts of very bad fishing neighbours. The

worst is the case of the opposite bank being let to an hotel, the landlord of which places no limit on the number of rods, and to fish opposite such a water as this is terribly uphill work, as each pool gets incessantly splashed over all day. That fine stretch of the Awe that is now let with the Taynuilt Hotel is a notable and melancholy example of this sort of fishery. There are, to the best of my recollection, some fourteen pools on this water, some of which are high water catches and others *vice versâ*, so they are rarely all in order on the same day; but the late landlord of Taynuilt Hotel let almost anyone fish, and I once counted eighteen rods out; and that sort of thing went on for many years, while the pools on the opposite bank which the hotel anglers could reach were entirely spoilt. There is now a new landlord at Taynuilt, who proposes to limit the rods to six; but even this is twice as many as the water will fairly carry, for each rod has only one and a half, or at the most two, pools at his disposal, while each is compelled to engage a gillie, who fishes as soon as his employer has had enough of it, so thus the water is most mercilessly flogged, and the pools on the opposite bank are quite spoilt. In our opinion it is not quite fair to one's opposite neighbour to let a fishery to an hotel without strictly limiting the number of rods; this is carefully done on the Dee, and anyone getting a rod from the hotels at Aboyne and Ballater* can make sure of an ample beat to himself. The Taynuilt Hotel water has, however, recently changed owners, for the discovery of some missing documents in the muniment room at Inveraray Castle enabled the late Duke of Argyll to establish his right to it, although the late possessors, the Campbells of Loch Nell, had owned it for over 150 years.

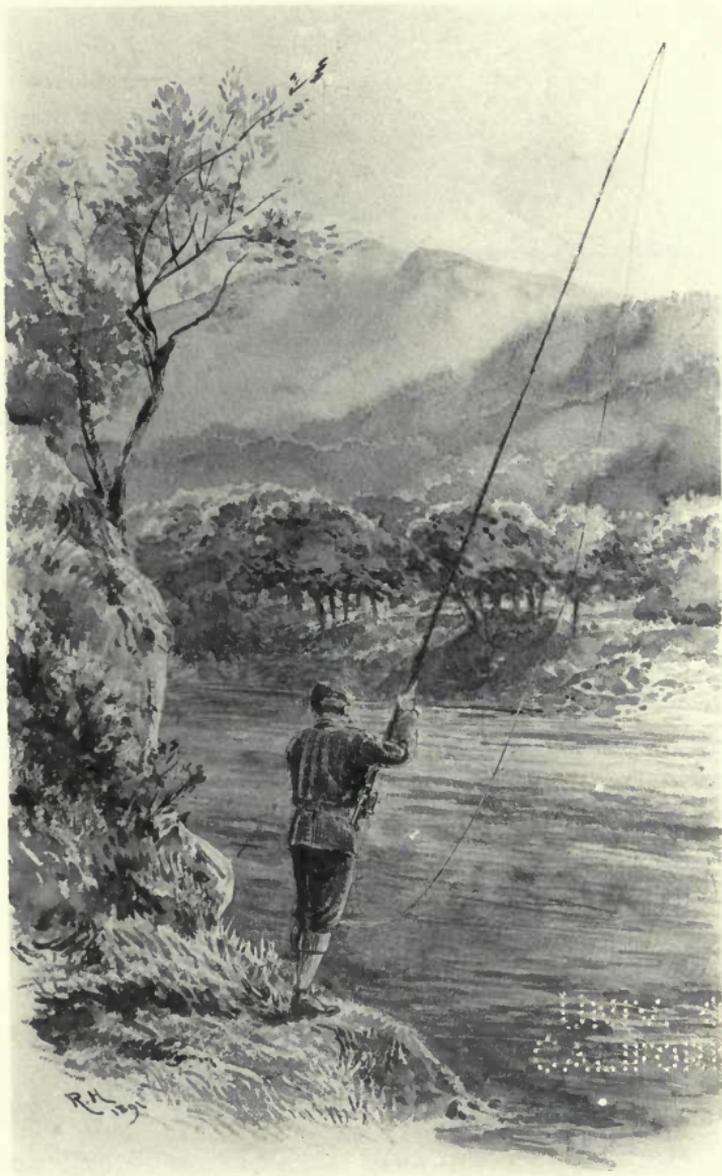
The second worst neighbour an angler can have is the one who does not fish himself, but gives indiscriminate leave to friends, tradespeople, and servants, a matter which is certainly very trying to the temper of any keen fisherman

* The Invercauld Arms Hotel no longer has this fishing.

renting the opposite bank. We recollect a case of this sort where the fishing being given to a family, the father, the three sons, two daughters, with two visitors turned out daily, and as there were but eight pools, each one had more or less an occupant all day. At length the matter was laid, in the most courteous manner, before the donor of the fishing to the family, and the representation being taken in good part, the family rights were at once limited to two rods a day.

Should anyone be lucky enough to take a fish so heavy that it is not weighable by his steelyard, there is yet an ingenious method of doing this, which was first shown to the author by Captain C. M. Pelham Burn, who rents Pitcroy on the Spey; as we had fished for thirty seasons before hearing of the "dodge," it is probable there are others in the same plight. Suppose the fish is judged to be thirty pounds, while the steelyard will only show up to five-and-twenty, then pick out a stone of over ten pounds weight, tie a cord round it and weigh it exactly; pass the end of the cord through the ring at the top of the steelyard, and fasten it to the hook at the bottom. Then put the fish on, and before moving the indicator on the scale the weight of the fish will have to lift up the weight of the stone, which, added to what the scale then shows, will be the total. Thus, a thirty-pounder having raised a twelve-pound stone will lower the indicator on the scale to eighteen pounds.

The author has but very few words to say on rods or tackle, for that has already been very thoroughly done by many others. Rods appear to us to be very much like guns, and because A. can throw his thirty-five yards of line with *his* pattern, that will be no reason why B. should do the same with a similar one, yet B. will throw quite as well and as far as A. with a rod of a totally different build; then in steps C., who will beat them both with something wholly different in shape from either. The make of the rod with which an angler is "entered" is the one generally continued; it may be modified in later years, perhaps improved on, but the build



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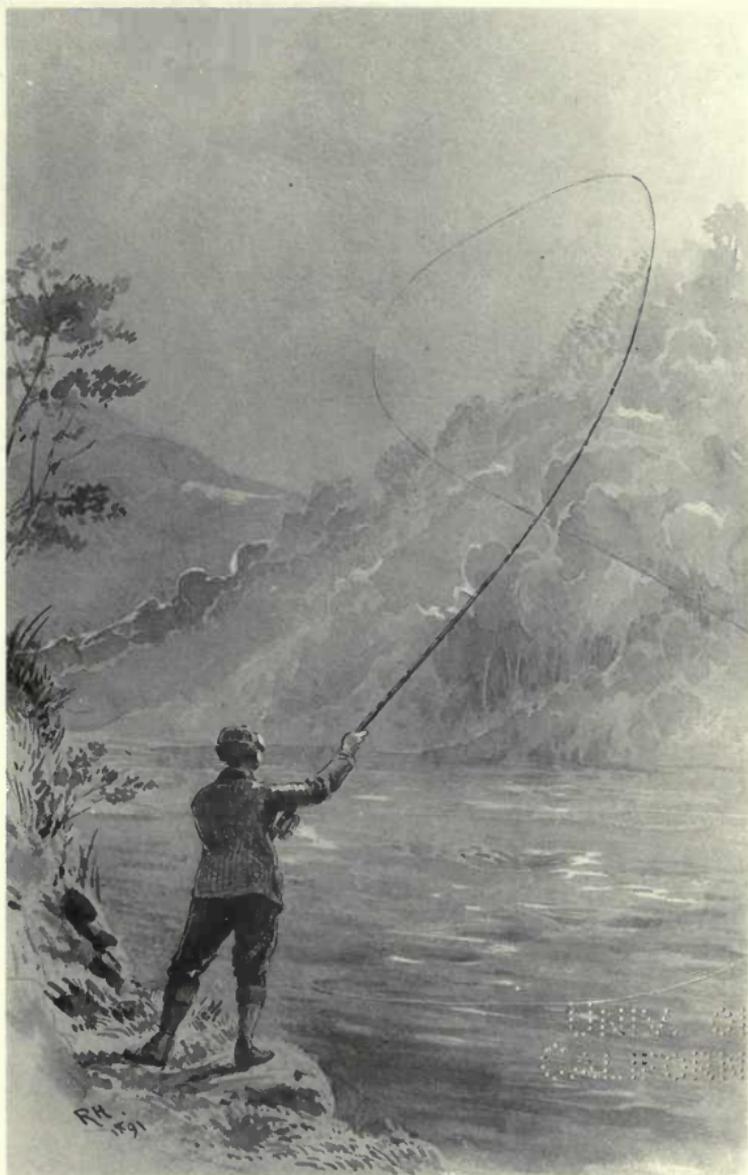
of the rod the angler starts with will leaven all the later ones. Personally, we own to liking a spliced rod better than a ferruled one; but when in two pieces they are so difficult of conveyance and so troublesome to put together that it is pleasanter to use the ferrules, unless going to fish in the same place for several days in succession, where the rod once put up need not be taken down until it is time to depart. The author swears by Farlow and eighteen feet of greenheart; but of late years we confess to having seen such fine rods of glued-up cane that our allegiance to the old wood is wavering. Their lightness is a great recommendation, and they cast as far in the face of a wind as the stoutest greenheart, and there is no doubt our old favourites will eventually be discarded in favour of the more modern invention.

The Spey-rod like the Spey-cast is a thing of itself, and to the beginner, no matter how good he may be at the overhead business, both rod and cast seem hopelessly impossible; these rods are always spliced, somewhat whippy, while the top joint, instead of being straight, turns up in a way that is most unsightly to the uneducated eye. In commencing to practise the Spey-cast, the novice will often wind himself up in his line; and lucky if he do not drive the hook into his ears or shoulders. After a period of this excitement, suddenly the cast comes to him as far as a short line goes, but it will take him weeks ere he can put out thirty yards.

"Hoo aisey" it looks, to see the late "old Crookey"—we beg his pardon, Mr. Cruickshank—as the *Field* and *Scotsman* call him, putting out forty yards, while standing dryshod on two little stones on the bank of Pol Brock on the Wester Elchies water; we believe he held the title of "King of the Spey" for many years, though Robertson, the famous Tulchan fisherman, and Shiach at Aikenway could each run him close. All anglers should try to attain the Spey-cast, for it is an exceedingly useful one, which when well done drops the fly on the water as true and as gently, and with no more splash

than if propelled by the overhead cast. Much has been written about this same cast, and no one has discoursed more wisely than my friend the late Major Traherne, in the Badminton Library, in which he has taken much pains both by word and by diagram to explain the matter, while doubtlessly his efforts have been of great use to his brother anglers. It occurred, however, to the author, that if he could get this cast illustrated by someone combining the angler with the artist, that then such illustrated diagrams might be of still further use to the beginner. In his friend Mr. R. R. Holmes, Her late Majesty's Librarian at Windsor Castle, he has had the good luck to meet with this happy combination of art with sport, and the three accompanying drawings of the Spey-cast were executed on Speyside itself; and the author ventures to think that never before has the Spey-cast been so well illustrated, and all credit is due to Mr. Holmes for his able handling of a difficult subject. This cast is made in three distinct motions, which, like the overhead one, is essentially a "time" cast.

Plate No. 1 represents the angler having raised the rod upright with one steady, moderately quick rise, so as to bring the line to the surface; No. 2, shows the line as it is immediately before the downward stroke is made; No. 3 depicts the result of this, while the fly is speeding in graceful curls to its destination. We also quite agree with Major Traherne, that there is no line so easy or pleasant to cast as a hand-made, double taper silk one of about thirty-three yards in length, spliced on to a hundred yards of reel line. Farlow makes these silk lines right well, while dressing them to keep supple for many seasons; but as soon as one end of the taper begins to wear it should be reversed. We consider the reel is best made of thin gun metal, for though this is slightly heavier than wood or vulcanite, both these substances are easily cracked by knocks or tumbles, while the metal one is far less vulnerable, for even if badly dented it can usually be put right again by any blacksmith. A reel should run lightly; in fact,



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so much so as to allow a fish being struck from it. Should a pluck come at the fly during any moment of inattention—and if fishing for hours without an offer the sharpest look-out is apt to relax—then the fish does not get such a violent jerk as will be the case if the reel is a stiff one; such a rise not having been seen, the rod is mechanically and sharply raised as the pull is felt, and in doing this a too severe strain is often put on the tackle, which often results in the hook being left in the fish. In streams, or in steadily moving waters, we are all against working the fly, but as it sweeps into slack water, some motion should be given to it, and even though the point of the rod rise and fall a yard with each movement, if there is a long line out, the fly itself will be moved but a few inches. On many rivers there are high, steep banks overhanging the pools, and on “dour” days it is instructive to hand the rod over to the gillie, and creeping to the edges of such banks, the fly can be watched as it explores the depths below. With a small river on a bright day it is easy to see the fish lying behind their resting-places, and in such a state of affairs they will frequently bolt in all directions as the fly swings over them, while not for some minutes will they return to their accustomed places in the stream. At rare intervals a fish will rise under such circumstances, but he does not come with a dash, but with one sweep of his tail will shoot from his shelter, and falling well below the fly while holding himself stationary in the current by a trembling movement of fins and tail, his mouth opens, the fly appears to fall into it, while with a downward sweep he drives the hook home.

Under such circumstances, to shout “Look out! he’s coming,” will almost always save the fish, as there are but few who can keep their hands quiet while such an intimation is excitedly made. Mechanically the point is raised only to snatch the fly away, when rarely will the fish return.

We remember, one bright June day, fishing the Cruive Pool of the Awe with a small “Blue Doctor” we had dressed that

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morning with a very spare wing on purpose for the sunshine. Overhanging this pool is a high bank, on which our old friend and attendant, Peter, had posted himself. The cast was drawn blank without a fin showing, and when we again joined forces to learn from him that eight different fish had all come to look at the fly, we were indeed surprised. Some two hours later the pool was re-fished, but this time the author changed places with Peter, when from his vantage ground he saw five fish come to take a look at the small "Sun" fly so neatly offered them; each returned to his lair not in the least alarmed, while not one of these thirteen fish broke the water, for had they done so they must have been seen, as this is a still, "oily" pool, and from this we think it may be taken for granted the angler on a level with the river little knows what goes on in the depths below. Having waited till the sun went off this pool, we again fished it with the same fly used the first time of trying it, when two fell victims to its fascinations; but the light was then so bad that Peter could not see if others were moved. Even in the very hottest and brightest of weather a keen angler need not quite despair, for if he can see a fish "turning" he had better stay and offer fly after fly, when perhaps he may bully it into laying hold of one of them. An instance of this kind happened to us on the Usk, one scorching day in July. The late Sir Sandford Graham and the author were staying at the Three Salmons Hotel, in Usk, to fish the association water, while as we were not believers in very early starts, it was often ten o'clock before a move was made. On that particular day we found "Pen Carrig" vacant, so Sir Sandford continued on his way to find another pool below. "Rhil-a-derry" and "Coed-a-prior" were both occupied, and from the rod on this latter pool he learnt that everything else lower down was also full, an unusual number of ticket-holders having come out that day. He therefore returned, and we took it in turn to fish over a nice little salmon that had been seen to rise. Thus in about every twenty



THE SPEY CAST, No. 3.

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minutes the choice of a fresh dainty was offered, but all to no purpose, until at last fourteen tasty morsels had been dangled over his nose, and evening began to come. It was then our turn to try with a fifteenth, but giving it up in disgust, Sir Sandford had another cast, when he at once hooked and shortly landed our stubborn friend—a nice fish of fourteen pounds.

There is no doubt one of the great secrets of success is perseverance, for any fairly good fisherman who will never stop working, who will run from pool to pool, eating his lunch while so doing, will kill more fish than a better angler who thinks it is going to be a bad day, and takes it easy if he does get a rise in the first pool he puts fly over.

Keep the lure in the water all day, hold the point low, and fish deep; do not watch the point, but keep the eyes on the spot where the fly is judged to be. By doing this a "boil" will be seen which might escape notice if the eyes were on the point of the rod, and when such is seen the fish can of course be offered another fly.

At times the gillie may be heard to say he is "Just thinking it will be a gold day," or a "silver one," as the case may be, in which case, unless the fisherman wishes to make his attendant miserable, let him put on a fly with gold or silver tinsel, as may be advised; while, more often than not, the man's long experience of the state of the river and the atmosphere will prove him to be in the right. Salmon are odd mixtures of shyness and boldness, and their sight is extraordinarily quick. In clear water we have often stood on bridges to drop small stones on fish lying under them, when the fish has invariably seen the stone coming and dashed off before it struck the water, though in the course of a few minutes it would return to the place it left. When a fish is seen to move, many anglers at once conclude the resting spot is exactly beneath the splash; as a rule, it is some yards below and a little to one side of where the water was broken. That very fish will, however, often take the lure above where he showed, or even a good bit below, and

this we think is also a fact from watching their habits from high banks and bridges; we are also quite sure they see further afield than is generally supposed, for though the accepted theory is not to advance more than a yard at each cast, we think quite two yards may be taken at every fresh throw; thus when fishing in this quicker style, if there be a taking fish in the pool it will be equally certain to see the lure, for a fish that wishes to feed will be sure to be keeping a sharp look out on all sides. In this way a long pool can be fished twice over, with two different flies, in the same time that the cast-at-every-yard angler will take to fish it once. If a fish rises short, then throw the line gently on the bank without reeling up, change the fly for a smaller one of the same pattern, and try him again in a few minutes from exactly the same spot. Fish may often be seen splashing at the sides of narrow, heavy rushes of water, and the eddies formed by such streams are often dead or even moving gently up stream. Such waters are best fished by commencing at the tail of the pool and casting into the rapid, when as soon as the fly nears the still water the angler should walk smartly up stream for three or four paces. By this means the fly will be kept "alive" and working in the slack, and thus this sort of awkward place can be fairly well fished, and if salmon are to be seen splashing in such situations they are usually hungry ones.

It may be fancy, but we prefer the old gut fly loop to the more modern metal-eyed one, as the former seems to swim the fly with more life; also, to a great extent, we are believers in every river having its own special flies; at any rate, it is certain the local ones are lures shown by long experience to be killers. At the same time, we are averse to having a VERY large selection of flies, and any angler who is provided with various sizes of Blue Doctors, Jock Scots, and Gordons for "gaudies," and the Glen Tana, the Killer and the Grey Heron of the Spey for "spiders," never need fear of catching fish wherever he may go. The four last-mentioned flies not being

so well known as the two first-named celebrities, the dressing is appended for the use of those who tie their own, which all anglers should learn to do. Apart from the pleasure of killing with flies of one's own making, the amusement will while away many a long day when the river is unfishable, and even a wet Sabbath—of course, not if within reach of the kirk—may be shortened if surrounded by fur, feathers, silk, wax and tinsel; but tell it not to "Sandy," or for ever those flies will come under the ban of unlucky ones.

The Killer:

Tag. Silver tinsel.

Tail. Red saddle feather of golden pheasant.

Body, commencing from tail. Yellow, orange, red, and blue mohair, equally divided and sparely put on, silver tinsel over.

Hackle. Grey heron at shoulder, and over it a red saddle feather of golden pheasant.

Wing. Two slips of red turkey or gled hawk set wide apart.

The Gordon:

Tag. Silver twist.

Tail. Topping and red ibis.

Butt. Black.

Body. Two turns of orange yellow floss silk and the rest rich claret floss, silver tinsel, and, if the fly be large, then silver twist by the side of it.

Hackle. Claret from commencement of claret floss, and light blue at shoulder, or in a small fly a jay hackle will do.

Wing. Two feathers of gold pheasant ruff, reaching to black butt, over these a mixture of gold pheasant tail, peacock, white, yellow, red, and blue fibres of dyed swan, a long topping over all, jungle cock cheeks and a black head.

If the fly be dressed large, one or two sword-feathers of the gold pheasant should be added over the gold pheasant ruff feathers.

The Glen Tana:

Tag. Silver twist.

Tail. Red saddle feather of gold pheasant.

Body. Half yellow, half claret mohair, sparely put on, gold tinsel, and, if the fly be large, then silver twist laid on beside it.

Hackles. Black heron laid on from commencement of claret wool, and teal hackle at shoulder.

Wings. Two long slips of red turkey or gled hawk, set on well apart.

The Spey Grey Heron:

Tag. Two turns of gold tinsel.

Body. Barely one-third orange floss and the rest black floss, gold tinsel put on very wide, and between the turns a single strand of fine silver twist; in a large fly two strands can be used, each equi-distant from the other.

Hackles. Grey heron from half way up, and teal at shoulder.

Wing. Mallard.

In spite of sombre look and meagre appearance, caused by the absence of tail and the shortness of the wing, this fly is a very killing one wherever quiet flies with sparely-dressed hooks are in favour, and we have rarely failed to score when giving it a trial.

Whether wading trousers should be buckled tightly round the waist, or be held up by braces and left open, is a question on which anglers differ. Personally we chose the open plan, as it is not so hot and better ventilation is ensured; also, accounts vary very much from those who have taken involuntary headers, some stating they can swim quite comfortably, while others tell a very different tale. Our own experience is, luckily, very small, for the only ducking we ever had while wading in trousers was on one April day into some ten feet of water of the north side of the Kirk Pot at Glen Tana. A large piece of rock broke away and we went souse in, when on

striking out and looking up we could clearly see our feet above our head. For two or three strokes we fought our hardest to reverse the position, but before we had any chance to try further experiments we were floated against a piece of projecting rock, and clinging on quickly pulled ourself out. Although smoking at the time of immersion the pipe was not lost, also the rod was kept hold of, which perhaps had something to do with the poor progress made in swimming. John Power, one of the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' keepers, was with us that day, wearing a long blue woollen sailor's jersey; so, as the sun was shining brightly, we stripped to don this garment, and raced up and down the bank to keep warm, while the wet ones having been wrung out were spread on a bush to dry. After a certain time the wind and sun were pronounced to have done their work, so, dressing again, we fished the day out.

Most anglers have the feet of their waders, as well as the brogues that cover them, made much too small; for in February and March it is most desirable to keep as warm as possible while in the water, for if there be the least tightness or pressure on ankles or feet the cold becomes almost painful. For spring wading in snow water we encase ourselves from head to foot in Shetland wool, and tucking the ankles of the drawers into a pair of soft worsted socks, over these come a pair of very warm and long knicker stockings, followed of course by the ordinary raiment of everyday life. Thus attired we walk to the river, and then, before putting on the waders, a pair of soft lambswool sleeping-socks complete the heating apparatus; but all this will be of no use if the feet are cramped up by either the wader or the brogue. If, however, all fits easily, then thus arrayed we can stay in the water in the coldest weather for an hour at a stretch without being numbed or miserable. Brogues are preferable to boots for wearing over all, as they are quicker to take off and put on when walking from pool to pool; and if the fisherman have a gillie

with him and has to walk half a mile or more to the next pool, he is strongly advised not to do this in his waders, for should he do so and then wade into deep snow water, he will feel the cold far more than if he had taken off his waders for the walk, while in addition to the comfort, the mackintoshes will also wear longer if carried.

The advantages of very large brogues were forced on our notice while fishing out the last week of season 1890 on the Spey at Aikenway, with Mr. W. S. Menzies of Culdares. Arriving there from Gaick Forest and deer-stalking, we were minus brogues, so Aberdeen was wired to, but they were sent too small; then Jock Shiach, the fisherman, kindly lent us his, which were just about twice as large as seemed needful, so much so, that it was a difficult matter to stay in them on dry land: but never before had we waded in such comfort, or with so few stumbles, and as the Spey offers the very worst of wading, we are sure the very large flat shoe is the right thing. Wading is quite an art of itself, which wants a quick eye with good nerves; but the great thing when fishing a very bad place, when the toes are invisible and the pool strange, is to move very slowly, while with a nearly straight leg shuffle the feet round large impediments, whilst avoiding in any way climbing over them; also be careful not to stir the rear foot before the advancing one has a firm hold. During our stay at Aikenway, mine host made a curious catch of a fish; he had hung his coat—a sleeveless one—on a rail when walking to the top of the pool, and having fished down to his garment, halted to put it on, to save the trouble of going back. Laying his rod on the bank with the line out, he ran to the garment, and while slipping it on, a fish hooked, and began to make the reel sing; the rod was speedily in good hands, and a fifteen-pounder was laid on the bank in due course.

To some bigoted anglers bait-fishing is a detestable method of catching salmon, so much so that by the very rabid ones this has been described as equivalent to shooting a hare on its

form. Well, if it was *really impossible* to kill a hare running, then, we confess, if we were hare-shooting and wanted one badly, we would certainly kill it sitting. There are many reaches of water through which spring fish run without a halt, while as they will not take a fly when travelling, and yet will take a bait, we consider that fact to be a very good reason for using one. Admitting we would rather catch a fish with a fly than by any other lure, we own to being so constituted that to come home blank is the abomination of desolation. To work hard at anything the whole day long for nothing does not suit our temperament, for after such an event, dinner is not enjoyed, sleep fails us, breakfast next morning is hateful, and peace of mind can only again be restored by a tight line. In sport, as in all other matters, live and let live has ever been our motto; without going the length of some bait-fishers, who call the fly an antiquated old lure, we do not hesitate to resort to bait of every sort, if by so doing a duck's egg for the day is saved. No one who dislikes bait-fishing need practise it, while those who object to it are usually fishermen having some of the picked fishings of a river, in which the salmon will lie for weeks, and if they will not rise one day they will be sure to do so on another.

Fishers of the natural minnow are often even railed at by those who use the phantom, prawn, and worm; and if this is not a case of pot and kettle, there never was one. This petty jealousy usually arises from the fact that the prawn and phantom man either will not take the trouble to procure the natural bait, or, having got it, cannot learn how to use it. This class of angler is often the one who begins to fish at fifty, and in two seasons is full of advice and instruction to those who have been at it since they were boys; therefore, we advise everyone desirous of making a good score, on a stretch of water through which the fish pass rapidly upwards, to go at them with every lure he can bring into play. As to a natural minnow

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spoiling a pool, it is all stuff and rubbish. On a cold, cloudy day a fresh-run fish will be more likely to take a natural minnow than a fly, as the hungry one can so easily see and smell that the former is genuine; thus, small wonder it should be preferred to a bunch of feathers, which, like the first oyster, will have to be taken on trust in the hope it is good. At the same time, there are distinctly fly days, minnow days, phantom days, and prawn days. As to clean fish or kelt not eating in fresh water, we do not credit one word of it, for minnows, prawns, or worms are all devoured by both. If plenty of fish are seen in a pool on a cold, cloudy day, while they refuse fly and bait, it is simply an indication that none of them are hungry, although a short time afterwards some may have acquired an appetite, and then if a fly comes over these there is a very good chance of hooking one, which is in no ways spoilt by the natural minnow previously offered. It must not be forgotten that of natural minnow there is but one kind, while there are hundreds of flies, and that the right one is presented must always be uncertain. Whilst on a visit to Mr. E. Brydges Willyams, who, in 1885, was the lessee of the Park Fishery of the Dee, we had a day on the Keith Pool when it was in grand order. It is a long pool, every bit of it fishes, while the salmon were splashing all over it. Commencing with a "Glen Tana," one was landed; the second time over it a "Grey Heron" was used with a like result; this was followed by a natural minnow, with no result. Then the "Gordon" had a turn, when one more fish came to bank, and lunch was eaten briefly but happily. Recommencing with the "Gordon," another fish was landed; then followed a blank draw with the "Yellow Eagle," and, finally, the minnow took other two, which made up the half-dozen; weights—twenty-eight, twenty-three, twelve, ten, ten, and eight pounds.

On the very same day, our host, fishing the pools of the upper water with fly only, "tied" us with six other fish,

weighing twenty-four, nineteen, twelve, ten, ten, and nine pounds. This was the best take of autumn fish that we have ever seen, as all this dozen were as *bright as spring fish*, and all had sea lice on them;* here our joint total for the eight last days of September was forty-three fish, weighing five hundred and twenty pounds. Now, when ceasing to flog the Keith Pool we had fished it with five flies and two minnows, and though there was any quantity of salmon left in it, we think we had an offer from every hungry one, for in addition to the six captured, one more was pricked, while two others "came short."

There is one great advantage the real minnow has over the fly, and that is in the attraction it possesses for "travellers." These, it is well known, will rarely halt for a mouthful of feathers; but that is not at all the case when the lure is a big, fat minnow. Also, this bait will take on frosty mornings while the ice is yet on the sides of the pools, and all anglers are aware that fly-fishing under such circumstances is nearly useless. Long experience has shown this to be the fact, and anglers accept it as gospel, though why it should be so has ever been a mystery.

Once when fishing a fly one April over Birkenbad Pool of the Crathes water of the Dee, a small company of running fish came into it, and shortly began to show as they went out at the head of the pool. Quickly discarding the fly-rod for the spinning one, we were in time to capture two of the runners in that pool; then, racing up stream at best pace, we headed them at the top of the "Floating Bank." There other two were brought to the gaff, while the rest of the school continued their journey; but once again running forward to "Chapel-of-Ease" Pool, one more was accounted for. Now, with a fly not one of these fish could have been captured; but, by the aid of the merry minnow, what would have been a

* Notwithstanding their absolute freshness from salt water, these fish were hardly worth meeting at dinner.

blank day was converted into a red-letter one; for, on the lower reaches of the Dee, it is a very rare event to take five clean fish on a spring day below Banchory Bridge, and we doubt if it has ever been done again.

We once made a very remarkable catch of a fourteen-pound fish out of the "Sandy Havens," on the Kineskie water of the Dee, landing the same without a hook in it! This fish gave a splendid run, and on eventually being gaffed we discovered it was not hooked at all; the minnow had swung under one of the pectoral fins, and the triangle catching over the line had made a loop, which had drawn so tight that it took us longer to disentangle than if the hook had been in the usual place.

Salmon may also be taken with dace, gudgeon, bleak, par, prawns boiled and unboiled, shrimps and worms, as well as by all sorts of artificial minnows and spoons; but neither by a mock representation of prawn or worm have we ever heard of an authenticated capture. Of all these different lures, the natural minnow is the most killing (when it kills at all) and the prettiest to use.

The rod should be of greenheart throughout, not too stiff, and from fourteen to fifteen feet in length; the rings of course upright, with the top and bottom ones of revolving steel, whereby much wear of the line is saved.

The reel should be large enough to take some seventy yards of "stuffing," together with a hundred yards of the so-called American line, size letter F, for though the material of which the "M. C. & Co." lines are made comes from America, the lines themselves, we believe, are made in Glasgow—and none the worse for that, as we have imported them from America, to find them no better. They are not expensive, twelve shillings and sixpence for the hundred yards; but the longer they are kept in store before being used the better they wear, as lapse of time hardens the dressing. They are, however, necessarily so thin that a few

days' fishing will spoil the ten yards getting the greatest friction; therefore, like all other tackle, only in a greater degree, this especially requires carefully looking over and testing each day. As soon as the varnish wears off, the line becomes so sodden when in use that the least wind blows it into kinks, and makes it impossible to throw even a fairly long cast. For this reason, the minnow-fisher must perforce part with a portion of his line every few days, when as soon as this has been several times repeated, then the value of the stuffing becomes apparent. The Malloch reel is a pleasant one to use in a high wind, as it does away with any chance of the line being blown into a tangle; but, except under those conditions, we prefer to throw from the hand, for with this reel it is impossible to cast to an inch, while the action of righting it after making each cast allows the bait to sink very deep. Though this is desirable in high water, in a reverse state of affairs it allows the lure to sink so far under the surface that it is for ever catching in rocks, and anyone fishing a Malloch reel in low water will get hanked up, and have to break much oftener than if the cast were fished off the hand.

A single gut trace a yard long, with three swivels in it, looped on to a similar one of treble gut, six feet with six swivels, entirely does away with any kinking of the reel line; the successor to the late Brown, the phantom-man of Aberdeen, supplies these of excellent quality at a moderate price, and for flies with all other Dee tackle we can strongly recommend him. In the earlier editions of the Badminton Library there is an illustration of the tackle used for spinning the natural minnow, which we ourselves gave to Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell on purpose for that book, as he very courteously acknowledges.

A large carpet or darning needle with the eye cut through is the best form of baiting needle, and these may be very quickly made in quantities by heating the eyes to soften the steel, when as soon as they are cold a file will cut a slit in the

eye, and then the metal is re-tempered by again being heated to redness, and while still aglow it is dipped in oil or cold water.

To bait the tackle, pass the eye end of the needle into the mouth of the minnow (previously killed by a finger flip on the head), and out at the vent; then hook on the gut loop (which must be a whipped loop, not a knotted one) to which the hooks are tied, and draw it carefully through till they are in position. Should the needle catch in the minnow, twiddle it round between the thumb and forefinger until it passes smoothly; then hold the bait firmly in the left hand, thread the lead on to the gut, and press it well home, for if this be not done thoroughly the minnow will not spin properly. Before the lead is inserted in the bait, it should be slashed with a knife so as to prevent it slipping out of its mouth.

