

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## THE INFINITE VARIETY OF SPORT

Those who take their pleasure sadly in the library, strenuously at the green table, have an idea that field sports are the same brush—deadly in their monotony. Some object on humanitarian lines, and ask, with Froude, what amusement there can be in killing things. Yet it is the sportsman who, knowing more than they, marvels that any could account his pastime monotonous. Were two hunting days ever quite alike? Is there any resemblance between shooting driven grouse from a butt and walking up snipe in a bog? Is the stalking of a chalk-cream trout only a repetition of a standup fight with a spring salmon?

Even were these sports alike, what of the endless changes in the face of Nature? Even in the depth of winter, when those who leave the indoor life pull down the blinds to shut out the drabness of the weather, the sky has rare smiles for those who seek them, more alluring perhaps in their transient beauty than the enduring glare of summer. At the height of summer, when the citizen covers in the shade of buildings, panting in vain for a breath of air, the despoiled fisherman is filling his lungs as well as his basket with the green water, watching the moving pages of the flowers and finding enjoyment in a hundred innocent sensations, in which the mere killing of trout has no place.

There is another variety—that between failure and success—which plays a not unimportant part in the sportsman's field days. As the poet has it, "Sweet is pleasure after pain," and if success were assured with rod or gun or other following hounds, then the critics of the outdoor life might have better cause for their charge of monotony. There must be black-letter days to contrast with the red-letter days: A blank day on the river makes next week's big fish or heavy catch the sweeter. The woodcock you got just as the light was failing would not have been so welcome had you not missed one earlier in the afternoon. Sport, in fact, is a gamble, and gambling and monotony are incompatible. Then there is the variety of accident. How can sport be called monotonous when at any moment you may fall in the river and drown, or be removed from the Post Office Directory by the bursting of a gun? The element of danger, indeed, must not be ignored if we would redeem sport from this curious accusation. There is perhaps, in these days of perfected arms and ammunition, something far-fetched in the illustration of a bursting gun as an ultimate possibility, but what of the minor shooting accidents, or what of the fatalities and lesser dangers of the hunting field? From pig-sticking to tobogganing on the Cresta Run, outdoor sport offers innumerable chances of sudden death; and if this is monotony, then what, in the name of an English summer, is change?

The alleged monotony is the more illogical when we recollect that one sport men are rare. Even if the sportsman has but two hobbies—one for winter and the other for the warm months—he rarely contents himself with less. The choice between such rival sports as fishing and shooting is based on a variety of considerations, and it may perhaps be of interest to compare the two in order to arrive at some conclusion as to which should be the more suitable for different tastes.

There is this in common between fishing and shooting—that in both the sportsman pits his strength, skill, or cunning against a wild creature on the defensive. It will at once be seen that hunting occupies a different plane. In the hunting field even the finest horsemen are merely a witness of the work done by hounds under the guidance of the Master and huntsman. Moreover, hunting claims the whole allegiance of its followers. At best, it permits them to enjoy a week's fishing in summer, when the foxes are resting, and an occasional day's shooting in winter when the weather is unfit for the hunting field.

Fishing, which has a classic claim to be considered the contemplative man's recreation, has, in fact, usually appealed more powerfully than the others to men of thought as distinguished from men of action. Thus Smiles, in "Life and Labour," compares it with grouse shooting, and, while he pronounces it "one of the most thoroughly resting of all recreations," he also admits it to be "a very slow amusement to persons of active habits." It is the peacefulness of fishing that impressed Burton, who, in the famous "Anatomy of Melancholy," welcomed it as quiet and free from the dangers which accompany the sports of hawking and hunting. As he lifted the passage from Dame Juliana Berners, the sentiment was hardly original. The worthy dame put the case thus quaintly:

"He seeth the yonge swannes, herons, ducks, cotes, and many other foules, with their brodes whyche me seemyth better than all the noyse of hounds, the blastes of horns, and the scree of foules that hunters, fawkeners, and fowlers can make."

Thus the "Boke of St. Albans," and the comparison would hold good today. Reckoned by the number of its followers, angling is, of course, immeasurably the more popular of the two, but this may in great measure be attributed to the greater facilities for enjoying it, at any rate in this country, which attract persons of modest means. Each man, comparing these sports in his "Complete Gentleman," considers shooting, hawking, and hunting to be the sports for noblemen and gentlemen, while angling is the recreation of the honest and patient man.