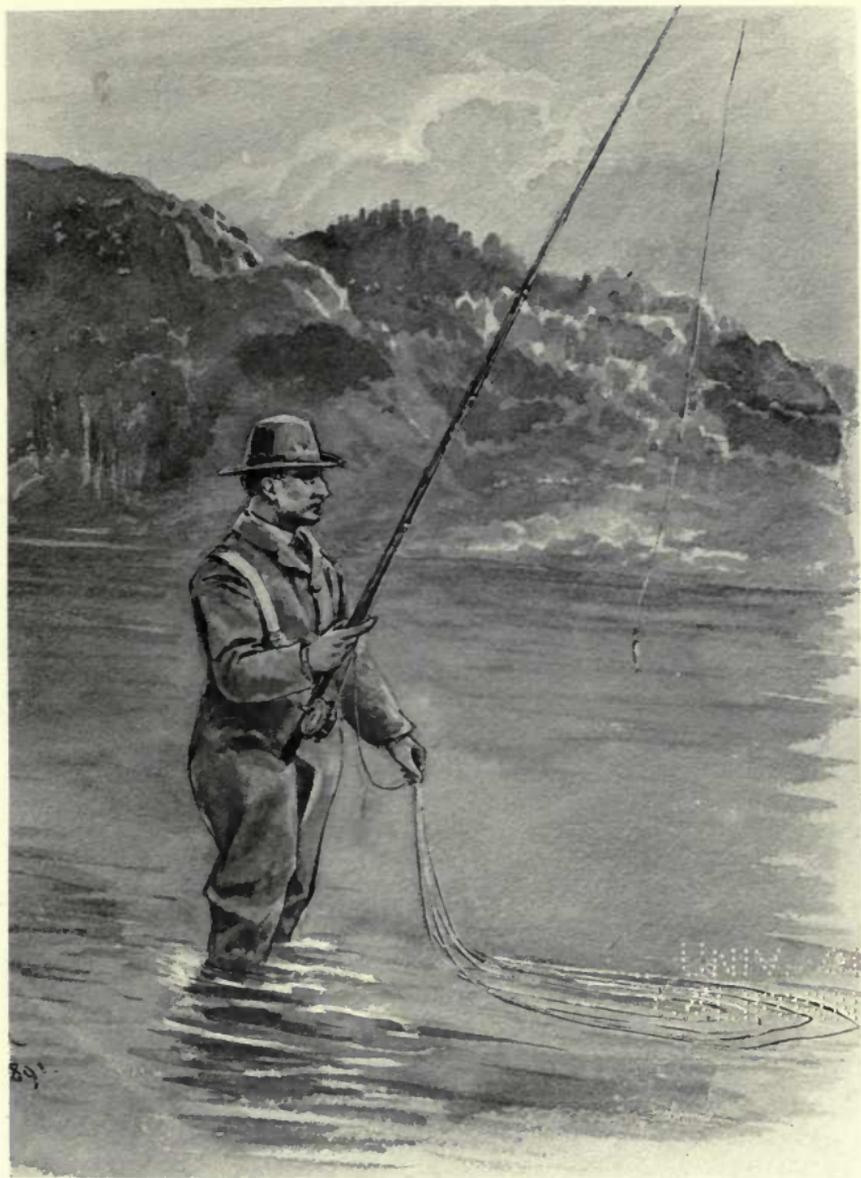
The gut between the two triangles should be doubled, as it keeps them stiff after being in the water a long time, and so hinders them from catching over the trace when casting.

The minnow is *par excellence* a cloudy-day, cold-weather bait, and unless the water is dirty bright sunshine is nearly fatal to it, and fly or prawn would have a better chance.

Our experience is that the minnow will kill well on all rivers running into the sea on the East Coast of Scotland, and that it is of no use on any river emptying itself into the sea on the West Coast, where the worm with the phantom are the best bait lures.

It goes without saying that Brown's phantom will kill anywhere, and in highly coloured, nearly dirty water it is the best bait of all.

The natural minnow is usually cast directly across the stream, but if the current is heavy it should be directed a little upwards to ensure it sinking deep; as it is carried round by the stream, it should be drawn slowly in and out with a sawing motion of the hand, but without any reeling up of the line. As soon as it swings into a straight line with the point



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of the rod, draw it in, take two steps forward, cast again, and so on till the end of the pool.

So long as the line can be deposited in coils on a grassy bank at the feet of the fisherman, it is child's play to send out some twenty yards; but as soon as it is necessary to wade, this becomes quite another matter, requiring a lot of practice to do well. The process is somewhat difficult to describe. The butt of the rod should rest high up on the inside of the thigh, then as much line should be pulled off the reel as the stream will float on the surface in the shape of a loop; nip this between the thumb and forefinger, repeat the operation, but make the loop shorter than the first; again secure it, and continue to do this till there are four or five loops floating on the surface, kept away from the angler by the force of the current; then sweep the rod from the thigh as if casting from the bank, while at the same time slightly raise the hand holding the loops, when the whole line will fly out smoothly. When the stream is not flowing smartly past the angler, he will have to make more and shorter coils. We once saw a gentleman, unable to master this method of casting, who had a tray of wicker-work hung by straps across his shoulders and standing out in front of him, on which his line was coiled. It certainly answered very well, but he was chaffed out of it by being promptly christened "brandy balls," from his ridiculous likeness to the well-known old character at Brighton, who for so many years promenaded the King's Road there, with his case of sweets sticking out in front of him.

It is often a matter of difficulty to procure minnows large enough, for they should be three inches long at the very least. During the summer months there are plenty of this size in the Dee, but in winter and spring they entirely disappear, either going up the burns or sinking into deep, quiet holes from which they do not stir till the water gets warm, and the latter proceeding is most likely the solution of the problem as to where they vanish to. Joseph Loveder, Full Moon Inn, Fish Ponds,

Bristol, is the only man we know of who can supply very large minnows in spring, and the journey to Scotland is usually made without the loss of a single one. When ordering, it is best to give as long a notice as possible, for each minnow has to be caught by hook and line, so that, if several hundreds are required, it means catching fully a thousand. The charge is a pound a hundred, which are forwarded in tins which will easily take two hundred in each; and whether these cans are kept or returned is optional. The minnows should be kept in soft running water, but beware of spring water, for we have seen whole cans full killed in a few hours by hard water. A flow of water should pass continually through their prison, while about once a week a small quantity of oatmeal should be given them. They are, of course, carried to the river in a smaller tin, which should be placed in the water while the cast is fished, care being taken to fix it so that it cannot be blown or washed away. We have watched numbers of salmon seize this lure, and as a rule it is taken as it swings to straighten the curve of the line, and is a matter of deliberation, though there are occasions when the bait is seized the instant it touches the water. As soon as the fish is hooked, the minnow is blown up the line; and if not bitten in half, two or three fish may be landed with the same bait.

It is a rare event to get a pluck whilst drawing in the line to make a fresh cast, and if such does happen, then nineteen times in twenty it will be a kelt that is hooked. It is of little use spinning the natural bait in a stream so rapid as to keep it close to the surface, for, apart from the reality of the lure and the small show made by the arming, the depth to which it can be sunk is also a great secret of success; therefore, to repeat the expression we gave Mr. Pennell, it is of little use fishing a heavy stream which, as it were, *tears* at the bait.

The two best fishers of the natural minnow I have met are my old friends Mr. Digby Cayley and Mr. George Whitehead; and I believe it was the former who first introduced this lure

to the Dee, and on this head he writes me the following characteristic letter :—

“As to the ‘Yorkshire Grey,’ I really believe I was practically the originator of its use for salmon. Twenty-five years ago, when fishing for trout with natural minnow on fine gut, with thirty yards of line, I found I was continually hooking and generally getting broken by salmon, and I set to work to develop appliances to prevent the latter casualty, little thinking it would turn out the success it has become. The first time I went to the Dee, viz. to Ballater, some sixteen years ago, I took with me, simply on spec., a can of some fifty minnows. This was on March 31st. The gillies laughed me to scorn! They had never heard of such a thing, but said they had known kelts hooked with a phantom in water too big and thick for a fly. In low, clear water, with twenty degrees of frost every night, I soon found that, as usual, the local artists did not know everything, and pulled out two or three daily with the ‘Grey Eagle,’ to their astonishment.

“Patterns of my tackle were begged from me by numbers of people. George Whitehead got it from me that year at Ballater, and took it to Aboyne, and then it spread, till it is universally used now, not only on the Dee, but on many other rivers.

“I have been cursed and called a poacher, etc., etc., but I have become callous, and am sure it was envy of my success, and nothing else, that prompted such feelings. I used in those days to fish every pool first with a fly, generally with two different flies, and then with the minnow, often getting one to six fish out of a pool in which I had had no rise to a fly. I am speaking of April, which, in my opinion, is the worst fly month on the Dee, though there are the most fish. I have thrice killed sixteen in a day on the Dee, and one year at Ballater—the last I was there, I think 1882—I got 133 fish in the month of April, and thirty-eight in the first three days, all, or nearly all, with minnow. I consider that the fact that

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it has more than doubled bags, has raised the rental value of the Dee fishings considerably. When told that it is unsportsmanlike to use it, I reply to my abuser that if he wishes to be consistent he has no right to use a breechloader, but should adhere to flint and steel, or the bow and arrow.

"My experience is that it is taken best in a big clear water, and in cold weather. The Malloch reel has simplified the casting for beginners; before that reel came out, the casting of thirty yards from the hand was an art not easily acquired, and many gave it up in disgust in consequence, but any muff can now fish the minnow tolerably with the Malloch reel.

"There is a general idea that it ruins a pool for anything else, but that is not at all the case, though I would not care to fish a pool with either fly or minnow after prawn or worm. They sometimes take it well in October, though not to such a certainty as in spring, for owing to the water being warmer the fly is taken freely in that month, and when they do that I prefer it, although one loses many more fish."

George Whitehead and his eldest son had an extraordinary good day at Glen Tana, in May, 1888, on the beats above Dinnet Bridge. He writes me:—

"I was on the south side, and my son on the north; and at lunch time he had killed nine with the fly, and I had only seven with the minnow. After that I got eleven more, and he did not get another—total twenty-seven for the day. It may interest you to know that about twenty years ago, while trailing for pollack, I hooked and landed a salmon of eleven pounds, and the nearest rivers were the Humber and the Esk, the former over forty miles off, and the latter over thirty."

The late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' famous fisherman, "Boatie" Stevens, has equalled these performances with the fly alone, and as an all-round caster of the fly is the best man I have ever come across, for he is equally good at overhead or underhand casting.

The prawn is fished in much the same way as the minnow,

and the rod that does for the one will serve for all other baits. Swivels should be dispensed with, but the line is weighted according to the strength and depth of the stream to be fished; and by this also the size of the prawn is determined.

There are various prawn tackles in use, but we prefer two triangles close together, one of which lies under the head of the prawn and the other a little way lower down. The hooks should be painted red, which is easily done by making a saturated solution of scarlet sealing-wax, dissolved in spirits of wine. Fine orange silk should be used to secure the prawn to the tackle, which if well put on and not seized will last all day, and even the next one too. The cast is made rather more down stream than if using a minnow; the point of the rod should be lowered to the water, and no motion given to the bait till it comes to the end of the swing; but then, before drawing it in, the rod should slowly rise and fall a few times, for it is often at this moment that a fish will hook.

This is a good low river bait in summer, and will kill in the brightest sunshine or clearest water; but at times we have also done well with it in heavy dirty water.

In baiting the prawn tackle, that part of the end of the needle to which the gut loop is tied should be tightly lashed to the gut of the hooks, and if this is done well the bait will never slip up the needle.

In still, deep pools, where there is hardly any current and the bottom is smooth, the common boiled shrimp is often most deadly if used on a small worm hook, passed in at the throat and brought out at the bend of the tail, the curl of which will cover the barb. A good-sized bullet should be placed about two feet above the shrimp, and all that need be done is to drop it in the pool and wait events. If nothing happens in a few minutes, lift it up and pop it in again ten yards lower down; in summer and in suitable pools, with plenty of fish, it is usually a certain if not very skilful way of getting a few. On the Usk in July and August it was found to be so deadly

that it was abolished on the Association waters. At the time this was done the river was so low with the weather so hot and bright that no angler had killed a fish for a fortnight, so in despair the shrimp was tried, with the result of an average of half-a-dozen a day to the introducer of the bait. The Association, having promptly put an end to this sort of sport, immediately proceeded to *net the pools* on the plea of their being over-stocked, while report said the proceeds were sold for the benefit of the Club funds! Many ticket-holders were, however, of opinion that it would have been fairer to allow the use of baits during the months of July and August than to take the fish from the river by nets.

Anyone who has once become an enthusiast about salmon will contrive to pursue his favourite sport in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. There is the well-known case of the late Mr. Fawcett, the Member for Brighton, who, although rendered totally blind by a shooting accident, yet remained a keen fisherman. There was a Mr. Clifford who used to fish the Usk Association waters very successfully from the back of a donkey, and the Jerusalem steed learnt his business so well that he would advance a step at each cast. On the Dee there was a one-armed fisherman who did everything for himself, and killed numbers of salmon. These three examples are instances of how deep a root the love of the sport can take. It has, however, still remained for my old friend Captain H. Shaw Kennedy (he being unable to walk owing to serious illness) to embark on a new method of making the best of it! This spring of 1891, he writes me from Suisgill Lodge, Kildonan:—

“I don't think many fellows have hooked a fish fairly casting from a bath chair, and then had thirty minutes' run along the bank over a roughish country before landing him; but I cannot walk a yard yet, and am forced to get about in this way, and the other day I got down to a good pool with smooth, grassy banks and landed two salmon from my chair.



MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

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You would have died of laughing had you been looking on, as we nearly went into the river two or three times, apple-cart and all."

In taking leave of our fishing friends, we cannot refrain from indulging in a lament at the falling off in sport on all Scotch rivers, especially since 1886. We cannot understand why five such fine rivers as the Earn, the Deveron, the Findhorn, the Don, and the North Esk should never be allowed to yield spring fishing for the rod, for on all these five rivers the spring angling is not let at any appreciable price, and as the catching of a fresh-run fish on any of them is quite an event, only the keepers and a few residents on the banks try the experiment. Yet at the mouths of each of these rivers hundreds and hundreds of clean fish are netted each spring. Those two splendid rivers—the Tay and the Spey—are not very much better off as regards early salmon, the spring angling on either being but a half-hearted business, confined also chiefly to keepers and gillies. The ancient reputation of these two rivers will, however, yet tempt a certain number of anglers to rent fishings on them each season; but it is rarely that any return for a second dose, and anyone knowing Speyside or Tayside has only to read the reports in the *Field* and *Scotsman* to see that for one gentleman there are five keepers at work—a fact which speaks more strongly than anything else of the wretched sport to be had.

To all these seven rivers there surely must be upper proprietors, and are they, then, indifferent to the value of their rod-fishings, or do they stand in with the man at the nets? It is quite certain if a fair share of spring fish were allowed to ascend the first five mentioned rivers, that then a stretch of two miles of water on a good part of any of them would be worth from a hundred to two hundred pounds for the spring angling! The total length of these five nearly fishless streams is, roughly, two hundred and fifty miles, and of this there is at least a hundred miles of right good fishing water,

but so close is the netting that we do not think the united spring salmon fishings of the whole five let for three hundred pounds! Now, if the same length of spring fishing could be added to the Dee, the Helmsdale, the Thurso, or the Garry of Loch Oich, they would certainly, at the most moderate calculation, realise five thousand pounds!

The Dee is one of the best spring salmon rivers in Scotland, which has been brought about by the wisdom of the upper proprietors, who, joining together, have bought the lower nets off the river. We can remember when first staying with our old friend, that very good angler, the late Mr. Thomas G. Simpson, at Blackhall Castle on the Dee, that the nets used to work right up to Banchory Bridge, which is some twenty-two miles from the mouth, while between that and the railway bridge at Aberdeen some dozen others were hard at work. These, by degrees, have all been bought up, and now no nets exist on the Dee above the suspension bridge of the granite city.

It is strange a proceeding so practical and so profitable has not had more imitators, as the result has been highly beneficial to the upper proprietors, either in the shape of increased sport or big rents. Only fancy the Tweed, the Tay, and the Spey all WELL stocked with spring fish, so that, instead of going to these rivers in the autumn and paying large sums for the privilege of hauling out numbers of red gravid fish, one could be sure of similar sport in the spring time with the strong, wild, desperate-fighting bars of silver fresh from the sea! What prices such fisheries would bring to the lucky owners, and what fun they would give to those able to pay for them! Of all Scotch rivers we consider the Spey is the grandest for the angler, but in spite of that it is the one of all others that has gone most hopelessly to the bad, though sad to say there are plenty but a little way behind it in the race for annihilation. In addition to excessive netting and the rough treatment of kelts returning to the sea, which is telling a tale on all rivers

alike, the splendid Spey has another drawback to contend against in the incessant par catching carried on by the riparian population. A right of free trout fishing is claimed, which has never been contested in a superior court, so it is mercilessly exercised, and each village and farmhouse sends forth anglers in plenty; most of them are pleasant-spoken, decent bodies, but among so many it is needless to say there are some black sheep, men who will glory in stepping into a salmon pool and fishing it with trout flies right in front of the salmon angler; and who, if asked to desist, will be prolific in abuse and bad language. These are the rascals who slip on a salmon fly the moment they think it safe to do so, and should they land a well-mended kelt, it is sure to be knocked on the head and hidden till they can return for it at night. In addition, however, to the man angler, each village sends out troops of boys to catch par. We think we hear our readers exclaim: "Oh, no; that cannot be right, as the Act of Parliament protects them"; but, alas, on the Spey it does nothing of the kind; it throws its shield over the *smolt* only, which is a par in the silver coat it takes for a few months before going to the sea. The Act does not even mention the poor par; and yet there can be no smolts without par, which stay in the rivers from two to three years before becoming smolts. Thus the boys and the girls of the species are protected, but the defenceless babies in arms may be massacred! Truly, this is a clever, far-seeing Act of Parliament. The little village urchins, therefore, catch thousands of par each season, and between Rothes and Aberlour one can daily see some twenty to thirty of them all thus busily engaged. That each lad will easily get a couple of dozen a day may be taken as certain. We saw one boy with fully fifteen dozen to his own rod, and as there are two hundred and ten days in the Spey fishing season, if but twenty-five lads are out daily and get but two dozen each, they will take 125,000 par, and this is on only seven

miles of water. Now, if one par in every two hundred grew into a salmon, that alone would rob the river of six hundred and twenty-five fish; but there are fully (we believe a great deal more) thirty-five miles of the Spey fished in this abominably wasteful manner, so thus, if our calculation is anything near correct, half a million par are annually killed, which robs the river of over three thousand salmon each year. Whether we are even approaching real fact in supposing it takes two hundred par to make a salmon, there is no possible means of ascertaining, but it is making a liberal allowance for the chapter of accidents incidental to par life, for it must not be forgotten they are sweet to salmon trout, herons, and gulls, whilst in the sea they doubtlessly have other enemies we know not of. These boy anglers are of course not very particular, and should they catch a smolt instead of a par, all go into the basket alike; and though there are plenty of water bailiffs on the Spey, we believe we are correct in stating there has never yet been a prosecution on Speyside for smolt catching!*

Old fishermen tell us the par of the salmon have an orange-coloured adipose fin, the par of the sea trout a yellow one, and the par of the river trout a black one. We are not aware if this has ever been ascertained to be correct; it is a matter the large fish hatcheries should be able to set at rest, but certainly there are the three different coloured adipose fins.

The Spey trouters claim their right on the ground that it is a navigable river; that every such river has a public right of way, and that where such exists the public have the right of fishing for trout. Now, the only navigation on the Spey has been in the shape of rafts going down it, and whether such constitutes a navigable river is a question for the lawyers. To all ordinary mortals the word "navigable" implies shipping, or at least boats going both up and down a river for the purposes of commerce, and all dictionaries we

* Recently matters have greatly improved in this respect.

have searched explain the verb "to navigate" as "passing by ships or boats." As there are two good fishings on the Spey, each rented by distinguished judges, viz., Sir A. L. Smith* and Sir Ford North, we should much like to hear their opinions on the matter; but, failing any intimation of their views, we cannot help thinking if a case were fought in a superior court that the trouters would lose the day.† The Tay and the Dee are both fully as much navigable as the Spey, but as yet on neither of these is the right claimed. On the latter river the matter has had the bad luck to be made a political question, so none of the proprietors seem inclined to move. The destruction of these numberless par could, however, be easily prevented, if the Fishery Board would make a bye-law to the effect that no fish whatsoever should be taken from the river that was not eight inches long.

We do not think the trouters would lose much if even a case at law went against them, for none of those who are well behaved would be denied permission, although it would enable the proprietors to put a check on the offensive and poaching members of the fraternity.

The Countess of Seafield, the Duke of Richmond, Sir George Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch, and Mr. J. W. Grant of Carron and Elchies, virtually own the bulk of the salmon rod-fishings of the Spey, and if they jointly so willed, it is certain they could devise some method of restoring the lost prestige to this magnificent river. In our humble opinion, the only thorough way to meet the present system of close scientific netting on any river is to lengthen the weekly close time. Many people imagine a salmon becomes a sort of aqueous racehorse the moment he leaves the salt water, and ceases not to wag fins or tail till he is a long way up the river. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind takes

* Died October, 1901, whilst this book was passing through the press.

† Since this chapter was written this matter has been fought out in a Court of Law, and the trouters were beaten. See *Salmon Rivers of Scotland*.

place, and in cold spring weather his progress in fresh water is decidedly slow, and it is doubtful if he travels more than seven or eight miles in the twenty-four hours.

Such being the case, a net ten miles above the mouth of a river has practically no close time at all, for the fish entering on Sunday are still below that net on Monday at six o'clock a.m., and are sure to be stopped by it.

There is no doubt the poor kelts are very roughly treated by many of the net men; of necessity they must be caught several times a day, and we have it from eye-witnesses they are often flung or kicked back to the water with violence, and during the night netting many well-mended ones are knocked on the head for clean fish.

Now, an animal or a bird that had been caught several times and roughly handled would certainly not revisit the scene of torture, and it is quite possible kelts may be imbued with a similar instinct, and so fight shy of returning to their rivers until driven to do so by the laws of Nature; certain it is that keepers have told us that of late years the autumn fish have not appeared as early as usual, but have arrived in November and commenced spawning operations at once. It is possible that this may be one of the many causes which has made the autumn fishings of the last few seasons so very poor.

The whole question between upper and lower proprietors has always been a vexed one, and is likely to remain so. For the last five years the latter have had things pretty much their own way, and the only hope for the angler appears to be the somewhat forlorn one, that excessive netting may go so near to killing the goose that lays the golden eggs that Parliament may initiate strong measures for the restoration of the rivers. As to Royal Commissions they are useless, their component parts being made up of gentlemen who from their position as river owners are unlikely to enter into any inquiries with unbiassed minds. We believe that if an extra twenty-four hours' close time was made law, as soon

as it had had time to bear fruit, the netsmen would catch as much and even more in the five days than they now do in the six. Our views have been spoken plainly, and probably they are not worth much, but if we have in our love for sport unwittingly trodden on anyone's toes, we humbly ask forgiveness. Every year seems to throw more light on the habits of the salmon, but we are yet fully convinced our interest is reciprocated, and that they know more about us than we know about them, and that year by year they become more alive to the flash of the rod, the shine of the gaff, and the glitter of the lure.

The end of our amusement is now at hand, and we will but wish our readers more thirty-pounders and more tight lines in the spring-time than have been frequent of late years; while if these pages have helped anyone to get better sport, or pass away a little spare time, their object will have been fully answered.

HIGHLAND SPORT

HIGHLAND SPORT

CHAPTER I

MURDOCH CAMPBELL'S REVENGE

ONE Easter, some twenty years ago, I received an invitation from my old friend Murdoch Campbell to come to him for a month at Marathon House, situated on the wild west coast of Scotland, somewhere between Crinan and Strome Ferry.

From youth up I had been devoted to rod and gun, and hence, in those days, my attention had been somewhat ardently turned to pigeon shooting, an amusement which was then far more fashionable but less business-like than it is now.

In the period to which this story belongs the licence to kill game expired on the last day of the shooting season ; the ten-shilling gun licence was also in existence, and a report had been spread abroad that the excise officers contemplated a raid on the members of the Gun Club and Hurlingham, with the object of fining all those who were not provided with the necessary authority to use a gun, while certain it is that had they done so they would have made a rich haul. Thus some of us had already taken out game licences for that year, for it made us safe, and it was but parting with three pounds a few months before the usual time. Therefore, when Easter arrived, I started for Marathon Cottage in possession of a game licence, which, as the sequel will show, was of more service to me in

the West Highlands than at the Gun Club grounds in West London.

In those days there was no railroad either to Oban or Strone Ferry, so making my way by the night express to Greenock, the remainder of the journey was done by steamer, and the following evening found me safely at my destination.

Marathon Cottage was a comfortable, stone-built building, situated about a hundred feet above the sea, and about a hundred yards from the shore. It had been built for himself by the happy possessor of the Murdoch estate, for the big house on the property, which was placed in a hole near a swamp, was rarely occupied by the owner, and more often than not was let with most of the shooting to a gentleman from Manchester.

Murdoch Campbell was a fine specimen of a black Highlander—standing six foot in his stockings, he was still in his thirties, was forty-four inches round the chest, and possessed arms and legs of prodigious strength. Moreover he was as lean as a deerhound and nearly as active; crisp, curling, jet-black hair entirely covered his head, while from under a white forehead and thick, black eyebrows shone a pair of the brightest dark-grey eyes. The rest of his face was tanned and weather-beaten, while his high cheekbones were cherry red. A large black moustache with a beard trimmed to a point, all combined to make him a remarkable and striking-looking personage.

Born of an ancient race of chieftains who, as long as there was fighting to be done, had ever been in the thick of it, though not always on the winning side, the more recent of these warriors had in 1715 and in "forty-five" so impoverished the estate that at the time of this story Murdoch had been reluctantly compelled to let the greater part of his shootings. Adored by his people, no kinder-hearted man breathed than my friend, and, devoted to sport of all kinds, he was ever a most cheery, pleasant companion.

His cottage he had christened Marathon, because he had

learnt in his school-days, with much trouble, from Xenophon that "Marathon looked on the sea and the hills looked on Marathon"; and he openly avowed that that passage together with sundry swishings were all the recollections of the distinguished Athenian warrior and sportsman that now dwelt in his memory.

From the cottage windows could be seen a wide expanse of sea dotted with islands of various sizes, a picturesque combination of land and water which supplied us with scenes of beauty and realms of sport; sometimes it was the seal or the otter that claimed our attention, at others the fish, while once we even joined in a whale hunt which ended in nothing. We tried for an early salmon in the river hard by, and many a tramp was made, rod in hand, across the moor to distant hill lochs, while for a wonder the weather had served us so well that for a whole week no rain had marred our enjoyment.

Then one morning a shepherd brought a note from the factor of the adjoining property to ask us if we would like to go and thin down the rabbits on Innis Coinean—which is Gaelic for Rabbit Isle—which lay with several others some five miles off Marathon Bay, and was one of the most exposed of the group. The letter concluded by saying, "Please don't spare the bunnies; they were not properly shot down in the winter, so if you do not care to go, I must send over and trap them, or there won't be a blade of grass left on the island." As we decided to go, Murdoch turned to me and said, "Should you mind if I asked the exciseman from Laggan to come with us? He's not a bad sort of fellow, a capital shot, and handy too in a boat."

Of course I assented, so a letter was at once despatched to the official in question, asking him to meet us at the Marathon boat-house the day but one following. At the appointed hour our friend duly arrived at the trysting-place; our three selves, Murdoch's head man, and two under-keepers with their ferrets, made up the party. The day was fine, with the sea so smooth that we soon pulled over the five miles of water between us and the sandy beach of Innis Coinean, which, unlike all the

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other islands adjacent, was totally devoid of rock, and was but some three hundred acres of sand-land, most of it standing but a little above sea-level, while its whole surface was covered with sweet, thick-growing grass, and hither in summer sheep were brought by boats to graze. To the humble bunny it was little short of a paradise; for there were no four-footed vermin on the island, while the feeding was splendid, with the easiest of burrowing, and what more could the mind of the most epicurean rabbit wish for?

As soon as we had landed and made all secure, each of us, accompanied by a man, went off in different directions, having previously agreed to rendezvous at the boat for luncheon. Sport was good and the firing rapid. The lion's share fell to my lot, so thus, twenty minutes before lunch-time, my man had more bunnies to carry than he could manage, and, unloading my gun, I took part of the burden, as we made for the boat.

On the way we fell in with the exciseman, who in reply to our cry of, "Well! what sport?" answered, "Oh, very good indeed, and well worth the ten-shilling gun-licence I took out yesterday!" I laughed at his business-like response, and told him under what circumstances I already had taken out not only a gun, but a game licence.

A short half-hour was all Murdoch allowed us for refreshment; then we started shooting again, and when the sun began to set we counted into the boat nearly three hundred bunnies, and large as the total seemed, it was yet clear that it would take other visits to effectually thin them down.

Some few days after this trip we returned from a seal hunt earlier than usual, having been driven off the sea by a heavy storm. As we were both wet through, I made straight for my bedroom, where I knew there would be a good fire with a hot tub; but Murdoch, with a Scotchman's contempt of a wet jacket, and in spite of wise counsel from me, turned into the dining-room to look at the contents of the post-bag.

Just as I was undressed I heard the front door bell ring,



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which was a very rare occurrence at Marathon Cottage, and usually betokened a telegram or a call from the "meenister" or the doctor. Shortly afterwards I heard Murdoch's hasty tread on the stairs, his approach being heralded by various Gaelic utterances which it needed no Gaelic scholar to interpret as curses loud and deep.

My room door was banged open by my host, where in the lightest of garments I stood awaiting an explanation, for clearly Murdoch was most angrily excited; the veins on his white forehead were swollen and stood out quite blue, the dark-grey eyes flashed, while his left hand held at arm's length a blue paper, which he threatened with the right fist as he strode towards me. In reply to my "What on earth's the matter, Murdoch?" there burst from him a torrent of imprecations: "Brute—cur—mean, rascally scoundrel—I'll break every bone in his body!" and how long this would have continued I know not, but creating a diversion by snatching the blue paper out of his hand, I soon saw that it was a summons to appear before the Laggan magistrates on a charge of using a gun without a licence, while the information had been laid by our late friend and guest, the rabbit-shooting exciseman!

I could not help laughing, which made Murdoch the more furious, and not until I had followed up my mirth by saying, "Well, I never did hear of a dirtier trick than that!" did he at all regain his wonted equanimity. At this period of our discussion I was warned by a freezing sensation that, as far as I was concerned, it would be wiser to continue it when I was better clad and Murdoch in a righter mind. So asking him to take pity on me, and remember his own wet clothes as well, I persuaded him to go to his room with a promise that we would devote the evening to forming plans of vengeance. I was soon meditating on the matter, from the seat of a cosy arm-chair pulled up to the peat fire of the dining-room, the while from the upper stories descended through the floor a rumbling as of distant thunder, which was the safety-valve of Murdoch's rage

relieving itself in furious mutterings against the treacherous exciseman.

All that evening we thrashed out various plots for vengeance on the traitor. At first Murdoch vowed that he would take no notice of the summons, but would next day seek out the informer and flog him. I pointed out that he would only put himself in the wrong by setting the law at defiance, while, as Mr. Exciseman stood but just over five feet, and weighed some three stone less than his would-be punisher, there would also be but little credit to be gained by taking the law into his own hands. As we each sat smoking by the side of the good peat fire, each cudgelled his brains for a means of crying quits with our friend, and bit by bit we hatched a plot; it was almost a forlorn hope, but the best we could devise.

It "came off," however. Silly vanity on one side with good acting on our parts did the trick. It was as follows, then, that we set to work. On the day fixed for hearing the summons we drove into Laggan, Murdoch taking with him many old game licences to show that he had never hitherto failed to fulfil his duty in this respect. The case was heard, and lasted but a short time; the exciseman swore to the facts "most reluctantly, and actuated solely by a feeling of duty," so he said, while the magistrates expressed their regret to Murdoch that the law left them no option but to impose a small fine, which was at once paid, and the case ended.

Making our way through the people to Mr. Exciseman, who watched our approach somewhat anxiously, we both neared him with smiling faces and outstretched hands, while as soon as Murdoch was close enough he patted him on the back and complimented him on the part he had played.

"You are just a brave man, and have but done your duty by the laws of the land, not permitting private friendship to stand in the way." So said Murdoch, while I followed suit to the same purpose.

Our friend seemed highly delighted at the turn things had

taken, so when Murdoch proposed an adjournment to the hotel with an invitation to our man to partake of lunch, the offer was promptly accepted, and in a whiskey and soda Murdoch pledged his guest. "Here's to your speedy preferment, Mr. Exciseman. Such zeal for the service as you have shown will not, I'm sure, be allowed to go unrewarded when the facts of the case reach headquarters."

The wretched man flushed with pleasure at this toast, as he replied, "That's right good hearing, Mr. Campbell, and I'm glad you bear me no ill-will."

"Pooh!" said Murdoch, "the whole thing comes to a fine not worth the mentioning, and the having to take out a game licence at once instead of in August. Now what say you to another day at the rabbits on Innis Coinean to-morrow?"

To our astonishment and delight the invitation was accepted, and early the next day our friend appeared once more at Marathon Lodge. We were soon afloat, with our exciseman at the bow oar, while behind him was deposited the luncheon-basket neatly covered with a white cloth, from beneath which stretched the necks of several black bottles, for the small solitary spring on Innis Coinean yielded but a scant supply of very bad water, while in times of drought its locality was only to be discovered by the extra length and greenness of the grass around it. On the top of the lunch-basket the boat's painter was neatly coiled.

The sea was like a millpond, and as we came close to the island's sandy shore, Murdoch cried to Mr. Exciseman, "As you are sitting forward, just take the lunch-basket in one hand with the painter in the other and jump ashore and fasten us to the big stone with the ring in it," and as our keel grounded on the sand our man did as he was asked. As he stooped to secure the rope to the ring, we shoved off again, while the boat end of the painter, purposely untied beforehand, flopped into the water as had been intended, and ere the trapped one turned round we were already clear of the shore, whilst the

position was not realised by him until Murdoch called out, "Now, good-bye, false friend and treacherous guest; you are paid out in your own coin, so may a day or two in solitude and fasting take some of the misplaced zeal out of you."

In vain the wretched exciseman begged us to return. Off we pulled, and began to trail for saithe round the island. This we did for fear that any passing fishing boat should rescue our captive, for we knew that as long as our own boat was rowing about near by these fisher-folk would never bother themselves because one of our friends was perambulating up and down on Innis Coinean and frantically waving a handkerchief. The lunch-basket our prisoner had taken ashore with him was but outside show, for the snowy cloth hid nothing more enticing or sustaining than a loaf, together with three bottles of a strongly-aperient mineral water.

Towards sunset it began to blow, and dark clouds were rolling up from the west as we pulled home in the dusk, while as we drew our arm-chairs to the fire after dinner, a gale was driving the rain in heavy splashes against our windows.

"Hurrah!" cried Murdoch; "that *is* good hearing! What a soaking that rascal will get! We are already more than half quits with him, aren't we?"

It rained and blew so hard that I could not help pitying the wretched exciseman, although the mere mention of such feelings made Murdoch furious.

The next morning, after breakfast, slinging our spy-glasses over our shoulders, we started to walk to the end of a promontory from which Innis Coinean was but a couple of miles, and from there we soon made out our victim pacing about, and at times waving a handkerchief.

"Hurrah! he's there still," said Murdoch. "He shall have another two days of it, and then, if no one has taken him off, we will send and fetch him."

To this I replied, "Look here, Murdoch, we don't want to kill the poor devil, and I think he's had quite enough of

it, for, recollect, he's not a very tough customer, or one that is used to face rough weather. So I vote we walk down to the fishing cottages below to send off a boat as if by pure chance, while we go home and pack his gun and cartridges off to Laggan."

Loth, indeed, was my host to consent, but I got my way eventually, and descending the hill to a few small cottages, we arrived only to find women folk at home. On explaining our errand, two of them with much laughter volunteered to fetch off our victim; so advising them to bargain for the payment of a good ransom, we shoved their boat to sea, and they pulled to the rescue quite as strongly and as well as any two men would have done. We then retired to the hill-top, from which vantage, with only our caps above the skyline, we eventually witnessed through our glasses the landing of our exciseman, and a more miserable-looking creature could not be imagined. The story soon got wind, and as the exciseman's excess of zeal had made him very unpopular in the small sea town in which he was stationed, he was quickly dubbed "Laird of Innis Coinean," while incessant was the chaff directed at him about this adventure and the "whiskey" with the other luxuries that helped him through his sojourn. At length he could stand it no longer, so making application to headquarters to be moved, our zealous friend was appointed to another district, where it is to be hoped that, profiting by our lesson, he learnt to temper zeal with discretion.

CHAPTER II

HOW I TOOK A SHARE IN THE MONNIELACK SHOOTINGS, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

"WANTED, a gun, to complete a party of four, on an extensive moor in the north; probable bag, six to seven hundred brace, with some roe deer, blackgame, partridges, and snipe; game equally divided. Terms, £250 for the month, which will include everything.—Address, Colonel S. L., The Shooters' Club, London, S.W."

Such was the advertisement that caught my eyes one day early in the month of August, 1889. Now I, Thomas Gae Green, had passed the ten previous years not wholly unprofitably in India, but the time thus spent had carried me out of touch of all my old shooting friends, and but few of them knew I had come back "for good" to merrie England.

The "twelfth" was close at hand, so as I longed to breathe the Highland air again, and to see if I could still face the hill as of old, this advertisement caught me just in the frame of mind to make an experiment which I had hitherto vowed nothing should ever induce me to try. It read like a genuine affair, while the terms were certainly not exorbitant if the statements were correct, so, before an hour had passed, I was waiting in the reception-room of "The Shooters," and, very promptly, a tall, smart-looking man of about fifty, with a red face, red whiskers, red moustache with slightly waxed tips, and a pair of bright blue eyes, introduced himself to me as Colonel Softword Lovewell. His mellow voice, his

soldierly bearing, combined with charming manners, at once pre-possessed me in his favour. The name of the shooting with the rent actually paid was given me. Photographs of the house, with lists of game killed in previous seasons, were also produced, while everything appeared satisfactory and above board.

There were two other little details I desired to know, and while hesitating how to put my questions as to whether the Colonel was a bachelor, and who the two other guns might be, he divined my thoughts, telling me he was married, but that his wife was an invalid, taking no part in the management of the Monnielack establishment, as she lived almost entirely upstairs in her own suite of rooms. "So, my dear sir," said he, "you see it is practically a bachelor party, and you can smoke where you like and dress as you please. Mind, sir, I am no petticoat hater—by Jove! no—quite the reverse; but, to my mind, one lady is rather a bore, shut up with a party of four men in a shooting box."

Having expressed my entire concurrence in these sentiments, I asked, "And what about the other two guns?"

"Well," answered the Colonel, "they were both strangers until introduced to me by mutual friends. Captain Smallgore Spiller lives in Cornwall, Mr. Auldjoe in Northumberland, and hence our arrangements have been made by letter; but they are both bachelors, while from all I can hear they are quite nice fellows."

All this sounded very pleasant, so I settled forthwith to arrive at Monnielack on the tenth of the month. A few days later I met an old friend and told him of my arrangement, when, much to my comfort, he remarked, "Oh, I know Lovewell, and you will find him quite a good sort. He was always a poor man, though, and married a widow some ten years his senior with a couple of thousand a year. She fancies herself an invalid, but I hear she is a dear old thing, for she lets Lovewell do pretty much as he pleases."

Then I came across people who knew both Spiller and Auldjoe. The report on the latter was that he was a queer old chap, with a hatred of the sound of a big big D., and a general detestation of modern methods, but withal quite a gentleman. The report as to Spiller was not quite so satisfactory—a Militia Captain, rather bumptious, a little too fond of lifting his elbow, and a cheaply earned reputation as a sportsman, seemed to be the verdict. With this little knowledge of the party I was about to join, Monnielack Lodge duly received me on the tenth of August. My hopes were more than realised: the house was large and comfortable, the dogs looked workmanlike, the head keeper, Donal Macdonal, was a pleasant, civil-spoken man, while his daughter Bessie was just one of the very prettiest Highland lassies I ever saw, and I noticed that the Colonel was fully of the same opinion, for leaving me to talk grouse with Donal, he went with the lassie to inspect the poultry yard.

The next day I elected to make a trouting expedition, and on returning was duly presented to Mr. Auldjoe, a tall, spare man of about sixty, with a very long clean-shaven red face covered with red pimples, while his looks and movements much resembled those of a fishing heron, but perhaps his tight-fitting suit of black pepper-and-salt clothes, with the stiff, old-fashioned white stock, contributed to this effect.

Captain Spiller was to arrive in time for dinner, but as he was late, after giving him fair law, we sat down without him, but had hardly done so before the wheels of his conveyance were heard outside, while a few minutes later the Captain entered, when with a bow to us and a shake of the Colonel's hand he rattled out a torrent of speech more rapidly and jerkily spoken than anything I had ever heard before.

"Here *we* are, Colonel," exclaimed he; "make you stare, I know, to hear me say *we*, but I've brought my wife! Only married five days, you know; couldn't leave her behind me, could I? Didn't even think of getting spliced when I settled

with you; the whole thing done in a jiffy. So now I'll just run up and change, and we will be down in no time!" And before the Colonel had recovered from the news of Mrs. Spiller, the Captain was off.

"Well, I'm damned!" said the Colonel, with a bang of his fist on the table.

"Sir!" cried Mr. Auldjoe, with a vigorous peck at his plate.

"Rather cool, at any rate," observed I.

"Pardon my expression, Mr. Auldjoe," interposed the Colonel; "and now, gentlemen, let us think what is best to be done." Then suddenly remembering Mrs. Lovewell, he exclaimed, with both hands held aloft, "Good gracious, what *will* my wife say? Excuse me, I must run upstairs and tell her."

Left alone with Auldjoe, he remarked to me, "This is a matter which is undoubtedly a breach of good faith, and one which must seriously affect the harmony of our party; but for the moment I opine our wisest course will be to make the best of it." To this pompous but feeble speech I dolefully assented.

The Colonel presently returned, saying, "Thank heavens! Mrs. Lovewell heard the news without being very much put out."

Dinner proceeded silently, slowly, and uncomfortably. Half way through the meal, the Captain appeared with his bride, and if they had been brother and sister they could not have been more alike—slight, fair, ferrety-eyed, freckled, and thirty; neither showed any sign of blushing or embarrassment, but took their seats as if they had been expected guests. She was arrayed in a flaming tea-gown, while he wore a gorgeous smoking suit. All went fairly well till coffee with cigarettes arrived, whereupon the bride rose, and saying that she did not like the smell of tobacco in any shape, asked the Colonel to show her the drawing-room.

On rejoining us the Colonel explained to Spiller that we were accustomed to smoke in the drawing-room as well in the

dining-room, to which he replied, "Oh, never mind, Colonel, we can all get on very well here"; and throwing himself into the most comfortable arm-chair, of which there were only two, he pulled out a cigar-case covered with an enormous silver monogram, and lit up.

Somehow or other we had each taken a violent dislike to the bridegroom, so the evening hung heavy, while talk became constrained. On the plea of being fresh for the exertions of the morrow, Auldjoe and I beat an early retreat. Then the next day the thoughts of the sport to come induced us all to reassemble in a good humour.

Spiller appeared last at the breakfast-table, clad in a new suit of startling, loud, ill-fitting knickerbockers. He had brand-new boots, a brand-new gun, brand-new cartridge bags, and while instructing his gillie to take care of a very long snow-white mackintosh that had also never seen service, he was busily engaged in pushing a hand into a most immaculate lavender kid glove. Auldjoe had appeared at the morning meal in the pepper-and-salt suit that he had arrived in, and I had been wondering how long he would take to change it, and what would be the result, when to my astonishment he came into the hall, picked up his gun, placed a beautifully-brushed, tall black silk hat on his head, while announcing that he was ready to start.

The Colonel whispered to me, "The get-up of those two fellows beats anything I've ever seen. You and I will shoot together to-day, so we will let the old crow go with the peacock and see what they can do together."

Now, Monnielack Lodge was built right on the moor, with the grouse literally at the door, so thus as the two parties divided they were quickly far apart. The Colonel's dogs did not belie their looks, while it was soon easy to see that their master was not only a very good shot, but also a very good sportsman, in whose company it was a pleasure to shoot. A most enjoyable day was passed, and we reached home with



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fifty-five brace. The other party we learnt had been in for some time, so that it was not until we all met at dinner that I heard their bag was but twenty-three brace. The moment we were seated Captain Spiller opened the conversation by saying to our host, "Well, Colonel, it is quite clear you kept the best beat for yourself"; and the bride joined in with, "Oh, yes, indeed, it must have been so, for Trip"—(which we discovered was short for Triptolemus)—"is such a splendid shot that there could not have been many birds on that part of the moor over which you sent him to shoot."

As Auldjoe heard this he sat suddenly bolt upright, looking just as if he was going to give the lady a peck with his long nose, but the Colonel suavely replied—

"Well, Captain, if you will come with me to-morrow we will try a fresh beat, and Donal shall settle which is the best; but I can assure you the ground you shot to-day was thought to be the likelier of the two."

We were all glad when dinner was over, and the bride relieved us of her presence. Mr. Auldjoe then began to examine Spiller with a curiously meditative air, while, with his hands crossed on his chest, his cold grey eyes were fixed sternly on the Captain. There was a silence, as our bridegroom began to be uneasy under this piercing examination. Then Auldjoe turned to the Colonel, remarking—

"I had no idea pheasants and partridges were so well grown in these parts at this time of year."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the Colonel, "for in five years out of six they are quite a month behind English-bred birds."

"Indeed, that is not the case here," joined in Spiller, "for, to tell the truth, I actually killed five pheasants and a brace of partridges to-day, thinking they were grouse"—on which Auldjoe sternly remarked—

"That, I think, was your total bag, Captain Spiller?"

"Well, yes, it was," replied he; "but who on earth could

shoot on a day like this has been? A strange gun, a keeper that didn't know his business, bad dogs, a blistered heel, and, I must add, Mr. Auldjoe, the sight of your tall hat, all combined to put me quite off my shooting."

Mr. Auldjoe jerked his nose towards the speaker as he replied, "The offending hat, sir, is one of Lincoln and Bennett's best, while the pattern has been in my family ever since tall hats have been worn. All my life I have never carried any other head-gear, and you, sir, are the first person I've ever met who has so rudely found fault with a trifling matter of dress, although I am well aware—and here he looked at the Colonel—that my hat is a matter which has often afforded amusement to some of the new-fangled school."

Here our host rose and said, "Well, gentlemen, we will try to make you all happier to-morrow, therefore it is settled, Captain, that you shall shoot with me, when I think I can promise you a good day."

On this the bridegroom sought his bride in the drawing-room.

"That's a nasty chap, Colonel," I remarked, to which my host answered—

"Yes, indeed; he will have to improve, or he will get notice to quit."

"All the better for your pheasants, Colonel," said Auldjoe.

The next day we took our sport as agreed, when I found my friend in the tall hat to be a good shot, an untiring walker, and a very pleasant companion, so we made a nice bag most happily. At dinner it was easy to see something had put the Colonel thoroughly out of temper; in vain the bride tried the blandishments of her small talk, and by degrees a feeling of depression overtook everyone except Spiller. He had replied curtly to my questions about his day's sport—

"Too tired to talk," he said.

He was, however, certainly not too tired to drink, for his attentions to the champagne decanter were frequent, and when

the bride left us he turned to the butler to order him to bring another bottle, just as if he had been in his own house, while remarking to the company in general—

“I daresay some of you will help me out, though it don't much matter, for the walk has given me such a thirst that I feel as if I never could quench it.”

The Colonel said nothing, but told his servant to bring the wine, at which Captain Spiller went with a will.

The bottle was nearly done, when he moved somewhat unsteadily up the table to seat himself next the Colonel, and clapping him on the back, said—

“Come on, old boy, order me another bottle; it does not cost you very dear, I'm sure; so while I finish it, you can tell us three poor devils how much profit you are making out of us.”

“Sir!” exclaimed Auldjoe; while I joined in with—

“Come, come, Captain Spiller, pray do not forget yourself; you will be sorry for your rudeness in the morning, and, in the meantime, as you appear knocked up, don't you think bed would be the best place for you?”

He retorted, “Bed be blowed; mean to draw the old boy first; must have *some* fun for my coin, you see, and if a month of this sort of thing for two hundred and fifty pounds is not downright—

“Halloo! confound you, sir,” yelled Spiller to Auldjoe, who, having deliberately placed the lighted end of his cigar on the back of one of the Captain's hands, was staring sternly at the ceiling. “You lanky, tall-hatted, black-coated old idiot, I'll——” but here the Colonel jumped up, rang the bell sharply, and turned to us, saying—

“Let us leave him, gentlemen, while, as the drawing-room is occupied by Mrs. Spiller, I hope you will come with me to my own little sanctum, to smoke there.”

To this our intoxicated gunner replied, “Well, I never did meet three such——”; but the butler's entrance cut short the

rest of his speech, and, turning to his servant, the Colonel said softly, "Take away the wine, then as soon as the room is cleared, tell Mrs. Spiller her husband wishes to see her!"

Arrived in our host's den, we lit cigars in silence, which the Colonel broke by saying—

"Well, I can only offer you both my apologies for Captain Spiller's behaviour, and now I'm going to send him a note, to be delivered in the morning, enclosing him a cheque for his two hundred and fifty pounds, with a request that he will quit Monnielack to-morrow; and though that will reduce our party to three, I feel sure we shall still have good sport in pleasanter company."

Having announced our approval of this plan, we talked while the Colonel wrote his letter, and that done, he joined us in better spirits, saying—

"Well, since you two have been talking over your sport, let me now tell something about mine. The Captain is absolutely the greatest duffer with a gun that I ever came across, for he is highly dangerous to those who are out with him, and wounded my best setter badly. Black game poults, with young pheasants that could hardly fly, he never missed, while grouse that could fly he never touched. He swore at my keeper, and told me I was not taking him to my best ground, while insinuating I was keeping back the cream of it till his month was over. Thank goodness, I managed to keep my temper, and, luckily, that extra bottle of champagne this evening will be ample excuse for kicking him out."

Next day, therefore, we sat down to dinner a very pleasant party of three.

"The fellow has had the good grace to leave me a few lines of apology," said the Colonel; and then Captain Spiller with his bride were forgotten, while all went so well that one day, when Auldjoe and I were shooting together, I said to him—

"This is really a very good place and the Colonel is a capital fellow, while there is no bother or trouble about any-

thing, so I have made up my mind to come again next year. Won't you come too?"

To this Auldjoe answered, "Yes, that I will with pleasure; but let us each offer the Colonel a hundred pounds a year more on the understanding that the party shall remain as it is."

"A very good idea, in which I'm quite with you," answered I.

Now, since our numbers had been reduced to three, we had taken it in turns to shoot with the Colonel, and for nearly three weeks all had gone right merrily; then one day our host announced that he would be obliged to go to Edinburgh for a couple of days on some law business; therefore Auldjoe and I were left together, and on coming home from shooting on the evening of the second day, the butler met us at the lodge gates, while with concern and grief written on his face he handed me a letter which I saw was in the Colonel's writing. The contents were as follows:—

"My dear Gae Green,—Forgive me for my desertion, but pray stay on with Auldjoe and shoot away till you think the stock of game is sufficiently reduced. For myself, *I am in a mess!* Both of you, I am sure, will think me little short of a lunatic when I tell you that Bessie—my pretty Bessie!—Macdonal's daughter, has so captivated my affections that life without her is no longer worth having. My feelings are reciprocated, and we are seeking happiness together in foreign climes. Although our friendship has not been of very long standing, I feel that I may call on you to break the matter to Mrs. Lovewell. Kindly also explain all this to Auldjoe, and ask him to accept my apologies. I had most fully intended to have stayed out the time with you, but Donal began to be suspicious, and his arrangements for sending Bessie away have precipitated events."

This letter I read to my friend in the smoking-room, and though he gave signs of suppressed excitement by various violent jerks of his nose, he uttered no word till I came to

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the end; then he took my hand while tragically pointing to the ceiling of Mrs. Lovewell's room, which was over the one we were in, he sternly said, "*You* must tell her, I couldn't"; and forthwith he departed to his room. I lit a cigar and sat thinking on the sofa, but always to the following effect: "Well, as Auldjoe is much my senior, surely he is a more proper person to tell poor Mrs. Lovewell than I am"; then I pursued him to his bedroom, only to find my friend packing a small hand-bag.

Guiltily, he said, "Look here, Green, I cannot stand these tragedies, so I'm going to walk over to the 'Inverness Arms' and stay the night there, while the rest of my belongings can follow me in the morning."

"I'm hanged if you shall," I said to myself, but to my coward I replied, "Look here, my friend, you and I have had some very pleasant days side by side, and I'm confident, from what I have seen of you, that you are not the man to desert a friend in a situation like this; at any rate, dinner is ready, so let us go and eat it with what appetite we can while we discuss the matter quietly."

To this he replied, "Very well, Green, it shall be as you wish, for perhaps it *was* rather cowardly of me to think of deserting you."

During our meal I said to the butler, in an off-hand way, and just as if the Colonel's absence was quite expected, "Oh, James, will you send up word to your mistress and tell her that as the Colonel has written to me saying he will not be back this evening, we propose to come upstairs presently for the pleasure of a talk?"

Auldjoe looked daggers at me, and as soon as the messenger had departed he said, "Surely, Green, you might have left me out of this dreadfully painful interview"; then when James returned to say Mrs. Lovewell would prefer to see us in the morning, we both were so delighted at the respite that we passed the rest of the evening quite pleasantly. As my friend's bedroom door closed I heard him mutter to himself, "Poor old

Colonel! But truly Nature has endowed Bessie with extraordinary good looks."

The next morning, in dread of what was to come, we were both ushered upstairs to Mrs. Lovewell's room. To our surprise she was dressed for travelling, and in reply to our "Good morning!" she answered, "No, gentlemen, it is '*bad* morning!' you should say; but there, pray do not look so unhappy. I have seen Donal, the stupid fellow, so already everything is known to me, and he and I are off in immediate pursuit of that silly husband of mine, who never could resist the sight of a pretty face; and it's little enough in that way I brought him, for his winning manners and handsome face won me when I was a widow old enough to have had more sense than to marry again. There was a time, though—but let that pass; so, gentlemen, pray join me in viewing the matter from my point of view, and let me see no more such melancholy faces or doleful looks. It is poor Bessie that is most to be pitied, but I think I have arranged how best to help her."

We were so astonished and taken aback at Mrs. Lovewell's views of the matter that all prearranged speeches of condolence were scattered to the winds. I think I said out loud, "Well, madam, you *are* a brick!" and then proceeded to explain that the culprits would be miles away by this time.

"Don't tell me, Mr. Green," she interposed; "they are both well known through all the country side, and could not have gone off together without raising a hue and cry. Donal found out everything the night before last, and Bessie's brother is off after her, for luckily she made a *confidante* of her cousin, who is kitchenmaid here, and the runaways have arranged to go to Glasgow by different routes—Bessie by the long sea trip round the Mull; therefore, as her brother has started by train, he will be in good time to meet the steamer and to escort his sister to the *rendezvous* where the guilty pair are to meet this evening. By that time *I too* shall be at the trysting place, where the Colonel will meet the whole party. So now, please.

excuse me, for I am in a hurry to start. Pray order everything you want, and take my word for it the Colonel will be with you again the day after to-morrow." We wished her success, while concluding to stay on and see the end of the adventure.

Two days later a letter came from the Colonel, the contents of which were as follows—

"My dear friends, Mrs. Lovewell and I hope to be with you in time for dinner to-morrow. Will you both do me the favour of never alluding to the events of the past few days? I am cured of my folly, and regret it deeply.—Yours sincerely,
SOFTWORD LOVWELL."

This being duly read to Auldjoe, I proposed we should forget the Colonel's escapade, and stay our time out, and thereupon he delivered himself as follows—

"Well, sir, the concatenation of circumstances has been wonderfully in the Colonel's favour, while the clever and generous behaviour of Mrs. Lovewell most fully deserves recognition; therefore, as I hardly think any one could for a moment suppose that I could countenance immorality, and as there is a great stock of grouse left, I am prepared to agree with your proposition."

I then heard him muttering something about Bessie and Nature's endowments. That young lady having been fairly caught, was consigned to the care of some relatives at a distance, so the Colonel and his wife returned without her, and we finished our holiday with no further troubles or adventures.

Since that day Auldjoe and I have passed many happy shooting seasons together, while as each "twelfth" comes round five fast friends, of which Mrs. Lovewell is by no means the least, meet under the roof of Monnielack Lodge; the Colonel, Auldjoe, myself, and Donal make up the quintette.

Bessie has married and gone to the Colonies; but since that day all the female servants at Monnielack have been remarkable alike for their age and ugliness.

CHAPTER III

TWO MONTHS AT SPEYSIDE

SOME few years ago a bright April morning saw two friends detrain at a small station on the Speyside railway.

Two sturdy gillies with a barrow apiece were in waiting on the platform, to wheel the baggage of the new arrivals piece by piece to a pretty cottage hard by. As the men handled the portmanteaus, it was easy to see some were marked in big red letters C. O., while others were distinguished by R. P. in equally large white characters. It will be as well at once to state these letters stood respectively for Charles Onions and Richard Pork, and by the latter this history is related. Charles Onions (known to his intimates as "Violets") had rented some three miles of the Spey for a couple of months, and had bidden me, his old friend Richard Pork, to come and help him coax the salmon from the rocky pools of that magnificent river.

The cottage in which we were able to take up our abode was kept scrupulously clean and well ordered by two sisters. Tall, thin, aged, dour and virgin Scotch "bodies" were the Miss Monyplies. One was the cook, the other "the waitress," while they were mutually assisted by a short, fat, dirty, red-haired, unkempt, but ever-smiling lassie.

The dress and manners, however, of the two Miss Monyplies offered such a guarantee that all about them must needs be respectable that we paid small heed to this young person's peculiarities of raiment or appearance, while later on she herself by the acuteness of her reasoning so thoroughly converted Onions to the belief that the whole of her untidy and dirty appearance

arose from the deep conviction of long experience, that he ever regretted allowing sentiments partaking of not perfectly respectful admiration to enter his head with regard to our Maggie, for said he to her one day—"Why on earth don't you brush and comb your hair, lassie? Now see here, if you'll promise me to do it every morning, I will make you a present of a comb and a pair of brushes."

"Thank you kindly, sir," replied Maggie; "I hear tell that the gran' leddies brush their hair each day; but for my pairt once a week's enough for me, and e'en then it's like tearing the verra life out o' me."

In vain Onions tried to explain that the daily process would be preferable and less painful than the weekly one, but as Maggie would have none of it, we both came to the conclusion that she had reasons equally good to excuse her dirty hands, ill-gartered stockings, and slip-shod shoes, and so we left her undisturbed; thankful moreover should we have been if she had but returned the compliment as far as our cakes and fruit were concerned, for surely never yet did any one lassie devour so much sweetstuff—sugar, prunes, figs, candied ginger, cake, and shortbread vanished before her in a manner that was marvellous. At last we were driven to keeping our sweets under lock and key; but the very first day we tried it Charlie, *after helping himself*, went off to the river before me with the key in his pocket, so that I not only had no sweets, but worse still no whiskey, for this one cupboard held all our stores, and determined a similar mishap should not occur again, Charlie gave up all idea of locking things up, and simply wrote to Lumsden and Gibson to send out treble quantities of saccharine luxuries from Aberdeen, and thus Maggie continued to have her fill.

Now, lest some of my readers may be tempted on account of our weakness for sweets to look upon us as a couple of youngsters fresh from school, it must be stated we were both on the wrong side of thirty; also it must be confessed that

Onions had rather a sweet tooth, for his great receipt of warming up his toes and generally restoring circulation of the blood after a long, deep wade in snow water, was several lumps of candied ginger with some Glenlivet on the top of them, and I can only assure my readers that there are worse ways of getting warm.

This day of our advent we did not think it worth while to take our rods out, so after unpacking portmanteaus we contented ourselves with an afternoon's walk along the bank of our fishery. Splendid-looking water we found it, so in the evening we divided it into two beats, and, tossing for choice, to my lot it fell to make a start on the upper one. We were astir betimes on the following morning, and though Onions was first in the bathroom, I soon heard his welcome cry of "Coast clear," and the sound of his return to his quarters. Now the bathroom door was exactly opposite my bedroom, while it was but a few strides from one to the other; also the whole of the rooms on that floor were our very own; thus, as I was in a hurry to get dressed, and vexed at the start Onions already had of me, like a reckless man I discarded all ceremony, dashed off my night-shirt, flung a bath towel round me, and in two strides I was in the bathroom, with the door already locked, when, lo and behold, to my horror I found the eldest Miss Monyplies behind it! She, poor thing, thinking that both her lodgers had tubbed, had gone into the room to get some china from a cupboard, and when first discovered by me she was standing in dismay on a chair, each hand holding out in mute expostulation a pile of cups and saucers.

"Goodness gracious!" said I.

"Open the door, young man, and let me out," cried Miss Monyplies.

Now that was precisely what I was trying to do, but the shock to my modesty had been so great that all efforts to unlock the door were unavailing. "Confound the lock!" I cried, and then venturing to look at Miss Monyplies, I saw she was still on the

chair with her face to the wall, while on hearing my remark she said severely, "The lock will just be turning the wrong way, Mr. Por-r-r-k." I then got the door open and fled to my room, from whence I did not again venture till Miss Monyplies had had ample time to make good her retreat.

Now although this *contretemps* with the eldest Miss Monyplies caused Onions much amusement, it must be stated that it led to a mutual shyness between the parties concerned which did not pass away for some days, and this feeling of bashfulness on the part of Miss Monyplies was only at last dispelled by the carelessness of myself in one day leaving my glass eye lying alongside my false teeth on the washing-stand. Miss Monyplies discovered these necessaries, and having placed them on a black Japan tray, entered the breakfast-room just as we were about to begin our meal, and without a word handed the same to me. But as long as I was clothed I was not going to be abashed, so I took my property and said, "Thank you, ever so much; I was just going to run upstairs to fetch them. You see, an *ass* shot my eye out at a grouse drive, while a horse knocked my teeth out in a hunting smash. Real bad luck, eh, Miss Monyplies? for I'm barely thirty, and sound as a bell in all other respects, as possibly you may have seen for yourself."

Miss Monyplies said, "Indeed, sir, I'm nae doubting it," and fled; but from that day she took quite a motherly interest in me and her shyness vanished.

To return to the fishing, however. On the morning after our arrival we were quickly under way, and parted from each other full of great expectations. Now both of us were fairly good men with the rod, for what we lacked in skill we made up for by hard work combined with perseverance. Three days passed, and not so much as a "rise" had rewarded our united efforts, so that long faces returned each evening to partake of Miss Monyplies' "collops," the while we heaped anathemas on the head of the London agent who had let Onions the fishing, while gaily assuring him we should easily average a fish a day

each. At last, as the fifth blank day was drawing to the usual dismal end, I hooked and lost a salmon in the dusk, and, disgusted beyond measure at my bad luck, I started off home at a great pace. In a bend in the road overhung with trees I came on Onions with his old gillie, Sandy Gralloch, who it was quite easy to see was staggering along under a heavy burden. As Charlie became aware of my approach he welcomed me with a shout of joy, and turning back, he cried out, "Broken the spell at last, my boy. There are three beauties in the bag—twenty, seventeen, and eleven! I hope you've got something, too?"

"What extraordinary luck!" I muttered to myself, and joining Onions, I told him of my misfortune.

By this time we were clear of the trees, and I felt the consolation of tobacco was a necessity, so I said—

"Well, Charlie, you lucky fellow, stop a minute, and, while I fill my pipe, let us have a look at your fish."

So a halt was called, while nothing loth to be quit of his load, old Sandy deposited it at my feet, and whilst I, full of envy, bent low over the basket, Onions looked proudly down on me to remark—

"There, now!—beauties indeed, aren't they? Just take care you do as well to-morrow, for we have plenty of lost time to make up."

As I opened the basket the white sides of the fish gleamed so brightly in the twilight, that for some seconds I enviously feasted my eyes, then a something made me shift my hand from the basket to the tail of the biggest fish. I turned it up, dropped it, only to treat the other two in the same way; then I pulled their gills open, and prodded their sides with my finger, the while a wicked grin stole over my face as I stood up to exclaim—

"Charlie, you old goose, they are just three kelts; let's bury 'em, or we shall be fined."

"Rubbish!" retorted Onions; "just like your nasty jeal-

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ousy!" and then all four of us crowded round the basket, while the three fish were stretched out on the grass, and now that they had been some time out of water my verdict was quickly confirmed, and for the rest of the homeward journey Onions was so vexed he would hardly speak to me. The gillies got the fish, while Charlie was duly credited in the columns of the *Scotsman* and the *Field* as the slayer of three heavy clean salmon.

The next morning we started once more for the disappointing river, and side by side we strolled up stream. It was my day on the upper water, so when reaching the head of Charlie's beat I said I would wait to watch him fish his top pool. Old Sandy quickly had his master's rod ready, when there came an exclamation of despair from his lips, and approaching Onions, he said, "Indeed, sir, but I've no brought the tackle-bag or your waders." But Charlie only laughed, while as he sent his man off for the forgotten necessities, he turned to say to me, "What a rage I should have been in if that had happened when there were plenty of fish about; as it is, it is quite a relief not to have to keep on flogging the water for nothing, for it is the most hopeless river I ever saw; so now then, Dick, jump into your waders, and set to work while I watch you fish the pool." In return I offered my rig-out to Charlie, but he would have none of it, so I was soon in the water, and had not made a dozen casts before I was fast in a fish. "Another of your kelts," I called out, but no! this time a real splendid ten pound bar of silver flashed high out of the water, and was soon safely on the bank. I cried to Charlie, "This won't do; I'm poaching your preserves. Now do take my waders to finish out the pool, then by the time you've done old Sandy will be back," for the cast was a lengthy one. But not a bit of it; Charlie haughtily bade me go on, and before Sandy returned three other spring salmon were laid on the bank.

Then the missing gear arrived, while as Sandy learnt the facts there were almost tears in his eyes. We then

separated, I hastening on to try the upper water in greedy hopes of more sport, while Charlie strode off down stream with every muscle of his back set rigid in disgust. For the rest of that day both of us "wrought sair hard," but not another rise did we get, and Sandy told me in the evening, with a twinkle in his eye, he had had a "terrible time with Muster Onions."

The weather now turned bitterly cold; snow and hail fell during the day, sharp frosts ruled the night, while we fished for a whole week without getting anything except a few kelts. So severe was the cold that one day when on my way to the top of the water I came across a curlew crouched almost alongside an oyster-catcher, both so frozen that they could but flutter along the ground in front of us. The two birds were within twenty yards of each other, under a sand-bank by the water's edge. Having caught them, I sat down and placed them under my waistcoat, one on each side of me, where they quietly remained to enjoy the warmth, only showing any sign of fear by the throbbing of their bright eyes. I then soaked some bread-crumbs in whiskey, and down the throat of each bird I poked some of this mixture.