What, after all, is this "patience," of which so much is made in fishing? Those for whom the sport has no attraction commonly reply when asked the reason, that they have not pa-

tience enough for it. Yet these same men, who would resent throwing an importunate fly that fails to elicit response, or watching a painted float that declines to go under, would quite cheerfully stand and shiver beside a rabbit earth while the ferret lies up below, or would stand in a cold dawn waiting for the fighting duck. It may, indeed, be doubted whether patience, in its ordinary sense, is the badge of the fisherman's tribe. Sir Edward Grey suggests a better term for his sovereign virtue in his self-control coupled with endurance.

Perhaps the relative appeal to the two sports may be appraised as follows. Fishing is the sport of sports for overworked business men and professional men, for barristers and statesmen and merchants, who seek mental relaxation after a term or session of overstrain. Shooting, on the other hand, is the dear delight of those who need exercise for the body rather than rest for the mind, of the country squires or officers on leave, who have no need for the rest cure offered by the murmuring river or slumbering lock. Their minds have never been overworked, their limbs are equal to the strain of strenuous exercise, and their one object is to keep "fit." What wonder, then, if they should fail to see the enjoyment of angling and should seek their pleasure in the brisk exercise of walking up the birds or in the tense excitement of a big drive.

By recognizing that fishing is the sport for those who seek rest for the mind, while shooting is for those who need exercise for the body, coupled with amusement, we may satisfy both claims. Fishing remains the sport for the Drydens and Davys and thinkers generally. For the overworked man of cities, who craves repose from the stress of business and the stir of society, routine, it is the one pursuit which takes him back to Nature and makes him realize, with the old writer, that—

"Other joys  
Are but toys,  
And to be lamented."

The legitimate place of sport is a relaxation from work, and herein lies the final refutation of this libel of monotony. All play and no work make men as dull as the reverse, and the day's sport sandwiched between weeks of business displays this infinite variety even more than the alternating of one outdoor pastime with another. Each is sweetened by the memory of the other. He most enjoys his sport who has earned it hardest, and, when the time comes round again, he works the better for his respite under open skies.—F. G. Aftalo, in Baily's.

## A PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC

A bridge with a low parapet spanned the river, and the aforesaid bridge was constructed in remote times just across the very nicest salmon pool in the old river, just below the mill weir. When the water is low and clear enough, anyone standing on this bridge can see the lordly salmon, at convenient seasons, lying with their noses towards the shallow sands at the top of the bridge pool, and, alas! many a good fish has yielded up his life in an inglorious manner and been foully murdered by the bacon hook, gaff, or stroke hand of the poacher, who, going forth to his labor in the morning or returning in the evening, has been able to spot poor salmon off this bridge and to plan and execute his destruction. So has he caused the "iron fly" to enter into his body, and has hauled him to the bank in an ecstasy of unholy glee.

Last season I arrived at this bridge one morning, and in crossing it saw four or five salmon lying in their usual position. Descending to the riverside, I began to fish, but with no result. It needed a long cast to cover the place where I knew the fish were lying, and several times I sent my fly over them in vain. Absorbed in my angling, I was suddenly aware of a noise above me on the bridge, and I looked up. I was surprised to see a crowd gathering there, and all the front row of "the house" or parapet was fast filling up. Eager faces, some of which were begrimed by the traces of honest toil, peered down anxiously upon me. Having realized that I was no longer a solitary angler, but a performer before a critical assembly, I at once found my line getting into hitherto unknown tangles. Clearing these with nervous digits, I again essayed to present my lure to the salmon. Then began a wild scene of excitement on the bridge. Exclamations and wild laughter reached my ears, and then a pebble was dropped into the river by some of the most eager, with the remark, "He's just over there, sir!" Now and then, when the fly came over the fish, I heard wild shouts of, "Oh, now he'll take it!" "Oh, look at the big chap running after it!" My hands began to tremble, my craven heart misgave me, and I felt shaky even to the inmost recesses of my soul each time the fly traversed the salmon's abode. A hurried glance at the bridge revealed a mass of excited, dancing, and capering aged and youthful humanity. Every individual could see the different feelings and emotions produced in each individual salmon by the passage of the fly through the water, all, alas! hidden from me; the principal actor in this poor stirring drama.