The warmth of my body coupled with the strength of the strange dose soon told a tale, and in the course of a quarter of an hour each bird was enabled to fly strongly away. During all this process, curious to relate, neither of these very wild, shy birds struggled to escape, while as a fact in natural history it can be stated that the curlew was much more averse to whiskey than the oyster-catcher.

We had also a further instance of how severe the night frosts were, for when the next Sabbath came round we passed a good part of that day in hunting for plovers' eggs, and on this frosty Sunday we had picked up some five dozen, which we carefully boiled for ourselves; but, alas! at Monday morning's breakfast they all went "pop," and splashed over our fingers as soon as the shell was broken, so we quickly realised

our delicacies were frost-bitten and useless, for no matter how fresh-laid or how long it be boiled, a frosted egg will never set.

We were preparing to start for the river when a small boy came up to the front door to enquire if we would buy six dozen plovers' eggs for five shillings. Questioned as to where he got them, we learned that his eggs had also been taken on the Sabbath, but, whereas ours had been collected from high-lying fields, his, he said, were all quite good, having, he explained, been taken some distance away off lower-lying lands—"Joost aroun' Craigellachie, sirs." Well, we thought it odd that he should have found all good eggs, while ours were all bad ones, so on expressing some doubt on the subject, at the lad's desire we sent for a pail of water to test them, when one and all promptly sank to the bottom, which neither a frosted or addled egg will do.

So we rejoiced in our bargain, and while Onions took the eggs carefully out of the pail, dried them in a table napkin, and placed them on the hall table, I went upstairs to get the five shillings, for that was a larger sum than either of us ever carried when fishing, and as the key of my travelling bag, in which all cash was stowed away, had been mislaid, I was comparatively a long time gone. However, the missing article was found at last, so, hurrying downstairs money in hand, payment was about to be made. As I passed the hall table, on which the eggs were neatly laid in rows, a single drop of water was standing out from near the small end of almost every one of them. Out of curiosity I picked up an egg and wiped off the globule, when, to my astonishment, it at once began to reappear. Then in a second I saw there was a pin-hole in one of the black spots of the egg-shell, while a look at the boy convinced me that all was not right, for as he met my eye he turned and fled as fast as his legs would carry him; but he escaped not entirely scatheless, for I pursued, and deftly lodged the frosted egg I had in my hand plump in his ear.

The young rascal, having discovered that his eggs were spoilt, had made pin-holes in each and filled them up with water, so that they should sink when tested, and thus he had hoped to outwit two simple-minded Saxons. However, as his trick had been detected, we only had a good laugh over it.

Sport still continued dreadfully poor, and our chief excitement was in occasionally breaking a rod joint while perfecting ourselves in the Spey cast; needless to say, we went through much unnecessary exertion in this performance, which culminated on my part by my driving a big salmon hook well over the barb into that soft fleshy outside part of the right hand which is situated about a couple of inches below the knuckle of the little finger. Cutting it out was a surgical operation not performed as neatly as could be desired. However, I had but the left hand to work with, while the knife blade was none of the sharpest; also it must be borne in mind that it makes a difference in the skill of the operator if he is cutting up himself instead of someone else. I have the hook to this day—likewise the scar.

As sport continued so very poor, I asked my host if I might telegraph to Bristol* for a can of minnows, and though he ridiculed the idea that they would prove a better lure than the fly, he readily consented, merely bargaining that he was not to be asked to use the "beastly things." Three more days passed by, and each of them had been absolutely devoid of sport, when the minnows arrived all alive and kicking. The very next day I used the new bait and captured three clean fish, with a lot of kelts; while in the succeeding two days I added nine other good salmon to my score. Now during the same period Charlie, who had held on strictly to the fly, had captured but two, and converted by this striking disparity he forthwith became a minnow fisher him-

* The largest minnows in the kingdom are to be got from Mr. Loveder, "Full Moon," Fish Ponds, Bristol.

self. As he learnt the art quickly, from that time forth we both did nearly equally well, and far better than any other anglers either up or down the river.

This, I believe, was the very first time the natural minnow was used on the Spey, but even with this lure our sport remained of the poorest, while since those days, sad to relate, each succeeding year has seen a further deterioration, until this spring of 1894 has been the very worst ever known on Speyside, for many anglers have not taken more than two or three fish in a month! and one good man actually records it in print that he has had 25,000 casts for one fish!

Of course we were abused for employing this lure, and called poachers, etc., by other anglers who persisted in using the fly only; but as we had already given every possible chance to every sort of fly that Shanks and old Cruikshank could produce, and all without success, we were glad to get a few fish the best way we could.

The wading of the Spey is often very bad, and each of us anxiously looked forward to seeing the other take a header. This, however, did not happen, but we witnessed a gentleman fishing opposite us take three very neat dives in rapid succession. We had always kept an eye on him, for our gillies had told us "he was no verra sure of himself in the water," and they were correct, for one day we saw him stumble and take a regular souser; up he came, minus his rod, but only to disappear again headlong with a mighty splash. Up again, but down once more, till matters began to look serious, until, as he re-appeared above water, his gillie ran in and caught hold of him. "All's well that ends well," said I, as we watched the unfortunate one come dripping out of the river; to which Onions gently replied, "I never saw anything so funny. How I wish he'd do it again!" No chance of this, however, for from that moment our opposite neighbour swore off wading the Spey.

For some days there had been a wicked feeling of

deplorable jealousy rankling in my heart against my host, which had come about in this way. We had had a bet of five shillings as to who took the biggest fish, and Charlie had lately landed a noble one of twenty-five pounds, which fact he good-naturedly mentioned many times a day, as, indeed, well he might, for large spring fish are rare on the Spey, although in the autumn plenty of heavier ones are got. Well, our time was nearly up, and as we ferried across the river on the last day but one the ferryman said to me, "Indeed, but she's in fine ply the day, sir;" and right enough the man was, for a big, rolling, peat-stained water was running under the boat, but yet quite clear enough for fishing.

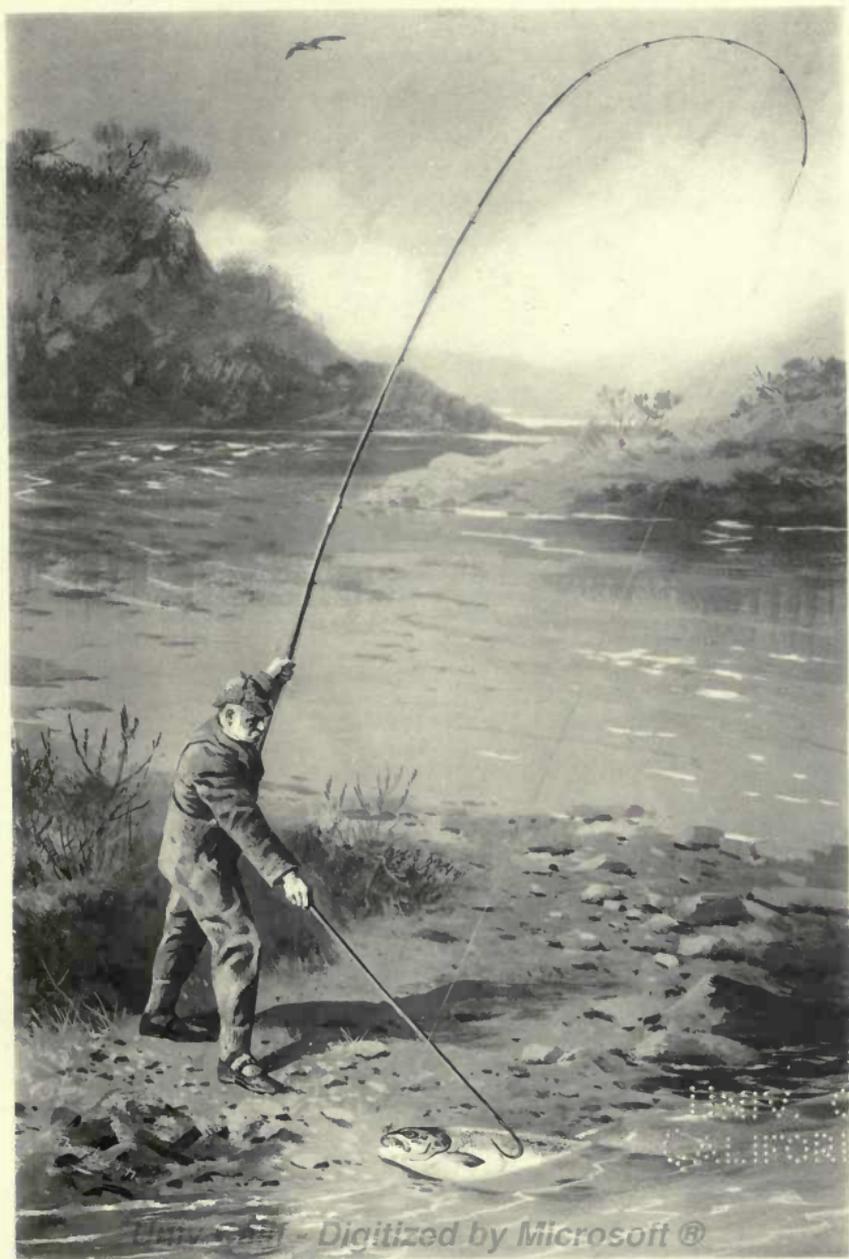
As I jumped ashore, Boatie called after me, "Good sport, sir, and I'm thinking you will get it if you're deeligent." His prophecy, however, appeared likely to be wrong, for up to three o'clock I had not seen even a fish splash. I was wading deep in the water while nearing the tail of a favourite cast when my line tightened very slowly to a long dead pull. Raising the rod smartly, for a second it was uncertain if I had hooked a rock or a sunken bough, for there had been no sign of a "boil." All doubts, however, were instantly dispelled by a sharp tug, and then screech went the reel, great waves in circles spread around, while a huge tail lashed the water white. Three times then did my captive dash best pace in a great oval round the end of the pool, the meanwhile keeping close to the surface, and sending forth waves on either side like a small steam launch; then steadily he began to bore up stream, and having found a place to suit him, he commenced a sulk.

I seized this opportunity to get into shallow water, and as I neared the bank my gillie broke the silence by saying, "Yon's a verra heavy fish, sir, but I fear me he's too big to be anything but a kelt." To this I vouchsafed no reply, but got well below my captive and put on considerable

pressure, which quickly converted his masterly inactivity into a most lively opposition, for the reel shrieked and the rod trembled as he dashed into the stream once more to fight it out. After a few very lively minutes he paused again, so as there was a good shelving gravel shore behind me, I came out of the water with the intention of coaxing him into this bay. Stepping back from the bank, the manoeuvre seemed about to be crowned with success, for he allowed himself to be towed right on to the sand.

"Hurrah, he is clean and a whopper!" I cried, when with a guttural yell my gillie, who had lost his head at the sight of such a big fish, rushed forward, gaff in hand. As the monster perceived the approaching foe he appeared for the first time to realise his danger, so with a desperate splash and one rattling run he placed some seventy yards of water between us. I looked reproachfully at my man, who was trembling with excitement, as he said to me, "Fifty puns at the verra least." I replied, "All the better, Donald, but keep behind with the gaff and pass it me if I ask for it, for if we do get him, I mean to pull him out for myself."

After a short rest on the far side of the river he began quickly to head down stream. It would have been fatal to check him, so we followed at best pace, while with a rattle he dashed into the pool below. At this moment of the fight my heart was in my mouth, for the bank receded from the river in a large, irregular half-circle, so while my fish had to go about seventy yards in a straight line, I had to race along the bank more than double that distance, for the fish was on the shallow side of the rapid, and the water ran darkly deep next the bank I stood on. Down he went without a halt, and run as fast as I could, by the time I had negotiated the half-circle the rod was straight, while so many yards of line were hanging listlessly in the water that it looked a hundred to one he was off. Winding up at all speed, as the line became tight I once more with great joy saw the rod assume



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that curve so dear to the angler, as a shriek from the reel cried, "All's well." But down stream he continued to go—fully seventy yards between us, he on one side, I on the other.

At length we came to a "croy," or "put" as they call it on the Tweed, and then right from the other side of the stream I coaxed him into the backwater of the croy, but only to see him once more dash back to resume his old position. We passed other "croys," and at each of them I repeated my persuasive process, while at each of them he renewed his counter-attack, and still down stream we went. Then we neared the last "croy," so as there was no other good landing-place for a long distance below this, I determined to make one more prolonged, vigorous effort to finish the fight. With gallant stubbornness he battled it out; I persuaded him ten yards nearer to me, and with a stroke of his tail he retreated fifteen. For fully twenty minutes this went on, but his rushes grew weaker, his white sides showed oftener, while each move of the great tail propelled him a less distance, till quite suddenly he was so dead beat as to come floating and rolling on to the gravel, too tired for words to express. Donald handed me the gaff, and in a second my prize was ashore, while the thwack of "the priest" as it descended on his head proclaimed the end of the fight. Forty pounds exactly! and a forty-five minutes' hard struggle over a mile of hard water. I cried, "Bravo!" for well I might, as but very few fishers in British waters ever have the luck to kill a forty-pound fish, and then I remembered Charlie's "sprat" of twenty-five pounds, while I thought to myself how mercilessly I would take my revenge.

The next day we packed up our traps, and took a warm but solemnly decorous farewell of the Misses Monyplies, while, in spite of bad sport, we were loth to turn our backs on Strathspey, for though we had taken but forty-two clean fish, and landed some hundred and twenty kelts in the nine weeks,

we had yet had plenty of hard, exciting exercise in fine scenery, combined also with much "laffter and chaffter." At least I, Dick Pork, can solemnly swear I had had a very happy time, while Charlie's verdict was, "Well, it has been good fun in spite of bad sport, and there are worse ways of spending spare cash; but confound that London shooting agent and his knavish tricks!" Then as he lit a pipe I heard him mutter to himself, "What a lucky beggar Dick was to get that forty-pounder!"

CHAPTER IV

A MONTH AT STRATHMAACOE

VERILY I do not think that in all the kingdom there was a happier man than myself, as I, Augustus Gee, drove up to the hall door of Castle Strathmaacoe on a sunny afternoon on the 11th of August, 1881. The original and historical castle was of the tower and extinguisher order, while of the little that remained thereof the basement contained servants' offices, and the upper part held nothing but a few bachelors' bedrooms. The whole of the rest of the building was comparatively modern, and had been added on to the older structure with profuse luxury. It was not much, however, that I cared for the style of the architecture of the house about to shelter me; that which interested me beyond everything else was the fact of there being some thirty thousand acres of deer forest, with nearly as many more of grouse and low ground shooting, belonging to this Castle of Strathmaacoe. The fortunate Highland laird who owned it had also another property somewhat of the same character in an adjacent county; thus, as circumstances prevented him from living in both, and doing justice to each, he had wisely allowed my friend, Tom Berks, to take a lease of Strathmaacoe at the bagatelle of three thousand pounds a year. There were people who knew nothing about sport who said it was very dear; others there were, myself included, who vowed it was "dirt cheap, sir!" but whether dear or the reverse, Tom Berks cared not a jot; the house together with the sport were both first-rate, while the happy lessee could well

afford not to bother himself with questions of economy; he had got what he wanted, and took care that all else should be in keeping with the luxurious surroundings.

In this sportsman's paradise then I had been invited to stay for a month, and on my arrival the house was already full of guests, amongst whom were several ladies; for there was a Mrs. Berks, and a better hostess it would have been hard to find; also there were some men who did not shoot, while lastly there were the four who did, who with Berks and myself made up the party of six "guns." During dinner I learnt I was a favoured guest, as the other quartette had only been asked to stay till the 25th of the month. However, Tom Berks and I were not only old schoolfellows but fast friends, and he found good-natured pleasure in ministering to my hobbies, for so great was my devotion to the gun, and so well-known to him, that he laughingly used to assert, I should come to my own funeral with a breechloader in one hand and a rod in the other.

Now, to chronicle the doings of a whole month by such expressions as "on the first day of my visit," "the next day," "the day after this," "the fourth day of my stay," etc., etc., would only at last involve me in a hank: I have thought to escape from the difficulty and to make matters clearer by recording the events of the period in diary form. There is no need to mention the names of all the guests, but suffice it to say that amongst them there was a very pretty Miss Kent, a General Sussex, and a Mr. Thomas Surrey. Commencing then with the 12th of August, and, dear reader, do not be alarmed, for I am not about to rhapsodise on the beauties of porridge, mountain air, mountain dew, purple heather, distant hills, feathering sterna, deadly tubes, crowing cocks, long shots, and lunches by babbling burns. Oh, no, my "twelfth" will be done with in a very few words, for here is all my diary records:—

1881, Wednesday, 12th of August.—Lovely day, started off

with Tom about 10.30, rather late, but he had to see to the getting away of the other two sets of guns, for during the first fortnight he sends out daily three parties of two guns each. We draw lots for our beats over night, and take it in turn to shoot with our host, while every day there is a small bet of "five bob a nob" as to which couple should make the best bag.

The dogs were A 1, and we found a great stock of birds, and although they were rather wild, we brought home 79 brace and some "various." Total for the three parties, 203½ brace; so sport was pretty equally divided—but Tom and I collared the dollars!

August 13th, 14th, 15th, very fine each day; dollars not all going into one pocket. Surrey is a real good fellow and a fine shot. Up to this evening 775 brace of grouse have been put into the larder.

16th, Sunday.—Breakfasted at ten o'clock; pretty Miss Kent did not put in an appearance, and later on in the smoking-room we heard from Tom that she was indisposed and much upset by having seen a ghost during the night. On this announcement Tom was overwhelmed with questions from all sides. What ghost? Whose ghost? Which room was it in? were all asked him by different voices at the same moment. When silence came at last, Tom Berks, with rather a grave face, begged us not to chaff or question Miss Kent about her adventure.

"You see," said he, "she is so much upset that she wishes to leave the house, but we have changed her room and persuaded her to stay on. Her story is that she woke in the night to see the figure of a woman standing at the foot of her bed, and from its appearance she was at once certain it could be nothing earthly, so thereupon she was terrified into a faint and did not recover her senses till it was daylight. I must confess it is a very odd thing she should fancy she has seen this apparition, for strange to say I heard from

one of the keepers' wives, when I took this place two years ago, that there was reported to be a walking lady belonging to the castle, who only appeared every three years, and thus it would seem as if Miss Kent had been gossiping with some of the old cronies about the place, and her imagination has doubtlessly done the rest. At any rate, my friends, the ghost won't spoil our sport, and we will leave it Miss Kent's empty room to wander in. Furthermore," continued Tom, "I'm sure it will be better not to talk of the matter; my wife is the only other lady in the house who knows of it, so if we keep it quiet, the rest of them and the children will not be made nervous."

With this we all readily agreed, and then separating into twos and threes, the day was passed as Highland Sundays usually are by the heathen Saxon. Some took their "glasses" up the opposite hill for a spy into the forest, others wrote letters, and another couple went off to the railway station three miles distant to watch the mails from south and north arrive and depart, while three more made their way to the river on a pearl-hunting expedition. With regard to this latter pursuit, it is a snare and a delusion, for I have fished up and cracked open thousands of mussels, but never yet has there been any pearl in them other than in the similitude of an unpolished dust shot.

17th and 18th.—Torrents of rain fell on these two days, and it was impossible to do anything more than potter about the "policies" in macintoshes.

19th.—Tom had business to attend to, so only two parties went grouseing, and I was asked to supply the castle with venison. The rain had gone, while the day was all that could have been desired, when after a long jolt on pony back over a rough country I found myself in the forest; then followed a lot of hard walking, with a great deal of spying. The first thing discovered was an eagle sitting on a rock devouring a grouse, and with deep interest we observed the



EAGLE AND GROUSE.

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proceedings of the splendid bird. While watching him a fox, hunting a hare by scent just like a dog, ran into the focus of the glass, but his nose did not seem very good, and pussy easily won the day.

Then we found a nice stag with horns nearly clear of velvet feeding quite alone. He was some two miles off, but an easy stalk, and in half-an-hour we were crouched in a very wet, dirty, peat bog a hundred and twenty yards from him. Our quarry was resting near the top of the hill a little below our position, with his back to us. Apparently he was lost in admiration of the view, for beyond an occasional slight shake of the head, or a flick of the ear, he seemed carved in stone.

I was but a young hand at deer in those days, so whispered to Donald, "How long is this going to last?" and received for reply, "I'm no verra sure, sir, but anyway we will wait till he rises."

This, however, I did not feel at all inclined to do; thus when a very long hour had already lapsed, I proposed a sitting shot, but was persuaded to "bide yet a wee"; so I looked at my watch and made a mental vow that if needs must I would be patient for another sixty minutes. Now two hours slip away in no time by the fire-side with a pretty girl to chat with, or a nice book to read; or equally at the dinner table, or in the smoking-room, they vanish imperceptibly; but two hours spent cramped up in a horrid black peat bog, afraid to move, speak, or smoke, and with nothing to do but keep a continuous watch on a pair of horns standing out of the heather, is quite another way of passing time, and was monotonous in the extreme.

At length the second hour went, and the beast was still like the stag on my host's crest—couchant. I therefore began to prepare to shoot. The rest for the rifle was good, the mark absolutely still, and I thought it nearly impossible to miss. But Donald was of a different opinion, and whispered to me—

"If ye'll no wait further, sir, and indeed I never saw a beast lie so long as yon, let me whistle him up for you; he will stand still for a bittie as he gets to his legs, and you can tak him then."

To this I consented, so having settled myself in position, with the full-cocked rifle at my shoulder, I made the signal for Donald to whistle. But as the stag took no notice of the first sound, it was followed up with a louder one, which was still unheeded; then there came a yet shriller whistle, with no better result, and next I tried my hand by performing a loud cough, but that too had no effect, and Donald said, "The wind is joost taking the sound awa', sir."

Now, during each of these experiments, I had been ready to shoot, and the four disappointments had made me callous; so I said to my man, nearly out aloud, "Try a real good one," and taking me too much at my word, his fingers were crammed into his mouth, his cheeks expanded, while there rang out a shriek any steam engine might have been proud of. Instantly the stag was up and away, the promised halt does not take place, and before I could press the trigger he had vanished. Donald looked utterly miserable, but I cheered him up by suggesting a peep over the face down which our stag had disappeared, so going cautiously forward we soon saw our hard-of-hearing friend trotting off in the distance.

On advancing further we spied three stags feeding below us to the left, and barely a mile away. The stalk was easy, so was the shot, and Donald was quickly smiling pleasantly as he performed the gralloch, but from that time forth I have ever been content to leave alone the system of "whustling him up."

We then started for home, Donald leading the way, and in making a turn round a high rocky cliff he suddenly halted, drew back to me, pulled the rifle from the cover, put the weapon in my hands, and waved me forward. Delighted at the prospect of getting another stag, my joy was turned to

disappointment, as nothing could be seen but a fox prowling some hundred yards off, and even though it be in Scotland, and many, many miles from any hunting country, I yet fight shy of pulling trigger on one, while on this occasion there was the greater reason for refraining, as there were two masters of hounds amongst our party; for my host and one of his guests each hunted a celebrated pack.

"Shoot, sir, shoot!" whispered Donald; so to please him I brought the rifle to my shoulder and pulled the trigger as if I had been taking a shot at a grouse with a gun, and to my astonishment poor fox dropped stone dead. A fine big dog he was, and Donald pocketed the brush to nail to his vermin board, while on arriving home the death of reynard was discreetly omitted from the list of the day's adventures. The grousing parties had 93 brace between them.

20th.—This morning we all went together to make an attack on the ptarmigan of the heights above the castle. As we started Surrey came up and patted me on the back, while whispering in my ear—

"I say, Gee, shall you and I give the others a lead up the hill, for if we set them a good pace, the whole party will be more quickly at the top?"

I consented, and off we strode. Presently I heard suppressed laughter behind me, and on looking back beheld a grin on every following face. I wondered what the joke was, and on again glancing to the rear found the same grinning faces, while all eyes were fixed on my back. Instinctively I swung my hand behind me, and as I did so, Surrey with a big guffaw bounded out of harm's way, for it clutched the brush of my victim of yesterday. That inveterate joker had been to Donald's cottage before breakfast, had seen the brush, wormed out the story, and having possessed himself of the trophy, had meanly hooked it on to my coat with a previously attached bent pin when he patted me on the back in so friendly a manner. And thus adorned, he had persuaded me to march

some distance in front of two masters of hounds, who were exploding with laughter.

Mem.—I am going to be even with Surrey! Our bag consisted of 48 ptarmigan, 45 hares, and 19 grouse.

21st and 22nd.—These were two fine days, and we kept pegging away at the grouse, until by Saturday evening we had made up the total, since the 12th, to 1,103 brace, a good nine days' work. Nothing more had been seen or heard of Mrs. Ghost.

23rd.—Was the usual sort of Sunday.

24th.—I was up early this morning finishing off some letters in the smoking-room, while waiting for the breakfast gong to sound, when General Sussex entered hastily, exclaiming—

“Good morning, Gee. I'm off to-day, though my time is not up till the day after to-morrow—the fact is I've seen that horrible ghost, and nothing could induce me to spend another night here.”

“Oh, come, General,” I answered; “surely it must be a freak of your imagination, or, perhaps”—remembering the fox's brush—“it is some trick of Surrey's.”

“Not a bit of it, I assure you,” he replied. “Ugh! the loathsome, creepy thing almost touched me”; and with this he bolted from the room.

Now, the General and Surrey each slept in one of the bachelor rooms in the old tower, so I dashed off to the apartment of the latter full of curiosity, and flinging open his door, plunged at once into my subject by saying, “What on earth is all this cock-and-bull story of the General's about a ghost; did you see it too?”

“Yes, I did,” he replied, “and I'm fairly puzzled; but sit down while I tell you all about it. Well, now, you will remember how early we all went to bed last night, and I'm sure you'll bear me out that every one of the party was literally as sober as a judge. The General and I came upstairs together,

and, having wished him good-night, I locked myself into my room, as is my invariable custom, and was soon fast asleep. How long I remained so I am not aware, but as far as I know I awoke of my own accord, and on opening my eyes, lo and behold! there, standing at the foot of my bed, was a woman, whom I at once recognised from the description as the very same that had disturbed Miss Kent so much. I admit I felt somewhat creepy, while a cold shiver ran down my back, but I was not long in making up my mind to 'go for' my visitor, so I jumped out of bed with the determination of laying violent hands on the intruder.

"As I approached the figure backed, with a quick but steady movement, to that door there which separates the General's room from mine. On my side you see there is a chest of drawers, while on his there stands a dressing-table, and as the figure, or whatever it was, reached the door it vanished, and I was in the dark. Well! I struck a match, ascertained that the entrance to my room was still locked, and then began to think. The process soon persuaded me to say to myself, 'This must be what is called a nightmare, or perhaps I have been dreaming and walking in my sleep—three hearty meals with no exercise to speak of yesterday might account for it,' so I tumbled into bed again, while the more the matter was thought over the more convinced I became this was the true explanation, so therefore I fell asleep, resolved to say nothing about the matter to anybody.

"My servant called me as usual, and equally as usual I had to get out of bed to unfasten the door to let him in. When I was nearly dressed I cried out to Sussex, who could be heard at his ablutions, 'How are you, General, this morning; a lovely day for our work, is it not?' To this he replied, 'Oh, don't ask me how I am! I'm all to pieces, for I've seen the ghost.' 'Really, and what was it like?' I called back; and then, Gee, I can assure you he described to me exactly the very same figure that I had chased out of my room apparently into his!

“‘What did it do, General?’ I cried; and he answered, ‘Oh, the loathsome thing came round the bed till it got to my side, when, begad! it began to bend over me, so, my dear fellow, you may laugh at me if you like, but I popped my head under the bed-clothes, where I waited the issue of events till the sun shone. Devil another night will I spend in this house, I can assure you.’”

“Well, that beats everything,” I remarked; “for it really must be a genuine ghost, Surrey, as in this old tower you are so isolated and so high above ground that no trickery could possibly be practised. Confound the restless old lady; she will clear the house if she goes on like this.”

“Bother her,” answered my friend; “but ghost or no ghost, I’m precious hungry after all this palaver, so as it is my day in the forest come along and have breakfast.”

It was an extra early meal, at which none of the ladies were present, and thus once more we were sworn to secrecy concerning our spectre visitor, while as all Tom’s eloquence failed to persuade the General to stay, he was forthwith made to promise he would declare his sudden departure was caused solely by a wire bringing him news of events requiring his immediate presence elsewhere. Having settled this, we wished him a hearty good-bye, and went off to our sport.

Tom and I were shooting together this day, while Surrey was to be in the forest with Donald; thus, on our way to our beat, we naturally discussed this latest and somewhat startling phase of our ghostly visitant, so as we passed a cottage the idea struck Tom of asking the occupant—a very old woman—if she could tell us anything about this walking lady.

In response to our tap at the door we were at once invited inside, when as soon as Tom had made his greetings by offering the old lady a taste of whiskey, he lost no time in explaining the object of our visit. The old woman listened in silence till he had done, and then, with a laugh, she said—

“I’ve been thinking this while that some o’ ye wad be

seeing her soon: for this is the verra year she is due. Every third year she is as sure to come as the heather is to bloom. 'Twice she shows, and awa' she goes'; so you have finished wi' her the noo, sir."

Tom looked quite relieved at hearing this good news, while in reply to his inquiry as to what was the story connected with the triennial appearance of the apparition, our hostess said—

"Weel, sir, they tell that mony years back the lady was the wife of a laird of Strathmaacoe—a bad mon, who, for wicked reasons of his ain, was wanting to be rid of her. So he ca'ed her upstairs into the verra room where your friend speered the ghaist, and where her sick bairn was lying sair ill on the bed. Then, as the puir mither stooped over the bairn to kiss it, the rascally laird plunged his dirk right through her. Hech, sirs, that's the story, and a dour one it is."

Having thanked the old lady we took our departure, and here it may be stated that what she said was perfectly correct as far as the ghost was concerned, for it troubled us no more, while as Tom had given up the Castle for a fresh place before another third year came round, we have had no means of ascertaining if other tenants have been honoured by the same startling attentions.

To continue my narrative of the events of the day, it must now be stated we had excellent sport, and after bagging one hundred and seven brace of grouse, we were well pleased with ourselves as we turned into the avenue of fine beech trees leading up to the house, along which we saw Surrey hastening to meet us. As he approached, there was a something in his manner which stopped the shout of merry welcome we were about to give, while as he came yet nearer, Tom's salutation was—

"What's the matter, Surrey? Something is wrong, I'm sure."

With much emotion and in broken tones he replied—

"Oh, Berks! I hardly know how to tell you; but there has

been a terrible accident in the forest! for, alas! poor Donald——”

But having got thus far, Surrey was so completely overcome that he could not continue his narrative, and he rushed from us into the house.

Further down the path at a side door we saw a cart surrounded by a small crowd of men, and on joining the group we learnt to our horror that the vehicle held the corpse of poor Donald. In vain did we try to gather details of the accident; some said “the gentleman did it,” some that Donald was himself the cause, while others told the wildly improbable story that it was the “royal” stag of Corrie-na-vaich that had himself done the deed. Unable to gather anything definite, Tom whispered to me to go in and look after Surrey, whilst he attended to other matters that required arranging on an emergency like this. With a sad heart I made my way to Surrey’s room, and having done my best to comfort him, he presently told me the following account of the tragedy, which I relate, as nearly as possible, in his own words—

“At our very first spy, to Donald’s great delight, we found a fine ‘royal’ stag, well known to the neighbouring foresters as the monarch of Corrie-na-vaich, who I learnt was renowned for his wily ways, for though he had been stalked times without number and had been thrice fired at, he had on each occasion escaped scatheless. We were soon within shot of the monarch, who this time did not display any extraordinary cleverness, but as he was feeding end on to me I could not take the shot at once. I noticed Donald was pale with excitement, and was already trembling for the result, which did not tend to make me any the steadier.

“When, however, the monarch at last presented his broadside to me, I felt every confidence as I pressed the trigger; alas! he fell only to rise again, to dash off with his fore leg smashed right high up in the shoulder; as he still kept side on to me, I put in the left barrel with great steadiness, but that

also failed to end the matter, and then turning the glass on to him, it was easy, in the bright light, to see the two bullet marks—the first was some inches to one side of the heart and a good bit below, while the second had struck in a line with the heart but just behind it. After this short spy Donald urged me to load again at once, saying, 'He's yours, sir, if we can but head him before he gets to the march,' and then off we started at his best pace.

"We soon sighted the wounded monarch, and it was clear that, as he could not make much upward progress, he was, putting on all steam he could down hill, with the view of reaching a pass at the end of the corrie, through which he could escape into the next forest. Now, I am a bad runner, Gee, as you know, so I saw at once that unless we could get along faster than we had done the stag would make good his retreat, therefore calling to Donald, I said, 'Here, take you the rifle, but be careful, for the stops are not on, and get away by yourself and cut him off; I'll follow as fast as I can.' Donald required no urging, and seizing the rifle out of my hand he bounded off like a roe-deer, while I watched him out of sight round the shoulder of the hill, with the pleasant conviction that the monarch would now be mine. Then I trotted on after him till I reached the place where he had disappeared, and finding that from this point I could command the whole of the corrie, I sat down, pulled out the glass, and soon spied Donald some four hundred yards off, running up to the stag, who was lying in a small basin-shaped hole of moss apparently quite dead, for his head was hanging down with one of the antlers resting on the soft edge of the shallow. In this position the stag lay when Donald reached him, and while he was pulling out his knife the monarch just raised his head from the ground but a little way as if in a last expiring effort.

"Then Donald quickly, and, alas! all too rashly, placed the butt of the rifle on the antler lying at his feet, when to my surprise the dying beast instantly half raised himself upright

and made a most furious blow at the weapon. I heard the clink the horn made as it struck, then the next second came a report, and Donald fell forward right on the top of the yet struggling stag. Down hill I dashed as fast as my legs would carry me, but, alas! only to find the poor fellow lying stone dead with a bullet right through his heart. I pulled him as well as I could on to a mossy bank, and then, as soon as I had satisfied myself he was past all aid, I hastened off to the shepherd's cottage; fortunately he was not out, while moreover he had two other men with him for the purpose of gathering the lambs next day, so thus between us by our united exertions we bore our sad burden to the roadside. "That is all, Gee, and I never felt so unhappy in all my life," said poor Surrey.

Needless to relate, this sad event cast a gloom over our hitherto happy party, and the last evening before it broke up was a melancholy one. The ladies retired early, while in silence we men went to the smoking-room, for poor Donald had been a favourite with every one. As we filed into our sanctum, Tom gave me a tap on the shoulder while pointing to the hall door, and we were quickly alone in the open air. "Gus, old fellow," said he, "I want you to do me a favour; you see we cannot resume shooting till after the funeral, so, as my friends are due to leave to-morrow, will you come as my guest to Loch Leven for a few days, and we can return on the first of September?" And thus it was arranged.

25th.—After Tom's guests had started off, he and I departed for Kinross, and arrived there the same evening, Miss Kent staying with Mrs. Berks and the children.

26th.—Kinross. There was nothing of Loch Leven visible from our hotel; however, we sat down to breakfast well pleased to be removed for awhile from the depressing influences of fatal accidents and ghosts. The room was cheerful, full of sunshine, and looked on to a small garden of flowers, so while Tom strode up and down, eating his porridge in orthodox Scotch

fashion, he said to me, "It is awfully good of you to come, Gus, for I fear the fishing will be somewhat of the cockney order!" and laughingly I replied, "Well, yes, I suppose we shall stand a good chance of hooking, or being hooked by, the fishers in the next boats, for with such a lot of them afloat they must get in the way of each other."

From this it will be seen neither of us was greatly impressed with the quality or quantity of the sport in front of us, and it was with no great keenness we went to the Loch.

On our arrival at the boat-house pier, from which all anglers had to start, a white-haired old Scotchman gave us a hearty welcome while telling us the other boats were already away; then conducting us to a long wooden building, he entered our names, addresses, and the time of day in a ledger, and that ceremony finished he asked if we were in want of flies, while directing our attention to the walls of the room; there we saw hanging on nails many rows of cast-lines, each ready mounted with four flies—for on Loch Leven it is *de rigueur* to use that number. They struck us as good and cheap, therefore we purchased plentifully in the hope they might strike the trout also. Most of the casts contained at least one of the favourite flies of the Loch, such as "The Zulu" and "The Hecham Pecham."

Then we went to the boat, and to our astonishment we saw Loch Leven was anything but the small loch we had imagined; why we had pictured it to ourselves as insignificant, goodness only knows, but, having done so, we were agreeably disappointed at viewing a fine big sheet of water, which we learnt from the guide-books covered more than three thousand acres of ground. As for the crowd of boats, there were but four or five in sight, the others being hidden in distant bays, or by Queen Mary's Island. Thus far we were both greatly pleased, and Tom cheerfully remarked, "It looks much more like business than I expected. How very well everything is arranged!"

Then we put ourselves into the hands of two clean, well-spoken boatmen, and as they expressed a wish "to pull west," we consented. They put their backs into the business, soon rowing us three miles from the pier, then they turned the boat broadside to the wind, shipped their oars, and while they began to fill their pipes the head man said—

"Now, gentlemen, fish away, for it should be a good day."

We were both soon at work, the trout rising well, but although we were old hands at loch-fishing, we missed a good many, and in reply to an enquiry as to whether the fish were not coming very short that morning, we got for answer—

"Oh, no, sir, not at all; but ye don't strike hard enough for this loch."

The hint being taken, from that time forth we hooked almost every fish that rose, and it became evident that Loch Leven trout were quicker in their rise and sharper in detecting the falsity of the lure than the trout of other Scotch lochs, so that to make a good basket the angler should strike very quickly, indeed almost roughly.

After drifting three-quarters of a mile from the shore rises became scarce; the water looked too deep and black for successful fishing, but our boatmen, who were happily puffing away, assuring us to the contrary, we continued to whip on, but nevertheless nothing came, until after a long spell of no sport we neared the shore once more, when we got plenty of rises. We disembarked to eat our lunch, while on counting our fish we found we had sixteen, weighing just over thirteen pounds.

As soon as the men were out of hearing Tom remarked, "Don't you think they are rather a lazy couple? Since they pulled us out to get the wind they have but sat and smoked, while letting the boat drift for more than two hours. I'm sure there are no fish to speak of in that deep black water; so after lunch I vote we try the plan of taking short drifts, and never going more than a few hundred yards from the shore."

To this I replied, "Depend on it, the men won't think much of your idea, as it will give them five times the work to do, and as we must not make them sulky, suppose you go and square them."

Thereupon Tom went to our boatmen and said, "Now, look here, my men, I've a fancy to work the boat on a plan of my own this afternoon, so no blame to you if there is no sport; it will be harder work though, so therefore you shall each have half a crown extra for your trouble."

This settled matters as we wished, so getting afloat once more we kept rowing five or six hundred yards from the shore and drifting in again, covering fresh ground at each drift. So well did this answer that when we landed at the pier we had forty-seven fine trout, averaging just under a pound each. We were both of us delighted with a very good day's sport, for the fish fought well, frequently splashing high out of the water or dashing under the boat at great speed, thus necessitating a quick eye with a steady hand to defeat these troutish tricks.

Moreover it was pleasant to learn from the pier-master that the new comers and lazy starters had yet brought back more than any other boat, and I fear as long as there are fishermen there will ever be feelings of this nature. Old Izaak Walton felt the sentiment in his day and boldly expressed it, for he wrote, "I envy but him, and him only, that catches more fish than I do," so, therefore, his disciples of three hundred years later may surely own up to the soft impeachment without feeling abashed.

The weight and number of our fish having been duly entered in a book, the pier-master then asked if we wished to send any away, for labels and boxes were ready and the railway close by. We availed ourselves of the opportunity, while once more dilating on Loch Leven good management; then we paid for our sport, half a crown an hour for each rod—thus as we had been afloat eight hours, the calculation of the amount was an easy one—so wishing the pier-master good-night, we

returned to our hotel with very altered ideas of Loch Leven fishing, which we now voted to be perfectly arranged, devoid of cockney surroundings, while giving as good sport as is to be had with brown trout on any loch in Scotland.

27th, 28th, 29th.—On each of these days we fished away merrily, and sticking to our system of short drifts we continued to do well. Our total for the four days was 157 trout, weighing 136 lbs.

On landing from our second day's sport we had a novel experience. Thirty-eight fish, weighing just that number of pounds, was our take, so as we had supplied as many friends as we could think of on the first day, we were about to give half of this lot to our boatmen and the rest to the hotel, but on telling the pier-master of how we intended disposing of our basket, we learnt that the Fishery Association allowed anglers one shilling a pound for all fish not wanted, and the idea of selling our take and getting our sport for nothing was so novel, and amused us so much, that we let the pier-master take the fish and cried quits with him; for on that day we had only been fishing seven hours, and as the odd three shillings went to one of the boatmen, the two accounts exactly balanced.

30th, Sunday.—We passed the morning in packing up, and the rest of the day in strolling by the loch-side, when of course, as it was not a fishing day, the trout, as is their custom on the Sabbath, were rising furiously. Then, at the fearfully early hour of six o'clock, we took our seats at the table d'hôte; this we had been most specially asked—I might almost say commanded—to do by the hotel-keeper, for he let us see pretty plainly there would be a "deeficulty" in getting a later dinner served in our own room on the Sabbath. Of course we had boiled haddocks, roast beef, and stewed prunes, three luxuries which appear to be indispensable at all Scotch table d'hôte dinners. The company was pleasant enough, so much so that at the end of the repast we followed the rest into the smoking-room, where naturally trouting talk was soon the

absorbing topic of conversation, while whiskey, hot, cold, and with soda-water, lent an embellishing hand to many of the stories.

There were amongst the company three friends in particular who, according to their own account, had caught heavier and larger numbers of trout than anyone who was present. They were also great at all athletic sports, and at length one of them related a story of a leap so extraordinary as to call forth from a listener an exclamation of "Impossible, sir! it could not be done."

On him the teller of the story turned fiercely, while exclaiming in angry tones, "Pray, sir, do you doubt my word?"

"Oh, no, not at all," answered the other, "only I feel sure you *must* have made a mistake somewhere."

"Oh, *do* you; you little know what we can do till you see for yourself," retorted the athlete; and, rising to his feet, he continued: "Look here, sir, if you would like to see an exhibition of leaping, I'll bet you a couple of bottles of whiskey, to be drank by the present company, that I'll find you a man in this very room who shall jump through the open door and touch the top of it with his foot as he goes through, and yet not fall."

Here the speaker turned to one of his friends to give him a look which was tantamount to saying, "You can do that easily enough, can't you?" Then resuming his speech, with a bang of his fist on the table, he wound up by saying—"And, by George, if he doesn't do it he shall pay forfeit." The sceptical gentleman at once took the bet, with the stipulation it should be put down in black and white, which being done, it was read out to the whole room.

Reader, I wonder if you have been sharper than we were, and discovered the "sell" for yourself. No sooner were preliminaries over, than the layer of the bet turned to the taker and said, "All right, sir, *you* do it; all *I* betted was that *I* would find the man, and that if *he* didn't do it, *he* was to pay forfeit."

As the astonished taker of the wager grasped the situation, he held out his hand to the winner and led the laughter which went round the room, while Tom and I felt thankful we had escaped being trapped, for neither of us nor any of the company had seen the catch in the matter, although it had been clearly stated to everyone.

31st.—We left Kinross early, and picking up three fresh guests at Perth—Charles Lewes, Thomas Dyke, and William Patcham—we all duly arrived at Strathmaacoe, where a warm welcome awaited us from Mrs. Berks and Miss Kent, who assured us the ghost had departed. Lewes and Patcham seemed strong, active men, but Dyke looked ill, and was distinctly very lame, while later on I discovered he had come more to recruit his health, after a bad accident, than to stalk or shoot. Laughingly he told Tom that in addition to his valet, he had brought his perambulator and nurse, in the shape of a strong young man, to push it.

It was settled from this day forth we were to go at the deer with a will. Some ten miles away was a stoutly-built forest lodge, and there in couples we were to take it in turns to spend three days of each week. The start was tossed up for, and the coin decided that Tom and Lewes should have first chance in the forest.

September 1st.—Whilst I was yet dressing, the stalking party drove off, so I hurried down to join Patcham, for we had been asked to make the best bag of grouse we could, either over dogs, or by walking in line, or kiteing. As we were starting Dyke hobbled into the hall, gun in hand, and said—

“Can you give me any idea of your line of country to-day, for if I knew which way you were working, I should like to try and get where I might have a chance of a driven shot now and then.”

We told him all we knew, while expressing our fears that the hill track would be too rough for his chair; but to this he replied—



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“Oh! I have had an extra strong one made, so I will risk it, while if you will only beat along that face by the track side, I feel sure I shall get a shot or two.”

Wishing him luck, we sallied forth, leaving him being jolted in his chair along the rough path, until we soon lost sight of him. About an hour afterwards an old cock rose wild in front of us to disappear straight ahead, and when a few seconds later we heard Dyke's gun, we were both pleased and astonished at finding he had got into such a good position, for it was certain many more birds would take the same line of flight. This proved to be the case, for by the time we neared Dyke we had counted several double shots with some single ones—thirteen discharges in all.

Patcham said to me, “I wonder what he has bagged. Hallo! why, look, there is his bath-chair on the track below, and flying a white flag, although it is empty; and there, further on, is Dyke's man with a flag also. Well, that is clever; don't you see the dodge? He has left them there to turn the birds from the road and force them to come to himself; while under yon stone, our friend is sitting snugly in the heather; but what on earth is he up to, Gee? for he is crawling about on all-fours, just like a bear.”

I noticed all that Patcham had pointed out, so only replied, “Come along, let us go and see what it all means.”

By the time we reached our friend, having finished his crawling, he was puffing a cigarette, and, in reply to our enquiries as to whether he wanted the dogs to find any birds, he smilingly said—

“No, thanks; you saw me doing retriever for myself, for I find it less painful to crawl than to walk, and I've picked up my birds. I had quite a good stand, and got six brace. Would you let one of the men put them in the panniers?”

We both exclaimed, “Bravo, indeed; but pray do not overdo it or knock yourself up”; but he would not hear of going back, so we lunched together on the roadside, while, for the

rest of the day, we worked our ground almost entirely to put birds over Dyke—for his misfortunes, his pluck, his good shooting and masterly management of the bath-chair enlisted all our sympathies, and we were only too glad to give him all possible sport. Our total bag was fifty-three brace, thirteen of which were Dyke's, who was wheeled home in the best of spirits.

2nd.—We shot in the same way as yesterday, with about a similar result.

3rd.—Our beat this day was too far and inaccessible for the bath-chair. Dyke went ferreting, and killed more than one hundred bunnies out of his perambulator, to the great surprise of the keepers. Tom and Lewes returned from the forest late this evening, having got nine stags, amongst them a good "royal" and a "caberslach."

4th.—As Patcham and I were preparing to start for the forest early this morning, Dyke appeared on the scene, saying—

"Should you mind if I joined your party? Of course, I can't stalk, or even keep near you, but I should like to spend a few days in the forest, if only to have a peep at the deer through the glass. Perhaps I might even see something of the sport from a distance, for I know enough about it not to get in the way." Needless to say, we took him, and were only too glad of his company.

At the entrance to the forest a stalker was waiting, so Patcham alighted and was quickly off, while we drove on to the lodge, where I was to meet the head forester for my day. Another four miles saw us at the end of our journey, and then, as we were about to start after the deer, Dyke looked so longingly at the top of the big hills surrounding us on all sides that I was tempted to suggest he should take a seat on the deer saddle of the pony standing ready to go with us, and return in the same way after we had gone a certain distance along the forest track. His face brightened as he jumped at the invita-

tion, and the procession was soon winding, in single file, round the base of the steep hill, on clearing the shoulder of which we could see up into a good-sized corrie.

At this point we halted, as from here Dyke was to turn back, and so, while the forester was giving some directions to the pony-man as to where to expect us later, pulling out my glass I immediately found three small stags feeding in a burn not a mile off. As they had not seen us, we drew out of sight while the forester took a peep, but only to pronounce them unshootable. Then we all three crawled up for a reinspection, when Dyke, with a longing look, said, "By Jove! if there had been a shootable beast in the lot, I really believe I could have got up to him." On hearing this, I fell back to ask the head forester to give my friend a shot, for even though he did kill a small beast, I felt sure our host would not mind as long as it gave pleasure to his disabled guest.

Here Dyke joined us again, and Angus—for that was the forester's name—said to him, "There's just one of them, sir, that might be worth a shot, and Mr. Gee tells me ye hae a fancy to try it, and there's sma' doot but what we can get up to them if you are still of the same mind; but, sir, it is just only the one I point out to you that you must take."

Dyke was delighted, so dropping on his hands and knees, he crawled the whole distance with hardly a halt. Angus took him up well to a capital position about eighty yards off the quarry, and then, putting the rifle into his hand, whispered—

"There, take that one to the west."

"Which *is* west?" murmured Dyke.

"The one on the knowe, sir, the nearest of the three," answered Angus.

Dyke laid the rifle, and as the report rang out the stag dropped, then while the two others were bolting at full speed, crack went the left barrel, which brought down one of them, while before Angus could expostulate the rifle was reloaded, and

discharged for the third time with deadly effect. Dyke looked up with a grin on his face as he said—

“All right, Angus! I will make it square with Mr. Berks. I don't suppose I shall ever fire at a deer again, so I thought as the chance offered I would have a real go for the last time.”

As we all stood up, behold! the two victims of the two last bullets also jumped to their feet and began to make off, each with a badly-broken hind leg—a wound which would not have dropped an old stag, or even made him wait for a moment. Thereon up sprang Dyke, rifle in hand, to make the best dash after them he could. Angus looked at me with a broad grin on his face as he said, “Why, sir, they are a' three gang-ing along exoctly alike!” and true it was that Dyke's infirmities and the stags' wounds gave to each the same lurching, funny movement.

Exhaustion soon compelled Dyke to stop, by which time a gillie with a deerhound had come up, so telling the man to slip him at one stag, Angus dashed off up hill to keep an eye on the movements of the other. Left alone together, Dyke dolefully remarked—

“I really could not help it, Gee, although I know it is all wrong, so I only hope Berks will not be in a rage about it. However, let us go and look at the one that *is* dead.”

This we did. He was but a six-pointer, and the baby neck was covered with blood, for he had been shot in the back of the head—a “fluke,” of course. So we sat down by him to wait for the return of the others. Dyke then took up my rifle, and drawing the cartridges began to look it over with admiring eyes, when this stag also suddenly came to life again, for with a kick and a plunge he was galloping off before we had realised the situation. In vain Dyke reloaded and emptied both barrels after him; and then before fresh cartridges could be inserted he had unsighted us, while in spite of Dyke's long face I could not help laughing, although he did much the reverse, while vowing the stags in Strathmaacoe forest bore charmed lives.

After some time we saw Angus returning, and when he joined us we heard that he only thought he knew where his stag was resting, for it was a long way off; then we told him our story, which sent him off with the rifle to see if he could discover the one that had shammed dead.

Dyke threw himself on the heather, remarking dejectedly, "Confound my stupidity, Gee; I quite hate myself for having spoilt your whole day's sport."

I comforted him, however, so successfully that at length we both broke into uncontrollable laughter over the whole thing. Then the gillie with the dog returned with one bit of good news, for "Torrum" had run his deer down, and it was lying gralloched some distance away. We tobaccoed and whiskied the gillie, who then went off to look what Angus was doing, and as he reached the sky line we heard a shot echo through the hills, while as but one barrel sounded we felt pretty sure that stag number two was also accounted for. In due course Angus rejoined us to confirm this supposition, when we further heard that the first bullet had but grazed the skin on the top of the head, and, though letting blood freely, it had produced but temporary insensibility; then, looking hard at the unabashed Dyke, Angus slyly said—

"Hech, sir, you will aye find it better to shoot at the heart of a stag than at the heid," which was his own way of combining politeness with sarcasm.

It was now past two o'clock, so as Dyke was looking dead tired, although he was all for our going in pursuit of the third stag, I insisted on his hobbling back to the pony.

Having started our friend on his way home, as Angus then opined it was too late for us to go further into the forest, we turned back on our tracks in search of the third stag, which after a long tramp we eventually spied, when another bullet ended his troubles. Thus, after all, Dyke secured his three stags at one stalk, which seemed almost impossible when each of them had turned out to be "runners,"

for had they been big, strong stags we should have been lucky indeed to get even one of them.

We spent a merry evening, as Patcham had killed a good ten-pointer, while I knew I had made a fast friend of Dyke for life, and that being the case, I was, perhaps, more to be congratulated than either of the deer-slayers.

5th.—Patcham and I were both off by eight o'clock to our respective beats. Dyke was to breakfast late and fish the loch close by the lodge. The day was all that could be wished, cool, with a steady breeze, a good light, broken by blinks of sunshine. At a quiet pace we made our way to the hilltop, where we at once found deer, for near at hand five stags were feeding with some hinds. The stalk being easy, the best stag, a fat eight-pointer, bit the dust. Angus performed the gralloch, whilst I sat down and soon spied a solitary stag coming into sight; he was going at a trot, but evidently had been disturbed by the sound of the recent report, although not quite knowing from which direction the noise had come. I pointed him out to Angus, who promptly called out—

“Have a try for him, sir, while I finish my work; it's a sharp run, but if you can reach the big stane yonder before he does, you will cut him off, for that will be his line, and I'm thinking you will get there in time.”

The aforesaid stone was about a mile in front of the stag, but much nearer to me than to him, so taking my bearings, I dashed off best pace. It was a down-hill run, the ground completely hid me, and I reached the spot puffing and blowing like a grampus, as, settling myself in a happy position, I waited the issue of Angus' prophecy. But not for long, for I soon saw the quarry trotting in the line foretold, and when he came broadside, as I pressed the trigger he rolled over stone-dead, so running up I bled him, and waited for the advent of Angus the prophet, who shortly put in an appearance, the while smiling proudly at the success of his strategy, although he was polite enough to declare all his pleasure was

derived solely from witnessing my part of the performance. Then we started again to get a third shot, and once more the bullet sped true.

Now, though it has taken but a short space to narrate the death of these three stags, it must not be forgotten we had had two stalks, a run in, and three beasts to gralloch, so, by this time, it was past two o'clock. Angus, however, was downright bloodthirsty that day, for, as we finished a hasty lunch, he jumped to his feet, saying—

“Well, sir, all last season no one rifle could get more than three beasts in the day to himself, but I think we shall manage to beat that now, so we'll start whenever you're ready.”

Nothing loth, I was on my legs at once, but in vain corrie after corrie was searched, for not another beast could we see, while by about four o'clock we had explored all the likeliest places and were reduced to turning back. At this Angus was quite depressed, but I could not in any way share his feelings, for three stags in one day should surely be sufficient, while I was even more than content. As we made for home Angus spied all the ground over again, but it was of no use, and we at last arrived at the edge of the range of the forest hills.

From where we stood we could see the lodge, a speck in the distance, while Dyke's boat was still fishing the loch, some three thousand feet below us. It was such a pretty scene of hill country that we were tempted to rest before commencing the long descent so trying to the knees, so we sat down at a spring and lighted our pipes, to repose awhile. Once again Angus pulled out his glass, and all feeling of fatigue left me as he said, “May be, sir, we shall yet get a fourth beast, for I can see a small stag feeding on the top of the Ileig burn, though I doubt if the daylight will last us.” Taking the glass out of his hand, I soon found the staggie, which was such a small beastie that I at once began to consider whether, after the good day we had had, it would not be more sportsmanlike to leave him in peace. On imparting

these sentiments to Angus, I found he had set his heart on making up the four beasts, while he also told me the stag was bigger than his horns indicated, so I took another peep to inspect him afresh, when he made a sudden bolt in evident alarm, while over the sky-line in angry pursuit there came a splendid stag with a grand head. Nearly certain I could count royal points, I was about to proclaim my discovery to Angus, when it flashed across my mind how pressed we were for time, and as with all his skill he was yet a very excitable man, I feared it might make him rash if he suddenly heard of the presence of such a grand beast, so I kept my own counsel, and quietly shutting up his glass I handed it back, while remarking quite unconcernedly, "Well, Angus, if you wish to get up to him in time to see to shoot it must be a case of running, so go ahead as fast as you like."

Go, indeed, he did, but as it was down hill for a mile, I managed to live with him till the ascent began, when Angus, like a gentleman, made the pace less severe, while, as he came to the top of the hill over which we expected to find our quarry, he had the wisdom to reduce it almost to a crawl, so that by the time the summit was reached I had quite recovered my wind.

On hands and knees we crossed the sky-line, while yard by yard the precipitous sides of the Eilig burn were searched, and horribly disappointed were we at finding our deer had probably fed nearer to the foot of the very steep hill. A worse place for a shot could not be imagined, and Angus whispered me that the last three stags killed here had all been smashed to bits by rolling down the hillside after receiving the bullet.

There was nothing for it but to follow our quarry, so feet first and flat on our sides we commenced the descent, only soon to sight the back of a small stag. As long as he fed we slithered nearer to him; the moment he lifted his head we were as immovable as the big stones around us. At length we were within a long shot of this staggie, while to my dismay

nothing of the big fellow could be seen, and it became uncertain whether our quarry was lower down the hill or hidden from our view by a projecting spur of rock. Just for fun, with no intention of firing, I put the rifle to my shoulder, when to my surprise Angus' long arm glided round me and depressed the muzzle to the earth, while a hurried whisper came to my ear, "There is another one just a wee bit better."

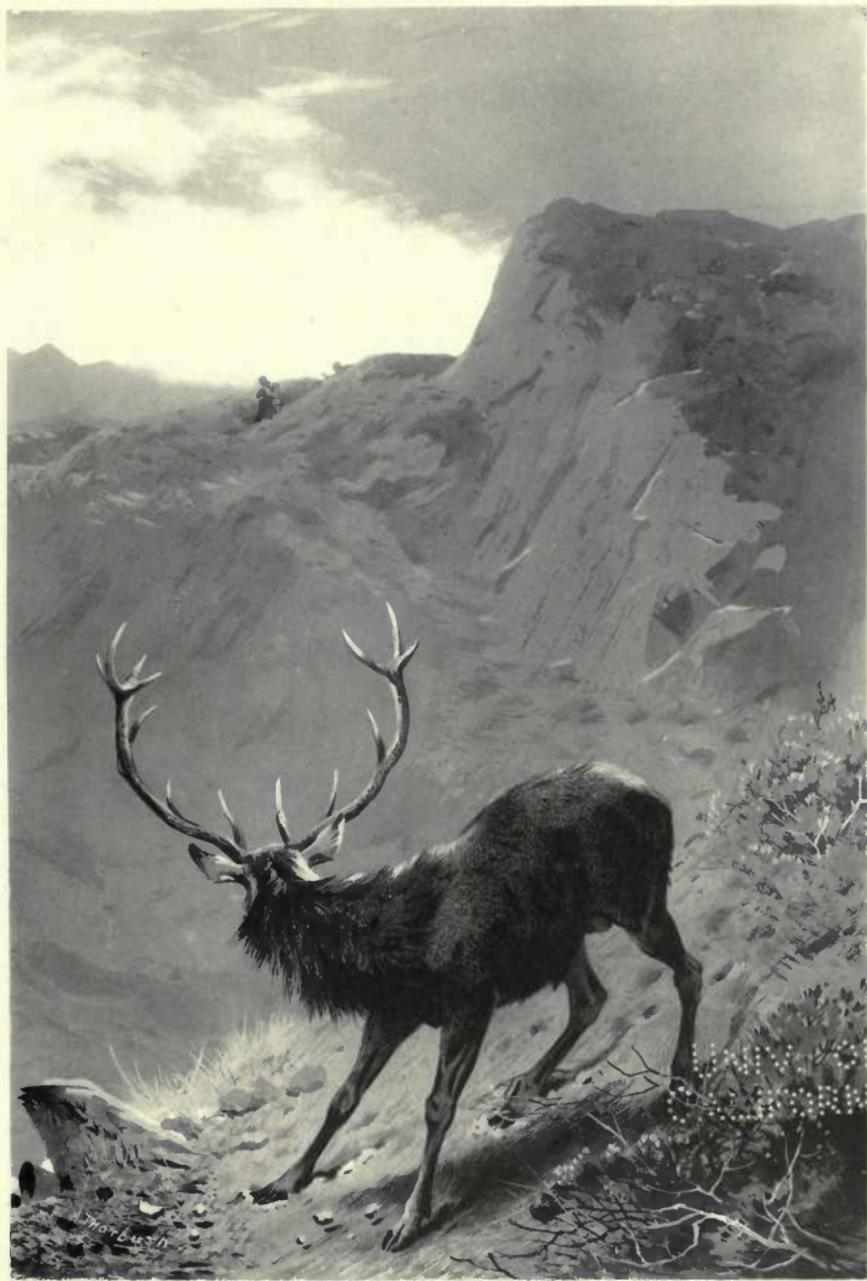
Now as I also knew there was another and a very much better one, I chuckled to myself at the thought of the surprise it would be to Angus if we succeeded in killing the royal. The situation was, however, getting critical and would speedily have to be decided, for it was growing dusk so rapidly that unless the small stag would kindly move out of the way it would be impossible to make a further advance without letting him into the secret of our presence, and in that case he would be certain to impart his discovery to his friends below.

For some precious minutes we remained immovable, while hoping the little brute would take himself off, but he kept on placidly browsing, while each mouthful he took was accompanied on our parts by anything but blessings on his head. Dusker and dusker it grew, and matters began to look very black; so much so, that I thought of confiding all about the royal to Angus, with the view of taking hurried counsel and attempting some rash or daring manœuvre. My own idea was to put the rifle at full cock, and then with fingers fast set between hammers and strikers, to make a dash down hill, trusting to luck to get near enough to the big stag to take a shot before he could run out of range. As I turned to whisper my plans, I saw two other good-sized stags coming up from the base of the hill to join the party above them, for in addition to the small stag with the big one there were also a lot of hinds. Angus had seen them too, and whispered me in sad, despairing accents, "Hech, sir, if it were but later in the season the other stag would soon put them awa, and show us where he was." As he finished speaking the two

intruders came to a halt, while the provoking little staggie that had delayed our advance disappeared with a caper; then the next second we heard the clatter, the thud, and the rush of a heavy beast in his gallop, accompanied by snorts of angry defiance, while the two stags in the distance turned to fly.

It was clear that the sounds we heard came from behind the projecting rock, so now our anxiety was as to whether the stag would continue his pursuit far enough down the hill to bring himself to our view. It was clear if he did put in an appearance we should be absolutely in full view of each other, so the full-cocked rifle was already at my shoulder as, after a few seconds of suspense, he bounded into sight about a hundred yards below me. He came thundering down the hill fairly broadside on, and excited as I was, it was yet impossible to help admiring the spectacle, for, though we were as motionless as the rocks around us, he "picked us up" in an instant, while bringing himself to a sudden halt with his fore legs planted stiff and wide in front of him, with his head turned directly on us. We were equally quick to see we were detected, and realized that in another second he would bolt down-hill to be lost to view. Alas! for him that second of hesitation was his death warrant, for the rifle spoke in the very nick of time, and he fell to all appearance stone dead. Quickly lowering the hammer of the left barrel and putting the stop on, we dashed down-hill with lengthy leaps to where he lay, only to reach him just as the sinewy hind legs began to kick in vigorous convulsions; on to one of them Angus flung himself, while I seized his horns and fixed his head to the earth, so thus between us we held him till the knife could be got at. A few minutes later the gallant stag lay prone on the now nearly dark hill-side, and we began to realize the good luck that had befallen us, for at our feet was a splendid thirteen-pointer, which next day, without heart or liver, scaled seventeen stone.

Then I turned mockingly to Angus while saying, "Well



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DEATH OF THE THIRTEEN POINTER.

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now what do you think of *my* little stag? I saw him when you told me to take a look at the small one, but I kept it dark, to give you a pleasant surprise." The reply came—"Hech, sir, but it's just the verra same stag I was hoping to get you a chance at. You see, sir, it was like this—I hae so often seen the sicht of such a gran beast as this mak my gentlemen all o'er of a tremble, that I just telled ye it was but a staggie we were after; but surely, sir, ye did not see him too, for he went out of sicht before I passed you my glass."

To this I answered, "Yes, Angus, but he came back again, and so I kept the matter dark, for I, too, have sometimes seen the sight of such a splendid stag make the best of stalkers rash, especially when he had to do his work against time; so we can each laugh at the other and cry quits over our thirteen-pointer. So now for a taste of Glenlivèt before we drag him down the hill."

It took us a good hour to haul our prize to the pony, and, though aching arms with want of breath more than once called a halt, we laughed at all troubles the while we cared not a jot how late home we should be. The shot had indeed been a lucky one, for on examination we found the bullet had gone high and smashed the spine directly over the heart, while two inches higher would have made it a miss altogether; moreover, it was almost the only wound that would have assured a few moments of absolute immobility; for, had the bullet been fair in the heart, the chances are the stag would have run a few paces at least, and then in his fall he would have launched himself rolling down hill, to be dashed to pieces like his predecessors. Our luck had also been the greater as it is but seldom stags notice each other so early in the season, for, as a rule, their jealousies do not commence until quite a fortnight later.

At the foot of the descent the pony-man met us, so all three lending helping hands our quarry was quickly strapped

on the saddle, while in the best of spirits a merry party stumbled home in the dark. On the way I confided to Angus that though I had killed plenty of deer, including several royals, yet the twelve points had never been exceeded, and that I was under a solemn vow the first time I broke the spell by killing a stag with more than a dozen points, to present the stalker with a bottle of whiskey for each point, so then, asking him what brand of mountain dew was his own peculiar weakness, I got for answer, "Thank you kindly, sir, it will be seven-year-old Glenleeve that I'll be taking."

6th, Sunday.—This was a day that passed slowly in our forest lodge. Of letters I had none to write, but not so the other two, for the moment breakfast was done my companions were hard at work with their pens; so I strolled quietly down the loch side, enjoying the sunny scenery, while rejoicing in the mere fact of being alive and in the possession of my senses. For was not each one gratified this lovely morning? The sight, by the beauties of Nature and the blue smoke as it curled from my pipe; the hearing, by the croaking of a raven in the distance, mingled with the cackling of the old cocks as they rose from the heather in front of me; the taste, by tobacco; the smell, by the indescribably refreshing scent of peat, moss, and heather; the feeling, by the pleasant sensation of breathing fine air, when walking in robust health over ground as soft as velvet to the tread. As the end of the loch was neared it brought me close to the rough road-side, where I met "the meenister," seated by his man, in a two-wheeled species of buggy. The reverend gentleman pulled up to converse with me, and as I noticed the dimensions of his conveyance, all fear of being offered a lift to the kirk was dispelled, for I was aware he was on his way to hold a service at the head of the glen. Now, lest from this my readers may put me down as a heathen, it must be stated that the aforesaid service was to be a Gaelic one. But thrice only have

I attempted to worship in that language, when the pronunciation with the intonation of the unknown tongue so reminded me on each occasion of my friend the famous Tweed fisherman, the late Mr. Thomas Tod Stoddart, and *his* Gaelic sermon, that I could never successfully resist the spirit of laughter the reminiscence called up; for Mr. Stoddart, though acquainted with but a few words of the language, had got a way of imitating a Gaelic "discoorse" which was so realistic and yet so comical that it never failed to convulse his hearers with laughter. I told the minister the story of the thirteen-pointer and sent him off to his congregation with a promise of venison to take home, if he would call for it at the lodge on the return journey, for Tom had told us to offer him some if any of us met him.

He continued his way while I went mine, and, arrived at the end of the loch, I followed on down the banks of the river running out of it; some ten miles away this Rhora stream joined the Spey, and later on in the season plenty of salmon come up to spawn.

For more than a mile I wandered on in the same happy spirit of contentment, when suddenly all feelings of that sort were scattered to the winds by the sight of a fine bright salmon leaping high in the air. I sat down by the bank of the pool to watch, and again and again he came to the surface, a twenty-pounder I was well-nigh sure, for at times he sprang far out of water and showed his goodly proportions, whilst more often he sent great oily swirls around him as he made those quiet rises which are maddening to a fisherman when witnessed with no rod in his hand. Bother! said I to myself; he will be absolutely certain to take the very first fly that comes over him; then, reader, with sorrow I confess it, there entered my head the wicked idea of having a try for him that very afternoon, even though it was the Sabbath, and jumping up I hastened home.

The two letter-writers had commenced luncheon, so hurrying

through mine I sneaked off to the gun room, where I knew there was a four-jointed trout rod, which, I was glad to find, when the joints were tied together and left separated by about a foot of string, would hang round my neck, two on each side of me, without showing below the skirts of a long macintosh coat. A short gaff was hidden up one of the sleeves, while with fly-book and reel in pocket, I hastened off to my salmon pool. No one saw me depart, and though it was hot work walking in the waterproof coat, I was soon at my destination. The pool was some three hundred yards away from the road-side, but quite hidden from view by high banks, so taking a look round to see the coast was clear, I plunged down the brae, and in a short time a small "Jock Scott" on a yard of very stout salmon gut was hanging from the end of the rod. After letting the gut soak for a few minutes I began to cast, when, just as anticipated, the fish took the fly greedily the moment it came over him.

Then the fun began, while all thought of the Sabbath was forgotten. With a great dash the fish left the pool to make down stream, but the going was good, so I kept with him, although he went faster than was pleasant. After a run of about two hundred yards we came to another big pool, and as it was also well hidden from view of the road, I was pleased when my fish showed an inclination to stay, and there he sulked, jiggered, sailed round and round, sprang out of the water, and tried all the dodges known to salmon to free himself, until, after some thirty minutes passed in this way, he began to weaken, and if I had had but a lengthier gaff, or a longer, stouter rod, the contest would now have been speedily ended, but it is a very difficult matter to bring a not quite exhausted fish up to a short gaff with a ten-foot trout rod. At last I made a try with the gaff, only to miss him, while as I did so I was electrified by a voice at my elbow saying, "Steady, steady, Mister Gee, or you'll lose him. Please gie me the gaff"; and suiting the action to the word,

the minister—for it was no less a personage, and I should have as soon expected to see Old Nick himself—had the fish cleverly ashore in a second; as I called out, “Well done, sir!” the good man looked half ashamed, but smiled bashfully as he said, “Aweel, Mr. Gee, it would have been a pity indeed to lose so fine a fish; but I shall be obleeged to you if you will not mention my interference in the matter.”

Of course I agreed, and how that fish was caught, or by whom it was gaffed, has ever remained a mystery in Strathmaacoe forest, for reaching home unperceived in the dusk, I took my prize to my bedroom, wrapped it in a clean towel, locked it in a portmanteau, and then, in the dead of night, when the household was snoring, I carried it on tiptoe to the larder, where it was safely deposited on a stone slab.

The minister’s appearance on the scene was accounted for by his seeing the top of my rod flash over the bank in the sunlight, and being alone on the return journey, having given his man leave to stay the rest of the day with some relations, he had left his trap on the roadside, well aware that his horse would stand for ever, and had come post-haste, full of indignation, to discover which of his parishioners was breaking the Sabbath-day. Sad to relate, that, somehow or other, Dyke got the credit of killing this fish, but the shameless chap took quite kindly to the idea, and did all he could to encourage the supposition.

Thus ended my first and last Sunday fishing in Scotland. To those people who do not fish, it may be surprising that I risked damnation for a paltry twenty-pound salmon; to those people who do fish it may seem odd that I did not devote other Sundays to the same sport; thus, as there is no just pleasing every one, I hope both fisher and non-fisher will each forgive me for a first offence.

7th.—Whilst finishing an early breakfast, a shepherd’s lad called at the Lodge on his way down the glen, to tell us there were a great lot of stags on the far end of the beat that was

to be mine that day, so I started with Angus forthwith for the spot indicated. On arriving at our destination, after spying the deer, we found the lad's stags were all hinds, for not a horn could be seen in the lot! Angus having duly blessed that boy, informed me there remained nothing else to do but gain the heights above us, and work our beat towards home, and thus, as there was nothing to be seen, by two o'clock our ground was exhausted, and I was hastening back to the Lodge for an afternoon with Dyke on the loch. Just on reaching home, we saw a figure cross the sky-line of the hill in front, which the glass showed to be Patcham's gillie bounding down with hasty strides; he was soon with us, when we learnt from him that "Mr. Patcham was just aal wrang the morn," for he had missed two good beasts, while about an hour since he had "haunched" a third, a fine ten-pointer, which had made off as if intending to cross into the next forest.

Patcham with his stalker was therefore some four miles away, awaiting the gillie's return with the dog "Cruachan." Now this animal was no magnificently highly bred deer-hound, but simply an enormous rough-coated St. Bernard, with a wonderful nose, which made him a perfect tracker of a wounded deer, while, moreover, his pace was so good that no injured stag, if shown to him not more than a few hundred yards off, could live in front of him, and, unlike most deer-hounds, Cruachan would kill a stag quickly when once alongside of him. Telling the gillie to go for the dog, we said we would accompany him, and in a few minutes the four of us were climbing the steep hill-side at our best pace, while Angus having handed me Cruachan's lead to catch hold of, he strained at it to such a degree that he almost trotted me up to the summit. Once there, we started at a double, soon to reach the disconsolate Patcham with his equally depressed attendant. The former received me grumpily enough, although, while we hastened to where the wounded stag was last seen, a few energetic remarks were whispered to me, distributing the

blame of the misses pretty evenly between the rifle, the stalker, and a cock-grouse.

Then Angus took Cruachan, still in the lead, and showed him the track of the stag; the dog picked it up at once, and we all went forward at a trot, Angus holding on to Cruachan with all his strength. In this way we covered a long distance, but presently the redoubled impatience of the dog warned us we were nearing our quarry, and as we cleared the next hill-top there he was, full in view, not two hundred yards in front of us, going very sick towards the adjoining forest. As he had not seen us, we dropped flat while Cruachan's collar was unfastened, when with a low growl of joy at a tremendous dash the dog sped headlong after his prey. As the stag saw him he quickened his pace, at which Angus merely laughed, as he said, "He is ours now for certain," and we jumped up to follow the chase.

It was a down-hill run into a burn; on the opposite side there was a sharp rise, which hid the deer from Cruachan, and as he went thundering into the stream, behold! there started up, almost at his very nose, a fine, strong, unwounded stag, so small wonder that the dog with a desperate bound forward settled down to the pursuit of this one. It was the more provoking to watch, as this deer went off at right angles to the line of the wounded beast, while as we knew too well the difference there was between a cold stag and a sick one, we stood dejectedly watching pursued and pursuer until both disappeared.

Angus, however, vowed he would yet have the ten-pointer even if he followed him all night, so telling us that Cruachan, as soon as the cold stag had fairly given him the slip, would be certain to return to the spot at which he had left us, we all sat down to wait.

In about an hour the dog came back, apparently but little the worse for his run. He was promptly put on the lead and taken once more to the tracks of the ten-pointer; it was getting dusk, but that made no difference to Cruachan, who held the

line of the deer correctly while leading us on till we were soon a long way in the next forest. Presently there were again signs of nearing our quarry, but it was so dusk that only objects on the sky-line could be discerned. The dog, however, strained so furiously at the lead that we felt sure of once more being close up with our victim, so Cruachan was slipped, the while Angus remarked, "We will just chance it; he surely must be near at hand."

Then we all stood still, with eyes intently fixed on the sky-line; suddenly the outline of the wounded beast appeared against the pale sky, and equally as suddenly we saw Cruachan bound on to his neck, when stag and dog rolled to the ground to be lost in view. We dashed up at best pace to find the stag lying dead with his neck broken, while the dog lay placidly by the side of his victim, uninjured, and apparently the least excited of the whole party. Visions rose to my mind of what a painting Landseer would have made of such a group, but they were roughly dispelled by Patcham saying, "Oh, how I wish the light was stronger and that I had my Kodak!" and then we fell to laughing, talking, and patting Cruachan. By the time the gralloch was over, as it was quite dark, we held a council of war—for as we were not in our own kingdom, it was a debated question whether we should despatch our men with a pony from our lodge to bring home the stag next day, or send a note to the owner of the forest in which we were, to explain the circumstances, and leave it to him to settle what was to be done; for it was clear that if he or his guests were stalking that way the next day, the arrival of our pony would spoil their sport. Our gillie solved the difficulty by saying, "Hech, sirs, a night on the hull will no harm me, so if ye'll leave Cruachan we can lie down together, and he will keep me warm. Then in the morning I can go to the lodge to tell the head forester what has happened, and beg the loan of a pony from him, which will bring the stag to our march after their party has spied the ground, if they should be coming this way."



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As this was thought to be the best plan, we therefore, leaving our two friends side by side, started at once for home.

As we had to go fourteen miles in the dark, tumbles were numerous, while the rate of progress was so slow that it was not till the clock in the hall of our lodge was striking midnight that we reached our destination pretty well "baked." Over a hasty mouthful of supper, Patcham confided to me he did not after all think so much of deer-stalking, for, said he, "I shall never get over missing those first two stags to-day, and then haunching the last one!"

We ought to have been at the Castle with our host this evening, but our non-appearance was unavoidable.

8th.—This morning we started for Strathmaacoë, meeting Tom and Lewes coming into the forest for their three days, so after explaining the reason of our delay, we continued our drive. On arriving at the house, we passed the remainder of the day in resting.

9th.—Rain fell in torrents, forcing us to stay at home, and Patcham, to my disgust, monopolised the smoking-room writing table nearly all the morning. My turn, however, came at last, for in turning over the leaves of the blotting-book I discovered the following very feeble poetical effusion, but to my joy it was signed "T. Surrey," so therefore I publish it on purpose to annoy him, and in the belief that it will more than make us quits for his trick with the fox's brush.

A STALK IN STRATHMAACOE

At start two miles uphill you go,
Hot tea with toast makes puff and blow!
And then, although you're boiling hot,
Down you sit in an east-wind spot.
Shivering hands pull out the passes.
To search the corrie, all the passes.
Then three miles off, a stag you spy,
So for him you're bound to try.
The first mile's done at racing pace,
And then you struggle up a place

HIGHLAND SPORT

All stones and rocks and fearful steep ;
 A halt, and then begins a creep.
 Half-bent double, crouching, crawling,
 Through cold burns and peat bogs sprawling ;
 With panting breath, and aching back,
 With pains that each tired limb doth rack ;
 At last within one hundred yards
 You find the hinds' keen eyes are guards
 To keep you waiting where you lie
 Till they feed o'er the line of sky.
 At length they go ! you raise your head,
 Sink your elbow in a mossy bed ;
 Inch by inch the rifle you protrude,
 Till to the stock your cheek is glued.
 Then crack ! rings out your number one,
 And when you see no mischief's done,
 Then crack ! again speaks number two.
 And there you lie and look most blue ;
 To think, in spite of all that crawl,
 You've gone and missed him after all.

T. SURREY.

10th.—It still rained as if the Deluge was about to commence afresh. In the afternoon we sallied forth in macintoshes to the Rhora, each armed with a double-handed trout rod and a small Blue Phantom. Twenty-four hours' rain had swollen the Rhora stream into a big, rolling river, rushing with resistless force to join the mighty Spey. Vague reports had reached us of monster trout that ascended this tributary during the autumn floods—stubborn monsters which dwelt spring and summer through in the black depths of Loch Insch, but which might yet be captured when pushing their way up flooded rivers to their spawning grounds.

It was settled that Patcham was to begin at once and fish upwards, whilst I was to go some miles above to fish down till we met, so after an hour's fast walking I commenced to try my luck. The water was of the darkest porter colour, and the gold sides of the phantom flashed pleasantly to the eye as it neared the surface. To fish in the river proper was useless, for it was just a raging torrent in which no fish could lie ; but

at varying intervals there were "croys" or small piers of stone built out into the stream to prevent the banks from being carried away by floods like the present one. At the back of each of these croys the current formed swirling quiet eddies on which white foam, dead leaves, and bits of stick revolved round and round, and into these places I dropped my phantom, and letting it sink, it was brought spinning to the surface again by a series of jerks from the top of the rod. Presently a black shadow flashed across the water and hid the lure, while the next second the rod was bent double, with the reel shrieking loudly as the fish dashed madly into the raging torrent, which carried him down stream faster than I could run. I did my best, but emptier and emptier grew the reel, until the last yard went out, then the rod point bent almost to the water, and click, the fish had been torn from his hold by the force of the current. Much surprised at the evident size of the fish with the suddenness of the whole affair, I wound up to recommence operations, with a determination not to allow other fish to get into a torrent from which it was evidently impossible to land them. By the time I met Patcham I had had nine runs and landed six heavy trout, the largest of which scaled $7\frac{1}{4}$ lbs., while I found my friend with five others, the heaviest of which was $6\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.; the whole eleven averaged exactly four pounds each, and to this day these remain the best eleven trout I have ever seen brought to bank.

11th.—The black clouds still continued to shower down their contents, so Berks and Lewes returned from the forest early this morning, quite "washed out of it," as they explained.

Up to this period but little chance had been given me of seeing anything of Lewes; this morning, however, we foregathered, and, though he was but three-and-twenty, it was soon clear he was not only a keen sportsman, but a good naturalist as well, while as he had hotly taken up taxidermy, we passed a very pleasant hour or two together.

After lunch Berks, Patcham, and I started off to the Rhora,

in the hopes of meeting a few more of the big trout, while Lewes sallied forth to stalk a blackcock or two for setting up. The trouting was a failure ; Berks took a brace of good ones, which was the total bag, and driven in by the incessant rain, we were all soon seated round a good fire in the smoking-room.

When the dressing-bell sounded for dinner, as Lewes had not put in an appearance, we took it for granted he had gone straight to his room. Berks and Patcham started to change, while I stayed behind to finish a book, and, whilst thus left alone, the butler entered and said—

“Mr. Lewes desires me to say, sir, that he will be much obliged if you would go up to him immediately.”

Of course I at once complied, but on knocking at his door I found it locked, and in reply to the cry which announced my presence, I heard him come slowly across the room to unfasten the door, whilst he said in a low voice, “Come in quickly, Gee.”

Entering the room with misgivings already gathering in my mind, I was horror-struck to see our friend had fallen back into an armchair close to the door, and that, while his face was deadly pale, his vest, shirt, and knickerbockers, which were of a light colour, were covered with large stains of blood. With a faint smile Lewes pointed with his right hand to his left arm, and then I saw that the entire forepart had disappeared. Hastening towards him, he looked quietly up into my face and said—

“It was all my own fault, Gee, but send for the doctor quickly, and promise me not to let my mother know, or to alarm the ladies in the house”; and then the poor fellow fainted.

Sharply, but not furiously, I rang the bell, which luckily the butler himself answered. Between us we lifted Lewes on to his bed, where he soon regained sufficient consciousness to swallow a good dose of whiskey. The butler, sworn to secrecy, was then sent off to despatch a carriage for the doctor. After a few minutes' thought, I saw it would be impossible to

keep Tom in the dark, and that without his aid we should not be able to make sure of carrying out Lewes' wishes with regard to the ladies, so, scribbling a pencil note, I sent it off to Tom's dressing room by a footman, and he was quickly with me. Of course, as I could tell him nothing of how the terrible accident had happened, we could only wait in silence for the doctor's advent. On the floor in a roll lay Lewes' blood-stained shooting coat, so Tom, with the intention of putting it out of sight, stooped and lifted it by one of the skirt tails that was sticking up. As he raised it the coat unrolled, and from it the missing portion of Lewes' arm fell with a thud on the floor at our feet. The gruesome sight turned us both nearly sick; but at that moment we heard footsteps coming towards the room, so, for fear of shocking others, Tom quickly flung the coat over the limb, while we rejoiced exceedingly when we found it was the noise of the doctor, for by great good luck our messenger had met him at the Castle gates as he was returning from his daily rounds.

Having forbidden Lewes to speak, the doctor made his examination and did his work in silence; then, taking Tom out of the room, he whispered that there was every reason to anticipate a good recovery, while he also wanted to know how the accident had happened, but on learning we could not even guess, he said, "Well, Mr. Berks, you will hear more presently, for some one must have helped him put the tourniquet on his arm, so no doubt whoever did that helped him here too." We then told him of the severed limb, and remarking that it would never be of any further use to Lewes, the doctor returned to the room to wrap it in a towel, while promising to relieve us of its presence when he departed. Tom had already had wit enough to send word to the ladies to say dinner would be half an hour late, so, leaving the patient with the doctor, who promised to remain till we returned, we explained Lewes' absence and our delay by saying that, as he had come in with a bad shivering fit, we had stayed to see him comfortably in

bed; and thus the wishes of our unfortunate friend were duly carried out, as for that night, at any rate, the ladies knew nothing of the accident.

After dinner we relieved the doctor, who, having given me full instructions what to do in certain events, took his departure, the while expressing a strong opinion the patient would require no further attention till the following morning, and so curled up in an easy-chair, I kept a night watch by the wounded man. In a few days Lewes was in a fair way to recovery, and the moment he began to gain strength he insisted on telling us the story of the accident, which I repeat in nearly his own words. Said he :—

“I had had several stalks at the old blackcocks, but having been defeated each time, was making my way home crestfallen, when in one of the corn-fields just outside the Castle gates I saw several fine old birds, so, as they had not seen me, I began to stalk them. In attempting to do this I had to creep through a beech hedge, which offered such a stout resistance to my passage that I was forced to leave go of my gun to use both hands in clearing the way, and then in pulling it after me somehow or other it exploded, and I knew that my own carelessness had caused a nasty accident, for I felt instantly that my arm was smashed just below the elbow; there was but little pain, and although the rush of warm blood caused feelings of terror, I realised my only chance was to stop the flow. Helped by the weight of the cartridges in the pockets, I managed to slip off my coat, and find a piece of old fishing line that I knew was there. I took one end between my teeth, while with the right hand I lashed it tightly round and round my arm till the bleeding stopped, then I took a good long pull at my flask with a sad enough look at my poor arm, and seeing that the fore part was hanging on by merely a bit of skin, I took my knife and severed it; the next moment I felt sorry for what I had done, so in the wild hope that it might yet be made to re-unite I wrapped the limb in my coat, and tottering to my



LONG ODDS ON THE BLACKCOCK.

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feet, I stole home unseen, crept to my room, and sent for you."

"Well, Lewes, you are indeed a good plucked one," we both exclaimed in the same breath, and then, seeing that the long talk had tired him, we left him to rest.

Good nursing by kind friends soon put Lewes on his legs again, and it can be stated here that in the following year he was shooting once more at Strathmaacoe, while his friends vowed he did better with one arm than with two; with extraordinary readiness also he learned "to do for" himself without his left hand, and apparently but one matter only caused him vexation or regret, and that was his inability to fashion his white dinner tie into a bow.

12th and 13th, Saturday and Sunday.—We rested both these days, and looked after our invalid.

14th, Monday.—Patcham and I went to the forest for the day. We both made handsome misses, so came back very grumpy.

On our way out to the forest as we neared the wire fence which divided it from the sheep ground, a turn of the road disclosed to view a small crowd of people who had evidently alighted from two good-sized brakes drawn up hard by. We at first took them for tourists, although we speculated what could have induced such an early picnic. As we drove up we saw the party had raised a white post, and as they gathered round, it required no second glance to tell us what this upright was, for at right angles from it there projected a long white arm, on which was painted in large black letters, "Public Road to Kirknell." Some of the party were busily employed in planting this firmly in the earth, whilst others indulged in much laughter with many jokes.

Promptly recognising that we were in the presence of a group of right-of-way maintenance gentry, we left our "machine" to join the party, who watched our approach with countenances expressive of mirth mingled with fear,

for right well they knew their mission could be no pleasant one to Tom Berks or his foresters.

We found them a very civil, well-spoken lot of men, while their leader courteously informed us that from time immemorial there had been a road to Kirknell through the forest of Strathmaacoe. In this he was correct, but he omitted to state that the aforesaid road had never at any time been fitted for wheeled traffic, while also he ignored the fact that for the last two hundred years the track had not been used except by an occasional shepherd. We very politely asked our informant to point out the road, and further inquired whether the party, together with the carriages, were about to start for Kirknell, and he smiled as he answered, "Well, no, sirs, not to-day; we are leaving it till others have worn the track plainer or made the road better."

We knew that all traces of the track disappeared a few yards from where we stood, and in the whole way through the forest only in two places did they again appear for a short distance, so no one could have found their way anywhere by following these indications. Then we parted with our right-of-way acquaintances, and in the dusk of the evening as we journeyed home we found the sign-post at the entrance to the forest looking quite ghostly in its brand-new whiteness. On reaching home we learned from Tom that he had met the whole brigade on their return, when after a short parley the company had been invited to the Castle, where they were so well entertained that they departed singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow." With regard to this sign-post, I must now anticipate matters by stating that a few days later it was found drowned in the burn by the side of which it had stood so proudly for so brief a time.

The right-of-way division were unkind enough to say that the hands of wicked men had placed villainous saltpetre beneath their trophy and hence its downfall. The foresters of Strathmaacoe, however, hooted this theory to scorn, while

vowing the stags themselves, alarmed at the prospect of a tourist-traffic through their quiet haunts, had combined together in a great charge on the white post, and had knocked it into the water. With grave concern Tom Berks heard both sides of the case, before he himself started off to inspect the scene of the disaster, when after a most minute examination he arrived at the conclusion that lightning alone had been the instrument of destruction. Anyway, the sign-post has never been replaced.

15th.—This was a great day for Dyke and his perambulator, for as most of the corn was cut on one of the lowland beats, we three shot partridges in line, and as there were plenty of roads, by continually heading us Dyke secured many driven shots. It is true careless gunners might have peppered him, but when we mentioned the matter, he paid us the compliment of ridiculing the idea of three old hands making any such mistake. We had a very fine day's sport, getting no less than 171 head: made up of 115 partridges, 7 grouse, 25 hares, 4 ducks, 9 snipe, and 11 rabbits.

16th.—Alas, with waking thoughts came the remembrance that this day I was to say adieu to my kind host and hostess and all the pleasures of Strathmaacoe. Now as it cannot be disputed that leave-takings are odious if unavoidable necessities, I will refrain from describing my parting with Tom and Mrs. Berks or their guests, but suffice it to say I sincerely hope some of my readers may come to the end of this diary with but one iota of the regret I felt at leaving my kind friends.

CHAPTER V

SALMON

IN conjunction with some notions of my own, this chapter contains the opinions which many good and observant anglers have expressed to me verbally or by letter. Each and all, however, have been somewhat prone to preach from the narrow standpoint of some favourite river; moreover, all hints and suggestions have reached me as detached items spread over a series of years; in the interest, therefore, alike of salmon, netters and anglers I have endeavoured to marshal these facts and fancies into one solid phalanx.

Before proceeding further, however, I will ask permission of my readers to narrate the memoirs of an unusually intelligent, well-educated salmon of fifty-four pounds weight. We all know there are talking birds, the Scriptures tell us of a talking ass, while the Westminster Aquarium has recently advertised a talking horse, so for these reasons I must beg my readers to accept the assurance that the before-mentioned fish duly confided to me the following episodes of his life. It is my secret as to how such communication was made, and suffice it to say, as I am bent on silence, it remains but for my readers to remember the usual fate of the too pressing questioner.

Of course, also, everyone is aware that birds, beasts and fishes can converse with each other, although at the moment of first introduction an Indian mahseer or a Florida tarpon would not at once perfectly understand salmon language, yet they would get on better than a Highlander and a Matabele meeting for the first time. Here then, as nearly as possible in his



THE BIRTH-PLACE OF THE FIFTY-FOUR-POUNDER.

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very words, are the adventures of my friend the fifty-four-pounder, who by the way was a male fish.

“My earliest recollections are of a rocky pool in the Dee, near Balmoral, where I saw many of my relations devoured by herons, big trout, and gulls, and it was only owing to our extra caution in taking advantage of the shelter offered by every large stone that I, with many others, escaped a similar fate.

“In addition to the enemies already enumerated, we learnt from the red deer, the grouse, and the rabbits, that as we grew older we should experience relentless hostility from the big, upright, two-legged creatures we sometimes saw striding along the banks of our pool. As our friends spoke of them with bated breath, whilst disappearing at the sound of their voices, so likewise we also quickly learnt to dread these creatures, while having no word in our own language by which to describe them, we adopted the one used by our hairy, furred, and feathered friends, and called them ‘Foes.’ For a considerable time we were under the impression that the male Foes covered up their legs, while the females of the species only wrapped theirs round with cloth; this we were led to suppose was the fact by noticing the more brilliant colours, together with the shapelier forms, disported by the Foes whose legs were hidden, so we jumped to the conclusion that, like the male of the pheasant, the blackcock, and the grouse, the males of the Foes also carried the brightest plumage with the comeliest figures. Observation, assisted by further discussions with our friends on the bank, eventually taught us our surmise was incorrect, and that amongst the Foes the laws which govern many of the birds and the beasts are exactly reversed.

“You see, fish start in life under one great disadvantage, for whereas deer, grouse and bunnies have the benefit of parental care and advice, we have to do without either the one or the other, and it is, perhaps, to compensate us for this loss that we are kept so small for so long. Of course, I am not capable of measuring time exactly in the same way as the Foes do, but

I can yet remember that twice I saw the ice and snow 'bree' succeeded by mild weather, while during that time many of our young bird friends had not only reached maturity, but had themselves become parents.

"The next event of any importance in my life was the strange fact that one spring day I began to change colour. The three marks on each of my sides disappeared, and I was soon swimming about in a pretty, bright, silver coat. The same thing happened to the most of my comrades, while all those that had donned this new garb became possessed with a frantic desire to explore the wonders of the waters lower down the river; so the word was passed round that a down-stream expedition would start on the morrow.

"Accordingly, on the next day, some thousands of us began to swim with the current. As we did so, we soon perceived that all our enemies were still with us; in addition there appeared also two new terrors in the shape of tempting worms and tiny flies. Now I had at times, when watching from the depths of the river, seen some of the female Foes shudder, shriek, and turn pale at the sight of a worm, but I can nevertheless assert that they are one of the greatest of dainties if they be of the right sort. Many of these worms and flies were, however, possessed of such strength that when we seized them, they retaliated by carrying us ashore. To their fascinations many of my friends fell victims, although I noticed that on all these sad occasions there was invariably a Foe on the bank, until by degrees I learnt to associate their presence with the appearance of these powerful flies and worms, so therefore I and many others, taking counsel together, agreed to look before we leaped, and by so doing I now know for certain that we escaped great danger.

"One day, together with four close friends, I was resting behind a stone, in a pool above Ballater Bridge, when behold, one of the nicest little worms I had ever seen came rolling round the corner of our shelter. It was quite a new species to

me, being beautifully marked with yellowish red rings, while it looked so tempting, smelt so sweet, and was wriggling so prettily in its efforts to escape, that, forgetting all caution, I made a dash at the enticing mouthful. Truly delicious it tasted, but as I turned to regain my resting-place, the horrid creature began to wrestle with me. In spite of my struggles I was hauled to the surface, only to be sent flying over the head of a small Foe into a grass field. Here I still fought my best to get rid of this demon worm, and while growing fainter at every kick, the small Foe picked me up, and kindly setting me free from the worm, threw me back into the river, the while calling out to a female Foe seated behind him in the grass, 'It's only a horrid little smolt.'

"I lost no time in rejoining my companions, and telling them of my adventure, we all swore off worms of any description. Many flies, however, were so tempting, but so exactly like the real ones we had just previously swallowed with pleasure and impunity, that great numbers of us fell victims to them, and very few had the good luck to meet with treatment as kind as I had experienced, for not one in a hundred came back to us.

"On our way down stream we fell in with other companies of fish, all equally bent on the same journey, while each pool we came to added to our numbers, until at length we were a countless crowd. Presently the rapid rush of the river ceased, and we found ourselves in deep, slow-running water, in which, by-and-by, we were brought to a halt by a wall of brown weed, which appeared to stretch right across the river. It was of singularly regular shape, but through it most of us wriggled our way in safety. This remarkable weed had a peculiar but not unpleasant smell, but when working my way past it, I saw many of our large relations hung up in its folds, while in spite of their struggles they were slowly but surely pulled to the shore, where I saw a cluster of Foes standing by the water-edge, which induced me to make a note of the event for future guidance, for it was clear our enemies were again persecuting

us in what to me was then a novel manner. Alas, now in my old age I am but too well aware of their fell designs, and how difficult they are to defeat!

"We then entered water as black as night, which smelt and tasted in a most nauseating way, so more by feeling than by sight we hastily continued our downward course, but not without the loss of many lives, as thousands of the weakly ones amongst us succumbed to the effects of the filthy fluid in which we found ourselves. After some time we were once more able to see, and then as we were revived from the dreadful journey by a deliciously stimulating but unknown taste, I recalled to mind what I had heard the great ones of my race saying to each other in the pool of my birth as they talked over this delightful relish while longing to enjoy it once more. Very soon after this the river had gone altogether, and we found ourselves in very deep, clear, quiet water. Greedily our gills drank in the tonic surrounding us, while our mouths were incessantly busy in satisfying the enormous appetite we all now felt, for one mouthful of this water appeared to contain more food than the river had afforded us in a whole day; also we gorged ourselves on tiny fish while passing our spare time in leaping, playing and rejoicing in the pellucid depths.

"For some sixty sunsets this life continued, while as we never ceased to eat, we grew big and strong at a great rate. During this time our chief enemies were the gulls and the coal fish, for as long as we were small the seals did not consider us worthy of notice, so we had indeed a happy period, till at last the whole of us were some twenty or thirty times heavier than when we entered these regions of plenty. Then there came to us all an irresistible desire to revisit the scenes of our babyhood. Those amongst us who had been born lower down the river than ourselves declared their intention of delaying their start, and the nearer to the mouth of the river each company had been born, the later they intended to make their departure.

In addition to the wish to roll again in the rapids of the Dee, we were expedited on our way by anxiety to rid ourselves of biting insects that had attached themselves so fast to our bodies as to become immovable, but which we hoped would be washed away by the rush of the streams.

"When the day dawned for our company to start, we made at once for the nearest land. I cannot explain how we knew in which direction to go, but suffice it to say no mistake was made, for after a long swim we reached a rock-bound shore, while in an equally mysterious manner the whole of us knew which way to turn our heads in order to reach our goal. In an extended line we commenced to swim along the coast, till we were pulled up by a wall of weed, which bore to my mind a most suspicious resemblance to the wall we had met in coming down the river. We were now too big to pass through the numberless small diamond-shaped holes in front of us, so resolving to exercise the greatest caution, I fell back to watch my companions pushing their noses in vain against this barrier. They followed along the wall until I saw many of them crowding into a great square space made of the same curious weed, and mindful of my river experience, I darted back, taking with me as many of my friends as I could alarm. As a crowd of us steered clear of the great square of weed, we noticed a stout pole stood out through the length of the structure, and while passing on we observed many of our numbers having got into the square could not get out again. We therefore stayed our progress to take counsel together as to whether we could in any way assist them, when a boat containing Foes approached the place where our friends were detained.

"Now as long as the water is deep boats do not frighten us at all, so we watched the proceedings, and on arriving over the top of the square the Foes pulled at the pole passing through it, when suddenly the whole thing collapsed into a bag, which was quickly drawn into the boat with all our struggling relations inside it! Horrified at the sight, we sadly

pushed on for the mouth of the river, but the numbers of these devilish traps that we met on the way was extraordinary, for we had no sooner left one behind us than we were encountered by another. Alas, at each we lost some of our numbers, until when we arrived at Dee mouth but barely one half of our original force remained, while we began to think the Foes of the sea were even worse than those of the river.

"It is not easy to explain how I with so many others escaped, but I have heard the deer say that in every herd of animals, the Foes included, there are ever some who are more lucky or more clever than others, and I suppose under this head must be numbered all those members of our company who now found themselves at the mouth of the Dee. We rejoiced as we felt the fresh water pouring down on us, for we recognised that the river was running bank high, so eagerly pressing forward, we lost no time in dashing as fast as we could through the horrid, thick, black, dirty water I remembered so well, while as we again reached the clear we one and all began to leap and race about for joy.

"On the banks there were great numbers of Foes walking about with their hands in their pockets, and in many places they halted in crowds to watch us, while some of them stamped their feet and shook their fists at us as if in a rage at our innocent joy; on the shore there were boats lying empty, while beside them, stretched on rails to dry in the sunshine, were long lengths of the treacherous weed that had trapped so many of our comrades in the sea, which I now know the Foes call nets.

"Surprised at the quiet attitude of the Foes, we began to hope their cruel natures had been changed; but just then we met a big old fish of twenty pounds, who mentioned that, luckily for us, this was a day the Foes called the Sabbath, and that every seventh day this festival recurred, while during it they agreed to leave all birds, beasts, and fishes unmolested. By the following morning we had become a good deal

scattered, as the night had been dark for travelling and the water rushes difficult to ascend, so the strongest had passed on ahead, leaving the weakest a long way behind. This day I found myself with half a dozen other tired friends resting beneath a boulder in a deep but rapid stream.

“Now the one drawback to river life is the scarcity of food, for excepting in rainy weather worms rarely come to us, so we have to manage as best we can by eating water shrimps with such like trifles, helped out by a few flies from the surface; therefore, being hungry after my exertions, my eyes were on the watch for something I might devour. Presently there was ever such a little splash in the water a long way to one side of me; then, lo and behold, I saw coming towards my hiding place a beautiful little insect, the like of which I had never seen before. With quiet, regular strokes it was at last playing about over my head, all unconscious of my presence. It worked its tiny fins, while it glittered and displayed many of the bright colours of the little fish off which we had all fed so plentifully in the sea; so saying to myself, ‘Surely it *must* be *good*—at any rate, I’ll try it!’ with a sweep of my tail I darted from my lair, and falling below my victim, with sensations of fear mingled with delight, I closed my teeth on the enticing morsel and prepared to rush back to my shelter. As I turned, I found that something checked me, but as there was nothing to pain or otherwise cause alarm, I did not pay much heed to the matter, until glancing upwards I saw there was a long piece of transparent grass hanging to the insect, so thinking this might have caught in a stick or a stone, I shook my head to free it, while as I glanced once more to the bank I observed an approaching Foe. As he advanced I felt an odd sensation of being in some way connected with him, for each movement he made appeared to be reflected in my own person, so that every step he took towards me lowered me a correspondingly further distance down stream, and then, horror of horrors, it flashed through my mind I was in some way fastened

to that detested Foe, even as I had been fastened once before by the tiny fly of the small Foe in the days of my smolthood.

"Therefore, with all the energy of despair, I plied both tail and fins until I had placed a long distance between us. This effort tired me far more than usual, so as the Foe was out of sight, I rested on the bed of the river to recruit. At the same moment I began to experience a peculiar jarring, grating, whirring feeling in my mouth, which, as the Foe once more came into view, seemed to throb in unison with the motions of his right hand, as it twirled rapidly round.

"As the water became shallow I looked up and noticed that what I had taken to be a transparent weed was a line of some nearly invisible material, which, leaving the water just above my head, joined on to a thicker one passing over the top of a thin bent wand, eventually to find its way into the hands of the Foe. Realising now most fully what dire peril I was in, I gathered my strength for one desperate dash for freedom, and anxiously I waited till the Foe was opposite me, with the point of the wand nearly touching the water over my head; then with all my might and main I suddenly flung myself high out of the stream, while as I fell back something went click! and as I instantaneously knew I was free, with a rattle I made my way up stream to my friends. As I passed the Foe, he was standing looking at the water with a Sabbath expression on his face, while his wand was straight and flashing beautifully in the sunshine.

"On reaching my retreat, I found to my dismay that the horrid insect was still sticking in my mouth, so during the relation of my adventures my comrades were devising methods to rid me of the nuisance, while they examined it closely. They told me it had a black and yellow body, with two small eyes half way down it; there was a shiny golden streak on its back, while its legs were black and white. The creature did not pain me in the least, but I began to reflect that it would be unpleasant to go about for ever with this oddity in my nose,

so by dint of rubbing it against stones, and by pushing it about in all directions, the tormentor was at last got rid of.

"A careful note was made of this insect, so that we might give it a wide berth if any of us met it again, and this done, we rested quietly till the sun's slantendicular rays illumined the depths of the Dee, but unlike the fishes that I once heard a bright-plumaged female Foe describe to a male, instead of crying out, perspiring and using bad language, we splashed about in the heat until we were tired out and glad to rest again. While lying in tranquil enjoyment, we presently noticed another remarkable insect just over our heads, but it was totally unlike the one that had brought me to such trouble, for it moved with quicker jerks, while it had a beautiful blue body which glittered in the sun; it had also blue legs, but no eyes in its back. Nevertheless I regarded it with suspicion, but before I could say a warning word a hungry comrade had seized the brilliant little animal, while as at the same second I saw the nearly invisible string reaching to the Foe on the bank, I realised that my friend would have to face the same danger I had so recently escaped from.

"Hastening to his side, I told him to do exactly as I had done; he took my advice to the letter, but, alas! after making his leap into the air he was still tightly fastened to the Foe. Repeatedly he leapt, but it was all useless, and then I took a look towards the bank, when behold this time it was a female Foe that held the bending wand, while behind her stood a male Foe, whose hands clutched a long stick, at the end of which glittered a cruel-looking, big, bright metal hook. Over the face of the male Foe there then came the same expression I had so often seen appear as they drank from the small metal cups which so many of them carried in their pockets, while over the face of the female Foe there spread a similar look of content, only we had noticed that this expression in *their* faces was usually produced by something the male Foe had whispered in their ears. Alas for my poor friend, I could but shudder as

I saw him dragged from the water by the cruel hook, only to be ruthlessly knocked on the head, while the heartless, wicked Foes fell to rejoicing over his body.

“With deliberate design have I used the term insect, although I am now well aware the Foe call these creatures ‘flies.’ Of course to their eyes they may appear to be flies, but certain it is to us salmon they seem to be water insects, for the only resemblance they bear to anything on which we feed in the sea is their glitter, their colour, and their liveliness, by which three things they often remind us of the toothsome shoals of the incessantly quivering fry of the sea fish; moreover, these insects of the Foe seem to be for ever trying to elude pursuit, which fact alone acting on the mind of any strong, healthy, hungry salmon is well calculated to excite the desire to catch and examine the curiosity. Fly, forsooth! It is an insult to our intelligence to imagine the thing a Foe calls a ‘Jock Scott’ or a ‘Blue Doctor’ can possibly be mistaken for a fly by even the most giddy or inexperienced of grilse. Neither are we so stupid as to take this so-called fly for a fish; we simply accept it as a water insect that may be good to eat, because we are hungry, and well aware we must not expect to find rich sea food in fresh water. In the words of your poet Milton, we ‘take it for a faery vision of some gay creatures of the elements that in the colours of the rainbow live and play’! At times it is the black with yellow body that tempts our appetites, at others the pale blue colour wins the day for the Foe. Likewise in certain weather and water, especially when it is a big river with a cold atmosphere, we are more readily persuaded to feed by the sight of large insects such as ‘The White Eagle’ and ‘The Gordon,’ and at such times I know but too well both these flies can be used against us with deadly effect.

“Once again, however, do these two insects well demonstrate the crass perversity of the Foe in speaking of them as flies, for where in all the wide world is any fly resembling

either of them? Nevertheless, we salmon are very fond of feeding on certain natural flies, and thousands and thousands of 'March Browns' have I swallowed with gusto, while, alas! numerous are the friends I have lost by the Foe's all too natural imitation of the same.

"Greatly upset and distressed at the barbarity I had witnessed, I was so terrified that I did not return to my friends, but rushed up-stream, till at last I came to a halt in a very big, long pool, which later on a friendly hind, who came to drink, told me was called 'Waterside,' in the Forest of Glen Tana, and here I found companions of all sizes. Daily, however, the Foes appeared on the banks to throw to us insects of every variety of size and colour. One Foe in particular, tall, thin, copper-coloured, and clad in grass-green plumage, seemed specially able to send his insects further than all the others, and when we saw him coming and fled to the opposite bank, he would yet send his fiendish lures right on to our noses. My friend the old hind told me later this Foe was called 'Boatie' Stevens, who was very proud of being able to send the insect at the end of his line further over the water than any other Foe in all Scotland, and we laughed with astonishment that such trifles could be considered as important by such clever beings as the Foes undoubtedly were. However, for the next forty sunsets we were safe from even him, for of rain there fell none, while the water grew small, and the sun shone so brightly all day, that as we could easily detect the thin line with the insect at the end of it, not a single one of us was victimised.

"After that, when the flood-gates of heaven were opened, I continued my upward journey leisurely, but only travelling a short distance between sunrise and sunset. Numerous, however, were the insects offered me during this period, but recollecting the cruel scenes I had witnessed, I passed them all unnoticed. It was not so, however, with every one, for, alas! never a day went by but what I saw other fish try

to devour some of these delusions, when again and again the same drama of murderous torture was enacted by rejoicing Foes.

“Then there came one special day when every pool through which I travelled had one or two of the Foes on the banks, while all that day the river was full of their treacherous insects; then, strange to say, on the day following there was not a Foe or an insect to be seen, and as they did not again appear, it seemed as if our existence was suddenly forgotten, for from that time forward every day was a Sabbath to us. In uneventful quietude I worked my way up-stream to another fine pool, which an old crow, who was poking about on the shore for food, told me was called ‘Tassack,’ of Cambus o’ May. Here I was destined to experience some totally new sensations, for as I swam into ‘Tassack’ I was joined by a slender grilse girl with a beautifully small head and tail, and whom I had formerly met in the deep sea.

“What charm there was about her I could not tell, but certain it was that from the moment of meeting I never left her side and could not bear to lose sight of her, while altogether there seemed to be a greater pleasure in life than I ever dreamt of. Now that I am old, I doubt if I did not over-rate these joys, for what with the life she led me by pretending to go off with others, thus tempting me into many tough battles with rivals, I now see that the period could not have been absolutely so full of delight as my fancy then pictured. However, this is only by the way, and an old fifty-four-pounder is entitled to a sneer at the pleasures of his grilsehood. Suffice it to say that we were duly married, the afore-mentioned old crow kindly cawing the service, while our honeymoon was passed in perfect happiness on a shallow, secluded bank of gravel.

“The frost and snow came and went, and then when we were discussing plans for another trip to the sea, for a change of water and food, all my enjoyment was scattered to the

winds, for one night, when the water was big, a fiend in the shape of an otter snatched my bride from under my nose, while next morning I had the misery of seeing her lying dead on the bank, with a great hole eaten out of her beautiful shoulders. Oh! how I rejoiced a few days later, and with what pleasure I saw the detested, dreaded otter struggling in the jaws of something which held him tightly fastened to the bank, and then while I feasted my eyes on his discomfort, my revenge was perfected by watching a Foe come along the side of the river, who killed the fiend with his stick, and threw him contemptuously into a large brown bag.

“With cheeks marked with orange stripes; with sides clad in dull, blackish mourning, I then in solitude began to drop tail first slowly down stream, only making progress when I felt there was sufficient water to take me in safety, for now the Foe was once again tempting us with his glittering insects.

“Hungry as I often was, all temptations were resisted, while several times each day there came great crowds of ‘March Browns’ floating down the stream, off which I with many others made fairly good repasts. I became, however, so accustomed to see some of my brethren seize the insects of the Foe that, instead of pitying them, I began to laugh at their stupidity, the while I flattered myself on my own cleverness. In this case, as is usual, pride met with its due reward, for a little later, when resting quietly, there came a most lovely fat minnow dancing across the stream, the while trying all it could to escape from me; in a second I had closed my mouth over it, but only to find once more that the artful Foe had anticipated my tastes, and that I was held fast by many pricking points. I fought my best, but tried in vain every trick former experience had taught, until at last, utterly exhausted, the Foe drew me to a sandbank, and, stepping to where I lay gasping, lifted me by the tail, while saying to a companion, ‘Only another brute of a kelt.’ Then, placing me on the sand, he held me so tightly as to prevent all struggling, while with a knife he cleverly

cut the minnow from my mouth, so thinking that my last hour had come, I fainted, as much from exhaustion as from fright.

"When I came to my senses the Foe was holding me in the stream by the tail, while as he covered and uncovered my gills with water by pushing me gently backwards and forwards, with spasmodic gasps I slowly began to revive. When I was again fairly strong, to my great astonishment he pushed me into the stream, where, seeking deep water with all possible speed, I quickly lost sight of him.

"Some days were here passed in recruiting from the terrifying exertions of this adventure, and then, resuming the downward journey, I witnessed many other fish hauled ashore by both insect and minnow, the Foe often after piercing them through with the cruel fork, flinging them back to the water to take their chance of life; and as but few of these poor wounded ones recovered, I congratulated myself at having escaped similar harsh treatment.

"I now began to meet, day by day, great numbers of sick friends; it mattered not whether they were coming up stream or going down, but almost every other one was attacked by a plague, though what caused it was a mystery to us all. The sickness showed itself by producing great white blotches on our bodies, which by degrees spread all over us, till some amongst us eventually became nearly as white as snow. A large patch of this misery appeared on my back, which produced such irritation, depression, and weakness that I began to fear of reaching the salt water.

"Hundreds and hundreds of other sick ones crossed my path, while on the banks many Foes walked to and fro with Sabbath faces, as with sharp hooks at the end of long poles they pulled the plague-stricken ones out of the water, and, after killing them, put their bodies in deep holes in the ground.

"While resting in the Aboyne Bridge pool a friendly fellow of some thirty pounds took compassion on my youth and

offered to be my companion to the sea, and, as this was his fifth descent of the river, many perilous adventures with hair-breadth escapes did he relate. From him I quickly gained much useful knowledge, even learning the titles of some of the Foes and the names of many parts of the river. The next morning we saw two of our enemies stop on their way over the bridge to peer into the depths below, but this was such an ordinary occurrence that neither of us had previously paid any special attention to the matter. These two Foes were big, striking-looking specimens, while the moment my companion saw them I noticed his sides turned a shade blacker, the red streaks on his cheeks deepened in colour, while the great hook at the end of his lower jaw shook with evident terror. Giving me a nudge, he whispered—

“It is time for us to be off, youngster, for those two Foes looking down on us are perhaps the most terribly persistent of all our enemies; year by year they return to destroy us, so now take a good look at them. The heaviest goes by the name of Digby Cayley, and the other is just one George Whitehead; so if ever you see either of these, or any others of the Foes I will presently point out, then, as you value your life, keep your mouth shut and make a fast day. Ugh! to my shame be it spoken, I must admit both of yon devils have had me by the tail as a kelt.’

“At the end of this speech we at once commenced to drop down stream, passing Ballogie, Woodend, Cairnton, Blackhall, and Inchmarlo, all of which are favourite haunts of the Foe, for on account of the numerous deep holding pools in that part of the river, many of our sea-comers were tempted to rest some time ere facing the rush of the rapids above, and this massing of our numbers ever gave the Foe a better chance of using their lures. On the way down my counsellor pointed out to me ‘Muster’ Drummond, standing on the Bridge of Potarch, Tom Farley, and David Rae were by the side of ‘Ferracht,’ and ‘Muster’ Hay with Frank Farquharson stood at the ‘Big

Gurnell,' so with nervous gasps my friend bubbled into my ear a warning to give all these Foes a very wide berth.

"Quitting this part of the river, we dropped quickly down through Crathes, Park, Durris and Drum, till the water widened to flow more quietly, and here appeared great numbers of the Foe on the banks and bridges, some of whom pelted us with stones, which we did not mind, for as they could be seen falling, they were easily avoided. Then presently we observed a boat crossing the stream above us; it was propelled at a great pace by four Foes, while a fifth stood at the end to pass long lengths of net into the river; heartily we congratulated each other on being clear of this danger, when, to our dismay, the boat was pulled swiftly round below us and back again to the bank it came from, while that terrible wall of net had surrounded us. Nearer and nearer it closed in, till presently the harsh thing was clinging round my body as it tore off my scales, and in a short time some hundred of us were all splashing in a few inches of water.

"Taking a last look at my native element, I vowed by all that was fishy, if I escaped this peril alive, that never again would I enter a river. We lay all huddled up in one gasping, struggling heap, while the Foes rushed towards us to cruelly seize and kill all salmon that had recently left the sea. Then in a body they rolled us that were left out of the net on to the shore, whereupon one of the Foe after looking us over cried out, 'Send the rest of these lanky beggars on their journey!' At this order the Foes began to kick us to the river with their hard boots, when all those of our party who were able to swim after such rough treatment dashed on towards the sea. As for myself, though badly bruised, I was not seriously hurt, for luckily for me a Foe had tried to kick three of us into the river at once, and as I was furthest from him, it was the other two of my friends who had been the chief sufferers, while the one nearest to the Foe died of his injuries. A few days in the salt water not only made us quite well again, but also completely cured the plague spots.

"Since those days, as I have devoted much trouble to acquiring fuller information about the Foes and their wicked ways, I now flatter myself I know as much about them and their devices as they know about me. The great problem I had set myself to solve was as to how we might avoid the perils besetting us in sea and river. It must be borne in mind that I had been caught as a smolt by a small fly, as a grilse by an insect, as a kelt by a minnow, and then by a net, and though my luck had been great in escaping each of these perils, the miserable fate of such multitudes of my friends had left me with an implacable feeling of resentment against the Foe.

"Immersed then in twenty fathoms of deep sea thought, I waited till the time came when many of us wanted to return to the joys of the river. Following in the rear of the first expedition that started, I soon saw the usual walls of netting standing out from the seashore, only they seemed to be even more numerous than in the past year, while a cursory inspection of these engines of destruction drove me back to the depths. There I met many others who having also made the river journey, survived to tell the tale, and by degrees we formed our plans. As every few weeks lapsed, I sent off a scout to the seashore with instructions to observe if the dreaded nets were still there, till at length one day our messenger returned with the good news of their disappearance. This scouting I had been induced to do by something I had overheard three seals say to each other. They had been lying on a rock basking in the sun, and had spoken very confidently of a time coming when all the nets in sea and river would vanish for a period. Ugh! then those horrid monsters discussed with much gusto an anticipated banquet of salmon!

"On communicating this news of the vanishing of the nets to my friends, I was unanimously elected leader of our band; so, calling them together, we started off for Dee mouth, which

having entered without molestation, we broke up into small parties in the lower reaches of the river, where the males of our company speedily took unto themselves wives, and enjoyed ourselves after the manner of our race.

“Thus far my schemes had been highly successful, but my great anxiety now was to discover when the Foe would resume their persecution, for the fact of meeting fish coming up out of the sea warned me it would not be long delayed. As leader of the company, I had forbidden any member to ascend the river higher than myself, so, on passing the word round in the pool I was in, we all assembled and began to drop down stream. At each pool we came to we picked up others of our band, while as we swam past the netting-stations we saw it was high time, for the boats with the nets were being got ready; thus, unmolested, and with every salmon want satisfied, we all once more reached salt water, and in this manner a yearly increasing body of fish contrive to avoid the snares and allurements of the Foe.

“It is nearly needless to state that the grilse boys and girls scoffed at our theories; go their own way they would, most of them paying for their frolic with their lives. As every season, however, fresh members join our company, we hope thus to meet the war of extermination carried on against us by the Foe.

“Occasionally it happened that relations who had lost their way from the Don, the Deveron, the Spey, the North and South Esk, the Tay, and the Earn, would unexpectedly appear in our midst; from these we heard doleful tales of destruction; the netting being carried on so continuously and so easily that it was nearly impossible for even a grilse to pass.

“I now know that the short truces granted us on the Sabbaths, with the longer ones allowed us late in the season, are but given to prevent the extinction of our race. So strong, however, is the feeling of the Foe against us, and so great is his greed to eat us or sell us, that the best-disposed

of them are compelled to employ many stout guardians to protect us during these close times, and, knowing all that I now do, it is certain no fish is so mercilessly or so incessantly persecuted as we poor salmon. Each day we pass in fresh water we are in danger from poachers, who use spears, gaffs, 'spurge' or poison, dynamite, and nets, that are not lawful; then, when what the Foe calls the close time comes to an end, nets innumerable try to take us both in fresh and salt water, the while the prowling Foe on the bank never ceases to tempt us with his insects, minnows, prawns, and worms.

"All praise, therefore, be to the water gods who inspired me to devise a plan for ensuring a somewhat more certain and peaceful life to all those good salmon who joined in my scheme. Amongst our increasing numbers the seal, the otter, and the poachers are now the only enemies to be dreaded, while it is but little to our credit that the attacks of the two first-named scourges are so often successful. That good fortune, however, which had guarded me through so many perils did not desert me in this matter, for though at times chased sorely hard, while being badly wounded by the teeth of both these enemies, I am yet swimming about in health and safety. As for the poachers, they troubled us but seldom, for as the rules of our company forbade us to proceed very far above the good city of Aberdeen, and as the fish-stealer liketh not publicity or the proximity of those of the Foe who dress themselves in dark blue, he was perforce driven to seek more secluded spots for the carrying out of his illegal designs.

"After comparing notes with many friends dwelling in the Don, the Deveron, the Spey, and the North Esk, I am indeed well satisfied at having been born a Dee fish; not that I would sing its praises as quite a perfect salmon Paradise, but it is much nearer that way than any of the other named rivers. As to the realisation of a true salmon elysium, I have ceased to dream of such a joy, for I recognise that as long

as the Foe lives, so long are we destined, year by year, to pay him a tribute of thousands and thousands of salmon lives.

"To the inevitable we are prepared to submit with the best grace we can, and I have been led into bubbling forth this long rigmarole, not from any wish to plead on behalf of our race for a wholly unmolested life, but solely with a view to urge the Foe to be merciful and not pursue us to total extermination. Surely since they set such store by us, it must be for their own interests to preserve us, and to this end on every river they should associate together to try to do away with all nets plying in fresh water, while insisting that a longer weekly close time be given to us, while as for the stake nets in the sea, at least every other one should be abolished.

"And now, if you will mention all these matters to your Foe friends, I shall feel I have not sent up all these air bubbles for nothing. The garrulity of old age must be my excuse, and so in the hopes of yet living to reach the weight of three-score pounds and ten, which is about the limit of salmon growth, and trusting when that time arrives I may not find myself fastened to you by any devilish insect, for by your face I can see you are longing for such an event, I wish you, sir, a polite good-bye."

To make a start, however, with this chapter, already so long delayed by the narration of the memoirs of my loquacious friend, the fifty-four-pounder.

In 1836, Yarrell wrote in his *Book of Fishes*, "In no country in proportion to its size are salmon fisheries so extensive or so valuable as in the United Kingdom."

Now that was penned nearly fifty years ago, and since then the numbers of the nets have enormously increased, although the actual fishing grounds have remained the same, while the only set-off against the amplification and the improved methods of working has been the opening up of fresh breeding grounds and the establishment of various fish hatcheries, and, as will be

seen, neither of these measures has been able to counterbalance the exigencies of the altered conditions of netting and angling.

For some years the salmon held their own in face of the annually rising demands made on them, both upper and lower proprietors having but little to grumble at; then as the enjoyment to be got out of salmon angling became more widely appreciated, while the access to Scotch rivers was made more easy, so by degrees arose an ever-growing demand for angling waters, until the upper proprietors of rivers whose fishings formerly let for small sums began to wake up to the fact that the angling tenancies could be made to play an important part in the value of their rent rolls.

This season four friends of mine paid one thousand pounds for the fishing of a well-known stretch of water for rather less than three months of the spring. In 1836 the angling on the same water could have been had for one hundred pounds, and, indeed, it may be doubted if it would have fetched so much.

To quote one more case of quite recent date, the salmon fishing on the Lower Test ten years ago was let for fifty pounds, but it now realizes one thousand pounds, and similar instances could be indefinitely multiplied. When, therefore, the closely scientific netting in both sea and river, in conjunction with the vast augmentation in the number of netting stations, began at length to tell upon the multitudes of the salmon, the upper proprietors naturally commenced to cry out at the few fish that found their way to them, for this meant a loss of rental, as it was self-evident the high prices paid by anglers would not be given if sport fell off each year.

Now certainly the upper proprietors appear to be entitled to have plenty of fresh-run fish in their fisheries from the very day the nets begin to work, for first and foremost they own the whole of the salmon breeding grounds, and, during their stay in the river, they protect them from poachers; also they throw their ægis over the whole mass of the baby salmon. It is true in some rivers the upper proprietors are helped in this work of

protection by the lower ones, while in other cases certain of the Fishery Associations provide water bailiffs to assist the keepers of the upper proprietors in their good work.

Many river owners have also been spirited enough to start fish hatcheries at their own expense, while with the view of increasing the size of the fish, eggs have been imported from the Rhine, the Shannon, the Tay, and the Deveron, as each of these rivers is celebrated for its large fish. Amongst those who have thus acted may be mentioned the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Mansfield, the Marquis of Breadalbane, Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, and Sir James Gibson Maitland, this last-named gentleman being an absolute enthusiast in the matter, who probably knows more about salmon-breeding than anyone in the Kingdom.* Altogether there are but few big rivers without a salmon hatchery, but, nevertheless, there are those who shake their heads at them and assert they do but little good in comparison with the number of fry they yearly turn into the river; they are convinced that hatched fry differ from river-reared fry, and that when turned into the river "tame" fry do not know how to conceal themselves from their foes, or how to find food, and altogether lack the strength of naturally-hatched fry; also I have heard it stated that hatched fry should be turned into the river as far away from the mouth as may be, for that if they are placed in fresh water too low down on the river and before they are acclimatised, they will on going to the sea wander off to other rivers to ascend them instead of returning to the one they started from. These theories are mentioned for what they are worth, for up to date none of them have been substantiated as facts.

The upper proprietors then, having done their utmost to preserve alike the old and the young of the salmon, find when springtime brings back the fish at their very best, that the lower proprietors are capturing with their nets almost every one that enters the river. It is perhaps fortunate for me that

* Since this was written both these last-named gentlemen have joined the great majority.

I am not an upper proprietor on a Scotch salmon stream, for the chances are I should have passed through the vexations of many law-suits, and probably have spent more than the value of such a property in trying to assert my rights to have a share of the fish protected and reared in my river at my expense, for to me the whole thing appears much the same as if a sheep farmer demanded from some other farmer with more suitable ground that he should rear and graze his lambs for nothing!

Presently, however, the lower proprietors themselves began to feel the attacks of the increasing numbers of sea nets, as a steady loss of rental began to overtake them. In self-defence they started fresh netting stations and worked harder, but their efforts have been nearly useless, for during the past forty years the netting stations in the estuaries and low down on the rivers have alike experienced a continuous falling off in rentals, and it is a fact, for which I have the authority of the owner, that one of the best stations on the Tay, which let in 1854 for £1,725, was let in 1894 for £972, or a decrease of £753.

It is equally a fact that in the eleven years from 1834 to 1844, the Scotch salmon fisheries yielded an average of 29,000 boxes of fish of 150 lbs. each, while from 1879 to 1889 the average was but 24,000 boxes, and the total decrease in the last eleven years, as compared with the earlier mentioned eleven years, is no less than 3,683 *tons* of fish, and estimating them as weighing ten pounds each, there is a loss of 825,000 salmon. Here, then, is incontrovertible proof of the slow but certain deterioration of our salmon supply, while I feel very confident that from 1894 to 1904 there will be a still heavier falling off.

The laws which at present regulate the salmon fisheries are practically the same as those made in 1861, or forty years ago, but the multiplication of sea and river nets during the last twenty years, with the improved methods of working,

together with the great increase in the numbers of anglers, have never been taken into consideration or legislated for.

Thirty years ago it was common enough to get real good spring angling on the Spey, while fair early sport was also to be had on the Deveron, the North and South Esk, the Don, and the Earn; but in the present day so close is the netting that it has become quite a rare event to kill a spring fish with a rod in any of the five last-named rivers, and, as a matter of fact, no attempt is ever made to let the spring fishing on any of them. As soon, however, as the nets are removed in August, the anglings of each of these rivers bring in high rentals and yield splendid sport. It is certain such a state of affairs is a direct interference with the laws of nature, and, as a consequence, the netting has at length commenced to deteriorate in each of these rivers.

Although autumn fish yield good sport, yet they are not to be compared for eating purposes with those of the spring; but anglers who pay heavy rents for autumn fishing are often loth to admit this, and while *those who catch them* say the "spring polish" is only just vanishing, those who merely see them laid out on the bank often turn away muttering, "Black as niggers, or red as foxes." Of course, there are some bright autumn fish, but they do not average one in four, and even those with sea lice on them are insipidly flavourless as compared with a springer.

There are people who assert that only spring fish breed spring fish, and if this has any foundation in fact, then the falling off in the netting returns of the Spey and other rivers alluded to can be easily accounted for. To my mind it appears unlikely there should be any difference between the fry of spring or autumn fish, but the ova of these latter, deposited much nearer to the sea, are ever in much greater danger of being swept away by violent floods, and, therefore, in any series of years in which these take place, it may well be that the whole of the ova in the lower waters is destroyed for several years in succession, and then, in consequence of the very few spring fish

that are permitted to ascend the river, the stock must become nearly exterminated.

The ova of spring fish are not so exposed to danger, for high up in the rivers and in their tributaries a flood has nothing like the force of the resistless torrent formed below by the accumulation of many waters.

It is to be regretted numerous observant anglers permit themselves to preface most of their favourite theories, or hobbies, by saying, "I am perfectly certain," for on the matter of salmon-lore, surmises, suggestions, and theories are more numerous than facts, and thus it is I have met with those who are "perfectly certain" it would be better if all kelts were killed, the "certainty" in this case being that the kelts devour such quantities of trout, par, and smolts as to render their preservation undesirable, while they are also looked upon as the source of all disease.

Now the evidence that kelts do systematically eat small fish is of the very weakest description, for though I have heard the same so often stated as at one time to believe it myself, yet I have never been able to come across any keeper or river watcher who could say he had detected them in the act, for at the time they are supposed to devour all these little fish the kelts are usually lying in shallow waters, in which they could not pursue their prey in the same manner as a pike does, without at once being observed. That they will take a spinning par or trout at odd times is no proof that they pass the whole of the days of their kelthood in devouring them. A fresh-run salmon will be quite as likely to seize such a lure, for there is no doubt that salmon of all kinds will frequently swallow any small fish incautiously placing itself over their very noses. Therefore, the evidence we possess on the question of the voracity of the kelts is rather more in their favour than against them. Also, the laws of nature have clearly ordained that the kelts should live to make many journeys to and from the sea during their lifetime, and under such circumstances I feel some-

what confident it is right to protect them. The accusation of devouring great numbers of smolts can hardly be laid to their charge, for, as a rule, there are no smolts till the end of April or beginning of May, and by that time the bulk of the kelts will have gone to the sea, for only an April drought would force them to remain in fresh water. Even, however, supposing the accusers of the kelt to be perfectly in the right, I am yet of the opinion they should be strictly preserved, and to that end I have for many years advocated they should be free of the gaff.

This very season I was well pleased to learn the Marquis of Huntly had sent out a circular to Dee-side anglers, asking them to refrain from gaffing the kelts, and the appeal is one that should commend itself to all good fishermen, not only on the banks of the Dee, but on every other river where rods are plied in the spring. To gaff the kelts is the custom in many places, but doubtlessly anglers have come to be so habituated to the practice as unthinkingly to lend themselves to the perpetration of a cruelty with a waste of salmon life. In this matter, the law of the land is a most half-hearted piece of legislation, which badly requires altering. At present, anyone found in possession of a kelt may be fined five pounds, which penalty was, no doubt, directed against poachers, and the traffic in and export of foul fish. The law having thus emphatically recognised the usefulness of the kelt, yet allows them to be destroyed in great numbers by the gaff, but so long as the maimed or mortally wounded fish is cast back to the river, it is quite content. Therefore, an angler may fearlessly kill hundreds of kelts as long as he does not keep them, but if a poacher, or a shepherd, on the banks of the same river, has but one in his possession, whether for sale or for food, he is fined five pounds!

The total waste of salmon life caused by the gaff is something very large. For instance, on the Dee, in 1891, fully two thousand clean fish were taken by the rods up to the end of

April, and it may be accepted for certain that two kelts were landed for every "right" one, while my own personal experience has been in the proportion of at least three to one; therefore in the period I have named, some four thousand kelts were brought to bank on Dee-side, and if even only one thousand of these were killed in the gaffing, it would be far too large a yearly tribute to cold steel. Personally, I don't think it is every other fish that survives being gaffed, for I remember, some ten years ago, fishing the Crathes water on the Dee in the spring, and the anglers on some of the waters above me made a practice of gaffing every kelt they landed, which filled the pools I was fishing with dead and dying ones, the most of which I took out, to satisfy myself they had succumbed to gaff wounds. My fish-book of that season, 1884, states I took out nearly three hundred kelts with but thirty-five clean fish in three months, which gives an average of seven or eight foul fish for each fresh-run one; but this was an exceptionally heavy take of kelts.

There are but few anglers who would grumble if a fine were imposed on gaffing a kelt. This would be a better plan than forbidding the carrying of a gaff until after a certain date, which is now done on a few rivers. The salmon landing-net is so large that its portorage entails the necessity of an attendant to carry it; while as there are numbers of anglers who delight in going out alone to do for themselves, as well as many more who cannot afford the luxury of a gillie, I would simply make it a finable offence to put cold steel into a kelt, and then leave each angler to his own devices.

I am credibly informed that kelt sells at sixpence a pound in Aberdeen, so any fine imposed should be sufficiently heavy to forbid the making of a profit on the capture of a kelt. How people can be found to purchase kelt passes my comprehension, for, out of curiosity, I once had the middle slice from a large, well-"mended" one boiled, but anything more horrid, tasteless, blankety, and nauseating I cannot imagine.

This particular fish was so well mended that my gillie, judging it clean, gaffed it in deep water before I had even seen it. As it was struck through a vital part, I yielded to his entreaties for permission to keep it for a Sunday dinner for his family, and so it came about that the fish was knocked on the head and hidden, to be fetched home in the dark.

My gillie warmly assured me that, if I would try a piece, I should be unable to detect any difference between foul or fresh-run salmon; but as will be gathered from the above remarks, the result did not come up to his expectations.

It may here, perhaps, be as well to define an unclean salmon. In the close time all salmon, of any sort, are dubbed unseasonable, and it is only when the close time terminates that fish are divided into clean or unclean. During the time the rod may be plied any unspawned may legally be taken—a “baggit,” or hen-fish, heavy with roe; a kipper, or cock-fish, full of milt, with a hook at the end of his nose, may both be captured, although should the row or the milt break in the act of landing, it at once renders them unclean, and I have seen several cases of this touch-and-go nature. No salmon that has spawned may be legally taken out of the water at any time in the year, unless it is a diseased fish covered with fungus. With regard to this disease, there is but little known about it, beyond the fact that if any infected fish reaches the salt water he or she is usually cured.

Most rivers have suffered from it, but those on the east coast more severely than those on the west. What a terrible scourge it is may be estimated when from the Tweed alone, in one year, nearly ten thousand diseased fish were removed and buried. The fact that this epidemic has been at its worst on the east coast appears to lend importance to the surmise that lime together with artificial manure and factory pollution have a great deal to answer for, the latter, perhaps, being the chief culprit. On the west coast there are but few factories, while as the greater number of the rivers flow through heather land,

there is but little artificial manure to be washed into them by floods.

The Tweed itself, where the ravages of the disease have been most severe, is a river swarming with all sorts of factories on its banks, and the town of Galashiels in itself holds enough of them to poison all the fish in all the rivers in Scotland. On the Spey the numerous whiskey distilleries daily send their poisonous refuse into the river, a few drops of which mixed with water will speedily kill any smolts or par placed in it; this then being the case, I cannot but think, if some spirited proprietor would put into force Lord Cross's Pollution Bill of 1893, that the distillers could be compelled to discharge their refuse elsewhere, even though at some expense to themselves; but as long as no one moves in the matter, the injury to the river appears likely to be continued.* The Spey has the honour of being the largest river in Scotland, but likewise it has the disgrace of being the worst spring angling river on the east coast; also the drainage of the lands of the adjacent farms is more perfect than on most rivers, and thus the rainfall, which some years ago required two or three weeks to gradually discharge itself into the river, is now exhausted in as many days.

That fish return to the rivers they were born in has been proved times without number, but there seems to be no rule as to their rate of increase in weight; some grow very rapidly, and others very slowly.

In February, 1893, a kelt was caught by the rod in the Hampshire Avon; it weighed sixteen pounds, was labelled, and retaken in the nets at Christchurch just one year later, weighing thirty-three pounds, but this appears to be an unusually rapid rate of increase.

There is also the oft-quoted instance of the late Duke of Athol, who, in 1845, caught a kelt of ten pounds in the Tay, and labelled it with a zinc label, No. 129, when five weeks and

* The distillers are now compelled by law not to empty their "burnt ale" into the river.

three days later the fish, with the zinc still attached to it, was taken in the sea nets at Pitfour, weighing twenty-one and a quarter pounds, which was even a greater rate of increase than the Avon fish.*

Marked fish have also been captured in the sea, five hundred miles away from the mouth of the river they had left. It seems to me, fish should be more often marked than they are, to which end I would suggest to Messrs. Farlow, Messrs. Hardy, and the other leading tackle makers that they should keep a stock of labels ready for attaching to fish, so that anglers could procure them easily; then, if every one that went fishing in the spring would spare a minute or two to marking all the kelts they landed, we should each year have thousands of marked fish to deal with, which would tend to throw further light on their movements.

A kelt can be easily weighed without harming it if the angler keep in readiness a piece of stout cord with a loop at each end, then, by passing the cord round the tail of the kelt, and one loop through the other, a pull will draw it tight, and the steelyard can be inserted into the free loop to weigh the fish without harm to it, which can then be returned to the water with the label attached to the adipose fin, while all particulars should be entered in a note-book. Much I regret not having done this in years gone by, but I did not think of it, although had I commenced to do this ten years ago, I could easily have marked more than a thousand kelts.

As to the age of salmon, there is but little known that is certain. Some say the par remains as such but one year before it becomes a smolt; others state it takes two years to arrive at that result; while again there are those who declare three years elapse; but this is a matter the fish hatcheries should surely be able to determine, and probably in different

* It has been hinted that the fish originally marked having been caught in the same net with the one of 21½ lbs., the label was changed from one to the other for the purpose of making the Duke think that such a rapid growth would warrant severer netting, which would increase the profit of the tacksman.

rivers the period of parhood varies. While discussing par it may be as well to mention that the samlet or par never has any colour on the tip of the adipose fin, whereas both sea trout and trout have an orange-red or pink tip to it, and this is an infallible method of distinguishing par from other small fish.

Scientific people also state that by the aid of the microscope a fish's age may be exactly determined, as under a strong magnifying power the scales of all fishes may be seen to be formed in rings, just as a tree is formed, and that each ring denotes a year.

Scientists likewise assure us fish have ears ; but, for all that, it is doubtful if they can hear sounds not sufficiently loud to produce vibration in the water. I have often tried to move kelts lying in a few feet of water both by shouting or hand-clapping, but no noise produced by these methods had any effect, although a foot stamp on the bank frequently caused a bolt.

There are still many believers in the theory of salmon not feeding in fresh water, but equally there are numbers who hold the opposite opinion. Those who favour the total abstinence idea maintain the fish live on their own fat in conjunction with the animalculæ of the water ; they point to the invariably empty stomach, and maintain a fish only rises at a fly, rushes at minnow or prawn, or deliberately pouches a bunch of worms out of sheer cussedness.

The believers in the feeding doctrine direct attention to the fact that many salmon enter the rivers in February and March to remain a whole year before returning to the sea, and the improbability—nay, almost impossibility—of such a lengthy fast is strongly insisted on, for it certainly is difficult to believe so large a fish could go for so long on so little. As par or as smolts it is not contended they do not feed in fresh water, and therefore it seems but natural they should resume the habits of their youth when they return from the sea. The probabilities are they are not hearty feeders in fresh water, but although

I can understand the feeling that might tempt a fish to rise at a fly, or rush at a spinning bait, or a prawn working about close to its mouth, I cannot imagine how such a feeling could be brought into play by a lump of lob worms rolling down the stream.

I well remember the first time I ever used a worm I lost the fish by striking too soon. On the next occasion it received so much time that on landing it I had to cut the fish open, while my hook was right in the stomach, with but a very small fragment of the bunch of worms remaining; thus then and there I came to the conclusion that if this was not feeding, it was at any rate a very good imitation of it.

As to nothing ever being found in their stomachs, it is easily accounted for by their power of ejecting the contents on the first suspicion of danger. I cannot but think that if a pool full of salmon were to be dynamited by a charge powerful enough to kill all the fish instantaneously, then many salmon-stomachs would be found to hold food. At sea they have frequently been captured with herring fry in them, and have also been seen to eject the fry into the nets; also they have been caught by bits of herring on deep-sea lines, while in a Norway river several were landed full of caterpillars, so taking one thing with another, the balance of probabilities points to the conclusion they do feed in fresh water. There are many people who doubt whether every salmon escaping the nets in the spring really does stay in fresh water for nearly twelve months, and certainly there is a good deal in the theory that after passing a period in the river they try to drop back again to the sea, returning to spawn later on. It is a remarkable thing in a well-stocked river to watch how each flood brings fresh fish into a pool, while each succeeding one takes them away to replace them by others. Those that vanish are supposed to pass up stream, but if they all did, then by the time October came the upper waters would be literally crawling with fish, but that does not happen, and it is likely enough

a certain number of early-running fish do drop back into the salt water.

The men at the nets tell me there is usually a run of fish at the first or third quarters of the moon, and if this is right, then the chances are fully four to one against the run taking place during the thirty-six hours of the close time; while furthermore it must be remembered that unless the fish find the river flowing big enough to take them up, even the hitting of the mouth exactly on the close day will be of no avail.

Of late years there is hardly a salmon river in Scotland that has not shown a decreasing yield both to nets and rods; especially are there four dismal records brought to our notice as sad examples of what other rivers may eventually sink to. In Ireland, the Blackwater and the Laune have been nearly fishless, while in Scotland the Tweed and the Spey have been quite as bad. Now it is incontestable that the only certain way of increasing the stock of salmon is the drastic one of lengthening the weekly close time for the river nets and limiting the number of the sea nets. With regard to the river close time, another twenty-four hours should be added to the present thirty-six; it should commence on Friday evening at six o'clock, and last till six o'clock on the following Monday morning.

An increase, however, of but twelve hours would do wonders if properly seen to and fairly distributed; for in my humble opinion a close time terminating at six o'clock on Monday morning for the nets at the mouth of a big river ought not to end at the same hour for nets that are twenty miles higher up the water; nets working four miles above the river mouth should not be permitted to ply till ten o'clock on Monday morning, or four hours after those at the mouth have started; while again those nets sweeping the river from four to eight miles still higher up should not be allowed to commence work till two o'clock, and so on all the way up the river, and allowing a delay of four hours for every four miles until

the highest situate nets of all were reached ; by this means those up-river nets would each have to undergo a close time nearly equal in duration to the nets at the mouth.

As these high-up nets are at present worked, there is practically no close time for them whatever, for fish entering the river at six o'clock on Saturday evening are still below the top nets at six o'clock on Monday morning. Surely the fish are entitled to have the same chance of avoiding these upper nets as they have of escaping those at the river mouth, while certainly it may fairly be presumed the originators of the Close Time Laws contemplated as much.

Take, for instance, a most favourable case for the salmon, and let us suppose a "company" of them to arrive off Dundee shortly after six o'clock on Saturday evening ; also we will imagine a nice "fresh" coming down the Tay. Now from Dundee to the top nets at the Linn of Campsie is fully thirty miles, a far greater distance than heavy spring fish will journey in thirty-six hours, so thus, though they escape the estuary nets together with the lower ones of the river, they will not have passed the limit point of the upper nets before they are at work again at six o'clock on Monday morning, and then, if things are well managed, nearly the whole of our "company" will be hauled ashore. Hence I maintain and think it has been clearly shown these upper nets have practically no close time at all, which is so well known to their owners that many of those placed high up on a river are only worked on Mondays and Tuesdays, as being the only days when there is any chance of getting fish.

A close time of twenty-four hours would, however, be far better than one of twelve, and that granted, then let all nets begin at the same time ; it is quite certain that though such an alteration in the present laws might at first cause the netters some small temporary loss, this would speedily be regained and eventually handsomely recouped, for as soon as the laws of nature had had time to develop themselves on the increased

stock of breeding fish, more would be netted in the five days than are now meshed in the six.

Such legislation would, moreover, not only largely increase the existing angling rentals, but would also greatly augment the extent of the angling waters, for rivers like the Findhorn, the Deveron, the Spey, the Ugie, the Ythan, the Don, the two Esks, the Teith, the Forth and the Tweed would each and all once again become good spring rivers for the angler. Also the upper proprietors of these streams would be more inclined to follow the example set by those on Deeside, who by their united exertions have made that river yield the finest angling in the kingdom.

In the season of 1891 no less than seven thousand salmon and grilse were captured by the rods, while rather more than one half of this magnificent take were spring fish. In that year a friend of mine rented the Lower Dees water on the Dee at Kincardine O'Neil; it was but half a mile in length and consisted of three pools only. Starting on the 11th of February, on the 20th of April he landed his hundredth clean fish. That very same year I was fishing on the Spey, and up to the same date on *twenty-five miles* of the cream of both banks, which were well and hard fished, there were not as many salmon taken as my friend got on his half mile of the Dee! Yet if the Spey had but the same treatment given to it, I am absolutely convinced in a few years it would excel the Dee and take the rank it should do, and shine forth both for net or rod as the premier river of Scotland.

CHAPTER VI

SOME REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS

THE history of the Monnielack Shootings illustrates the dangers besetting the sportsman who "takes a gun" without making sufficiently close enquiry in all possible directions from which information could be gained. In the Monnielack case, however, the lessor was a gentleman who had no wish to make a profit out of the lessee, while between him and the regular shooting "coper" there are many different grades. As a rule it will be wiser not to take a gun when the terms asked are such as would give a large profit to the lessor, for there are plenty of good men really prepared to put down their share of the expenses, and so long as they are insured against being further out of pocket, they delight in the responsibilities of the management of a shooting: these, however, are the gentlemen who should exercise the greatest caution in selecting their "guns," and not settle rashly with just the first offerer that comes, for shooting is in such demand that any good fellow need have no difficulty in making up his party, although neither side should trust to arrange the matter solely by correspondence. Let the parties make a point of meeting several times, when a few talks together will throw more light on the suitability of the proposed arrangements than all the letters in the world.

It is wiser to be the last gun to join, for the latest arrival will thus make certain of knowing something about all the number. The bargain once struck, toleration should be the order of the day, while, as long as all concerned act as gentlemen, it should not become a matter of offence if even one of

them, like good old Mr. Auldjoe, does wear a tall black silk hat with pepper and salt trousers on the moor. No matter either if another dons lavender kid gloves and wears the loudest of checks, provided always he be "safe" and does not misbehave himself like Captain Triptolemus Smallgore Spiller. Avoid all "Bessies," and make the keepers and gillies your friends by considerate and sportsmanlike behaviour.

Bachelor parties are more apt to run smoothly than those of married men, for if four Benedicts bring their respective wives to an out-of-the-way shooting box, and the ladies are young and good-looking, the chances are great that one of the men will soon be paying more attention to the wife of one of his friends than to his own lawful spouse, which will cause squalls to cloud the horizon. A "gun" should not fail to treat his host as if he were really a *bonâ-fide* guest on a visit to him, while especially when on the moor it should not be forgotten to exercise courtesy with sportsmanlike behaviour; for instance, if one "gun" is a stouter, faster walker than the other, the better man should at once suit his pace to that of his companions.

I have several times tried this plan of taking a gun, and for some seasons was a shareholder in a Shooting Company, of which but the pleasantest reminiscences of good fellowship remain. There were four of us, and for about £200 a year each, which included all expenses, we passed a happy ten weeks in the Highlands. The bag averaged about seven hundred brace of grouse, while black game, partridges, snipe, and hares made up two thousand head, while as to this could be added the same number of rabbits, it will be seen that according to present prices our little company had invested their money wisely and received good dividends in the shape of health, happiness, and sport.

Some thirty years ago a friend of mine was not quite so fortunate, and related to me with much indignation the following story of his adventures. Having answered various advertisements, he at length settled to complete Mr. Money Bagge's

party of six on the well-known Cashbucket shootings. From the day the company assembled at Cashbucket House all went well, for the sport was excellent, while to add to the perfection of the thing, Mr. Bagge had hired a fine steam yacht—for the house was on the seashore—and in her were spent many happy "off" days by those too tired to shoot. An ancient billiard table helped to pass the evenings merrily, while as Bagge with two of the party were extra good hands at the game, numerous were the matches that were played, the host always insisting, however, on the stakes being limited to half-crowns.

"Anything higher," said he, "spoils harmony, for if once we begin to increase, we never can tell where it will end, and as some years ago I myself was a very heavy loser under a nearly similar arrangement to the present one, I should indeed be distressed by a recurrence of any such unpleasantness under my own roof."

With such sentiments it was impossible to quarrel, while as far as Mr. Bagge was concerned, the wisdom of his decision was clear, for although a good player, he was not quite a match for either of the others, so while obstinately refusing to accept the points freely offered him, he usually lost with good grace a few half-crowns each evening. Five weeks of the time had flown happily away, and but one more week remained, when the whole party, having become mutually pleased with each other, agreed to re-assemble next year. After dinner that day Mr. Bagge expressed his pleasure at hearing of this decision, and rising to his feet, said—

"Now, gentlemen, although I feel very much flattered at your wishing to return, while I need not say how glad I am to have the chance of keeping such a pleasant party together, you must all know I cannot afford to keep this place up on my own hook, therefore, if you are determined to come again, I should like to be able to continue our present staff of keepers and kennel of dogs; also I should wish to spend a few pounds on improvements, especially in putting up better driving butts and procuring a few brace of grouse to change the blood; so

for these reasons it would be to our mutual advantage if you could each let me have fifty pounds on account, which would save me any anxiety as to matters financial, for I could not do all I wish for next season's sport without being a considerable sum of money out of pocket."

As this seemed but reasonable, we one and all agreed to the proposition, and the next day Mr. Bagge received five cheques of fifty pounds each, so while his "guns" were busy writing out the documents, he promised them an extra day's sport on a hitherto untouched beat, and faithfully he kept his word, for the bag was heavy while delightfully "mixed." To celebrate the occasion properly the champagne flowed freely, and, sad to tell, the billiard players did not walk round the table with quite their usual steadiness. After being beaten three games in succession, Bagge lost his temper, and with a bang of the butt-end of his cue on the floor he angrily exclaimed—

"It's all this confounded table; it's neither true nor fast, for I could beat either of you fellows on a real good one. I'll tell you what I vote we do to-morrow: let us steam into Greenock, take train to Glasgow, and there I will play you each a game of three hundred up for anything you like; so come now, just say if you two have the pluck to say yes to that!"

To this his opponent, on whom the wine had had a greater effect than on any of the others, retorted, "All right, done with you, and you can have a 'monkey' on it if you like!" while before the host could reply, the other player joined in to say—"Very well, Bagge, you can have a match on the same terms with me too, but I vote we all go to bed now and think it over in the morning, for really your champagne was so good that we are just a little excited, for as neither of us wish to get the best of the match, some points must be given you to make it a fair one."

This only increased Bagge's ire. Strong language passed on both sides, and all three waxed so hot that ultimately paper was procured, and a play or pay match was then and there made.

The programme was duly carried out, but the Glasgow billiard table made such a great improvement in Bagge's performances, that he easily won both matches, with some outside bets into the bargain, and in a downpour of Greenock rain—which is quite a special sort of rain—the party returned to Cashbucket. On sending them ashore, their host announced his intention of spending the night on board the *Osprey*, with a view of settling up some accounts with the crew, so therefore next morning the house party felt no great surprise at not seeing the yacht lying at her moorings, and later, on hearing that Bagge had sent word he had gone on a fishing trip and would be back to dinner, all the "guns" took to the hill. When the evening came, as the *Osprey* had not returned, the party at Cashbucket sought their beds, while wondering what had gone wrong with her. After breakfast the next day the Factor for the estate was announced, and explained to the "guns" he had come by appointment with Bagge to receive the balance of the rent, only £100 having been paid on account. After informing Mr. Factor of their host's absence, and mentioning the fact that they themselves were only paying guests, who had already handed over to Bagge £250 each, it may be guessed with what feelings of dismay they learnt Bagge had signed the lease in the joint names of himself and the first gun who joined him, which he had contrived to do by inventing excuses for delaying the signing until he had secured his premier customer, and that done he had not hesitated to forge the victim's name. Mr. Factor was very polite and expressed much sympathy with us in our trouble, but, seeing we intended to resist further payment, he took himself off to consult his employer.

Needless to say, the lessee of Cashbucket did not return, while though wires were promptly sent off to stop payment of the cheques for the billiards and the next season's shooting, it was found Bagge had been too quick, for after landing his friends at Cashbucket, he had steamed back to Greenock that same night to turn the cheques into gold the very next day.

Eventually law proceedings were commenced against the unfortunate man in whose name the lease stood, and rather than run the risk of an adverse verdict, the amount was made up between the whole five guns. This they did not from any sense of what was fair or proper, but from pure anxiety to avoid the publication of the billiard story, and of how they had one and all been swindled not only at billiards, but also out of the fifty pounds which each had paid in advance for the next season's sport.

Some time afterwards the party heard their late host had daringly steamed for the Cape in the hired yacht, and on arriving safely had sold her for what she would fetch. The very latest news, however, of those concerned in the matter is to the effect that Mr. Money Bagge was driving a butcher's cart in Kimberley, while his victims continue to rent Cash-bucket shootings, and get on well enough without him.

In the story of "Murdoch Campbell's Revenge," one of the most obvious hints is, never forget to take out a shooting licence. This little formality is, however, often ignored by many gentlemen who have not even the excuse of a short purse for their laxness. The sport of the west coast is almost endless in its variety, for setting aside the pursuit of game with the gun, the fish, the otter, the porpoise, the seal, and the wild birds in the time of the migration are ever inviting the attention of the sportsman, and on this beautiful coast a cottage with a boat and a boatman will provide daily amusement at a very small cost. The most plentiful fish are the codling, the whiting, and the coal fish or saithe, whose young are called 'cuddies.

The saithe, I soon found, were very partial to a fly dressed on an inch hook, with two long strips of white swan feather for wings, a silver body, with head and tag of red worsted, which attached to a couple of lengths of salmon gut will beat all the shop flies, while with it I once landed, helped by a small sharp gaff, a treble event in the shape of three coal fish weighing,

within an ounce or two, five pounds each. Three fish, however, appear to be more easily landed than two, as their joint efforts to escape tend to neutralize the violence of their mutual struggles.

The sport with whiting, as long as it lasts, is usually fast and furious, for during the first two days of the arrival of a shoal on the feeding grounds, from ten to fifteen dozen may be pulled into the boat in a few hours. The third day of the whiting fishing on the same bank is usually spoilt by the quantity of dog fish that have come in pursuit of them, and then often there will be more of these gentry hauled up than delicate whiting. There is one species of dog fish that carries a long spike on its back a little above the tail; this weapon, which varies from one to two inches in length, is so strong and so sharp that a fish of but five pounds can drive it through the leather of a boot, and when a wound on bare flesh is inflicted it usually swells or festers to an alarming extent. All such customers should be knocked on the head before being brought on board, while it is wiser never to permit any sort of "snapping turtle" to be pulled in alive, and a smart rap on the head as the gunwale is reached should settle matters. I have often been surprised at the numbers of big dog fish I have landed on single gut when fishing for whiting, and can only account for it by remembering these latter fish require quick striking, and thus most of the dog fish, having been caught for whiting, were only hooked just far enough inside the mouth to hinder them from reaching the gut with their teeth.

On still, sunny days great amusement may be had with a small barrel from which both ends have been removed, and one replaced with plate glass. If the tub be then fastened to the stern of the boat with the glass end sunk some inches under water, the bed of the ocean can be closely scanned down to a depth of twenty feet. On each side of the man at the tub a very long bamboo pole should lie, one armed with a sharp three-pronged spear, while the other should carry a semi-circular shaped net of small mesh, which



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A WEST COAST SCENE.

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paraphernalia being provided, many bright, hot days can be passed in paddling gently round the rocky coast while searching the depths of its remarkably clear waters. The spear will bring skate, flounders, and often other fish to the surface, while the net will fetch up oysters, sea urchins, or various other dainties or curiosities of the deep. In this way I speared two heavy fish, one a skate of forty-seven pounds,* which was only secured after a hard tussle, while the other was a curious marine monster called the Angler Fish, but known to the natives as the Fishing Frog. It had an enormous mouth, with a protruding under jaw, armed with sharp teeth. The head was out of all proportion to the thickness of the body, while from the centre of it grew a long tapering tendon, not unlike the thin end of a lady's riding-whip, which terminated in a black tuft hanging over the mouth of the frog. It is said small fish take this tuft for something to eat, and on approaching to inspect it they are at once snapped up by the great jaws below it.

We estimated this fish to scale between twenty and twenty-five pounds, but the immense head, when compared with the small lanky body, made it difficult to judge with accuracy, for that day we had not a steelyard with us, and since then I have often regretted not having had the monster preserved. It did not in the least heed the boat being over it, as for more than an hour I watched in the hope of seeing a fish caught, but to my great regret this did not happen; then when the light began to fail the spear was used.

With regard to the otters, many of them have seaside residences as well as river ones, and in the middle of the first and last quarters of the moon, when the neap tides occur, their bolt holes into the sea are left so much uncovered that they have to cross a yard or two of dry ground before reaching the water. On days of this sort it is indeed good sport to

* This is a small Skate for the West Coast, where they run up to one hundred pounds in weight, and even more.

row from island to island, and, accompanied by a couple of wiry-haired Skye terriers, visits can be paid to every holt. The dogs should be put into some hole well above the one opening into the sea, while it is not necessary to spend much time at each earth, for if the otter is at home the dogs will be certain to give tongue at once, so a few minutes' silence is a nearly sure indication that the amphibious one is not there. The moment the dogs enter the holt the hunter must stand prepared for a snap shot, while as he is rarely more than twenty yards distant from the bolted otter, but few should escape. For this work I used No. 3 shot, and in one season got sixteen otters.

Now as to the seals I must confess they fairly beat me, for from being a good deal "looked after," they seldom rested on the shore of the mainland, preferring the greater safety of the points of the small islands, while as they can see, hear and smell better than any deer, it was nearly impossible to stalk them, and thus I never got but two, and those as much by good luck as anything else, for they were the results of snap shots made at about a hundred yards: on each occasion the Express bullet literally laid their heads open, and killing them stone dead, we were able to row up in time to get the spear into them before they sank. It must be stated these two shots were the only "bullseyes" in many essays, but a seal's head is not a large mark when bobbing about in the water a hundred yards off; also the boat is moving, while the shot has to be taken from the shoulder.

As for the porpoises, at times they appeared in vast shoals, on which occasions they paid no heed to our craft, often rolling up within a few yards of our boat when anchored for whiting fishing, but after having more than once snapped bullets clean through them, finding they could not be killed stone dead, I gave up the attempt. The natives at times tried to harpoon them, but their weapons were of such a primitive character that the porpoise always wrenched himself free, and not one capture was witnessed by this method. With a well-made harpoon,

however, there is no doubt many could be taken. I also think the porpoise might be made to afford excellent sport by hooking them with a spinning herring, and if this lure were attached to some hundreds of yards of stout line wound on to a big reel fixed in the stern of the boat, then indeed excitement might be forthcoming. The only question is whether they would take the lure, for all the rest could be easily arranged; at any rate, the next time I visit the West Coast, part of my kit will consist of the necessary tackle to give this idea a good trial, while in addition there will also be a sharp harpoon with barbs that will not draw, and so in one way or another I look forward to some lively times with the porpoises.

In quitting the subject of the wild West Coast I will but urge my readers never to allow feelings of fatigue to tempt them to sit down before a good fire while wet through. This caution is especially given as in these latitudes wettings are so much more frequent than on the East Coast that at last they come to be regarded as the normal state of affairs and are despised; unless, however, wet things be at once changed for dry ones, rheumatism cannot for long be set at defiance.

The chapter on Speyside shows how there are but few shooting agents who will not freely promise an intending renter an average of a fish a day per rod on any fishing placed in their hands for letting, and it is undoubtedly harder to get details of past sport in the fishing world than in the shooting one. Even if the name of the last tenant be forthcoming, while application to him brings but a poor report, the agent has but to shrug his shoulders while he says—"Well, sir, there are anglers and anglers, as you know, and from what we hear, Mr. Last neither fished well nor perseveringly, and we are sure it would be quite different with you, sir!"

Then there are ever the cries of an unusually bad season, with either too much water, or not water enough, and what with one thing and another, the fishery lessee is more often doomed to disappointment than the moor renter. Early spring

angling in Scotland is difficult to get, for the angler's choice is limited to the following rivers: Beauly, Brora, Carron, Conon, Dee, Garry of Loch Oich, Halladale, Lyon, Naver, Oykel, Lower Shin, Spey, Tay, Tummel, Thurso, and Tweed, although on many of these rivers spring sport will never be of much account until there is an alteration for the better in the laws that now govern the close times and the nets.

Such rivers as the Deveron, Ugie, Ythan, Findhorn, Nairn, North and South Esk are practically worthless until the nets are taken off. On the West Coast of Scotland, strange to say, though there are fully a score of good big rivers, with some hundred more of a smaller size, there is not a single early one in the lot, although at any time after the middle of June excellent sport may be had in most of them, especially in the Laxford, Inver, Kirkaig, Shiel, Lochy, Spean, Awe, and Orchy.

When on a fishing trip, it is always as well to parade your gillie, to see that he really has with him all requisites for the day, and attention to such a little detail will often save loss of time and temper.

Plovers' eggs can be found more easily by watching the birds using a field than by walking it up and down many times. If the seeker hide himself for such a period as to make the peewits think he has departed, which does not require very long, and then gradually show himself again, the hens with nests will be seen to rise silently and steal off at great speed to a distance ere they utter their pretty cry. Those birds that rise to circle about over the place they started from, the while shrieking loudly and incessantly, are cocks, or hens without nests.

As soon as the egg hunter has marked the places from which the nesting hens have risen, he can walk directly to them, and if the marking has been well done, he will go straight to each nest. At first it will be difficult to mark more than one or two hens at a time, but practice will soon render the matter easier, and I have seen a man used to this

method of finding eggs walk without faltering to seven different nests.

With regard to the events told of in "A Month at Strathmaacoe," had space permitted they might have been more voluminous, and I have been puzzled in selecting matter which appeared most likely to interest my readers.

I hope no one will think the worse of me for slaying the hill fox, as in some parts of the Highlands they are far too numerous, while where there are no rabbits great is the havoc they work amongst ptarmigan, grouse, and white hares; for though reynard will condescend to eat rats, mice, and moles, he much prefers something more substantial.

When writing of foxes, a strange incident is recalled to my mind which happened during a stay at Carim Lodge in the Ochill Hills of Perthshire. The keeper having caught a cub in the spring, kept him chained up in a kennel made out of an old cask. One morning the fox was missing, when it was seen he had drawn the staple, and gone off with chain and collar fastened to him. The keeper was sure that with this appanage attached to him he could not run far, so he took his retriever to the kennel, and showing him the deserted abode sent him in pursuit of the missing pet, while as fox and dog were good friends, he had no fear of the former coming to harm. After a short absence the retriever came back, holding one end of the chain in his mouth while he led the fugitive once more to his kennel.

The sad accidents told of at Strathmaacoe are but two more examples of that carelessness with firearms which annually claims fresh victims, and I have come to the conclusion that all preaching of safety except to mere boys is useless; for if a grown-up man is such a fool as not to be able to recognise for himself that the weapon capable of killing a deer or a grouse will equally as well kill the bearer or his friends, then all the talking in the world will not avail to make him wiser, and such a one is best given a wide berth.

With reference to Loch Leven, I can strongly advise anyone wishing to put away a few spare days to give it a trial, and in my opinion August is the best month, for though sport may not be quite so good as earlier in the season, the fishing club "competitions" have then come to an end, which allows of a boat being secured without the necessity of engaging it very long beforehand.

It is at times quite extraordinary what good sport may be had at driven grouse by but two or three shooters, and with the latter number I once helped to secure fifty-eight brace in a few hours at Huntly Lodge, Aboyne. This good bag for Scotland was made by the aid of seven beaters, four of whom acted as drivers, whilst the other three were posted near the occupied butts in such positions as were best calculated to turn the birds to the guns, and Mr. Dyke's one gun grouse drive well exemplifies how much good generalship will help to swell the bag.

Although, perhaps, enough has already been written here on the subject of deer-stalking, I cannot refrain from relating an odd adventure which occurred to me at Corroun. I had left the lodge early, and after making a circuitous round of some twenty miles found myself in the dusk of an October evening on the Ben Alder march. The road home took me past old Allan McCallum's cottage on Loch Ossian; as this was the half-way house, on arriving there at about seven o'clock I was tempted to sit down by his peat fire and take a cup of tea, and once seated I lingered on, glad to rest while gossiping deer with the veteran stalker. Somewhere about nine o'clock I started to finish my journey to Corroun, which was some five miles distant, while it must be stated that this was then one of the least inhabited and most desolate parts of Scotland.

It was a pitch-dark night, so much so that at times I was forced to search for the track with my stick as if I had been a blind man, which to an already tired traveller was but a

slow process. Hence when half the journey had been made, I sat down on a dry heather bank by the side of the ditch which drained the track, and was proceeding to fill a pipe when suddenly right from under me there came a deep groan. Needless to say this caused me to spring to my feet with a bound, as I exclaimed—

“Who’s there? Get up, whoever you are, and let me have a look at you.”

To this exhortation a voice replied from the bottom of the ditch—

“Eh, mon! we are just poor tinkers who left Fort William this morning and have lost our way.”

Then there emerged from the peat hag three dim figures, which I learnt were Mr., Mrs. and Master Tinker. Poor creatures, they were of the tramp tribe, and worn out with the fatigues of their thirty-mile journey, they had laid down to sleep in the dry peat of the ditch, whilst I by strange chance had seated myself right over them. They had no reason however to regret their awakening, for I took the whole lot on to Corroul, where my old friend the late Henry Spencer Lucy made them happy with hare soup, roast beef, and whisky toddy, followed by a shake-down in the straw loft.

Having now come to the end of my tether, it remains but to hope I have succeeded in making these recollections of Highland sport readable and amusing, but whatever the verdict may be, my very best thanks are due to the many eminent sportsmen who, themselves possessing far better knowledge of the subjects herein discussed, have yet been kind enough to support me in the publication of this book.

THE END.

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