This state of things went on for some time. My arms ached, and never a sign of a fish did I see, or know that I was receiving the least attention whatsoever from the salmon except by the agitation and excitement of the crowd above me, which could see the fish moving and following the attractive morsel of tinsel

and feathers which I all blindly presented to their notice. I walked ashore, sat down exhausted, changed the fly for another one chosen at haphazard, and began a second act. At the third or fourth cast a big fish made a nice head-and-tail rise, and I was too paralyzed with fear, I suppose, to pull the fly away before he had hooked himself. Never shall I forget that moment, with the wild shout from the mass of humanity above and the wild rush from the fish below! The next twenty minutes seemed to me hours. "He's off!" "No; he's on still!" were the cries which greeted me. He sulked at last under an old log of wood, the stump of a tree which had been washed down and lay at the bottom of the pool. Many had now forsaken the bridge and roadway and were lined along the bank, and now were eager to rush into the river, and volunteered to "push the beggar out." I felt like the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, restraining my impetuous army of guards lest all should be lost. A nod from me, and they would have been at him under the log. Luckily, a steady downward strain moved him, and he was off again with a fine rush down through the centre arch of the bridge, and I had just time to butt and turn him before he was in a fine frenzy rolling. Never again under the rod. Oh, the dancing and shouting when the end was near and he began to make his short rushes and to flounder on the top of the water! At last my old henchman waded in, but, owing to the disease of Anno Domini and the glitter of the bright sunlight on the water missed the fish twice before he was safely sailed into the bottom of the landing net, to the accompaniment of wild shouts of exultation and merriment which greeted the finale.

I felt like Macready, the great actor, when he said, "Sir, the pit rose at me!" Before I reached land eager hands were outstretched to assist me, and, like unto Horatius Coclès, "around me thronged the fathers" (of the village) "to press my gory hands." Then a glance upwards caused me some alarm. There I beheld the face of the miller glaring at me above the bridge's parapet. Down and evil was his gaze before he "in a fine frenzy rolling." Never before had I seen his cheery features expressive of such anger. He had been for the past half hour vainly trying to induce his mill hands to leave the bridge and start the work of the day, but all in vain. Girls and men alike refused to leave the bridge and go to work while the battle ebbed and flowed below them. I afterwards heard he fined the girls and the men 6d. a piece for being late at their work that morning, and comes round again, he works the better for his respite under open skies.—F. G. Aftalo, in Baily's.

It is nervous work, this fishing to a gallery. Feeling runs high, and anything goes wrong with you you must face the music of the vox populi. Later in the season I had another experience, wherein I found myself in the chorus only, and not the leading man. A good-hearted, big friend of mine came to fish with me, and I gave him my rod. The pool we were fishing was deep, and had very high and somewhat undulant and sloping banks. Imagine my dismay on beholding my burly friend rushing along these banks playing a lively 13-pounder. My old gillie henchman realized the dangers of the situation and its possibilities at once. I heard a hoarse whisper behind me, "Sorr, what the devil will we do if the bank won't hold him and he falls in?" Both of us rushed behind the angler, but said never a word, awaiting developments, gaff in hand. Again the whisper reached me, "If he begins to slither at all, sorr, ought I to gaff him at waist?" Luckily the fish moved down the pool, where the banks were sounder, and my friend went home delighted with his fish, which he safely landed, and all unconscious of the perils behind him which he had passed through. I do not want ever again to fish before a public assembly; I find angling under such circumstances distinctly trying, I might say shattering, to one's nervous system. The catch runs through my head:

"Oh! publicity, publicity,  
Avoid it if you can,  
For it's easier to criticize  
Than play the leading man."  
Woodcock, in The Field.

## AMBITIONS

Ambition is a curious and variable thing. Speaking strictly for myself, I find that it alters not merely from decade to decade or lustre to lustre (that were, but natural, since we all change as the times change), but from week to week, even from day to day. Time was when my ambitions were akin to those of the gross-weight competitor who forms a part of several miles of angler distributed along the patient bank of Severn or Thames or Lea; I yearned after intensely full baskets. I used to read about fishermen in the eastern parts of England who would stagger home when the sun

was high bearing their burden of bream in sacks, and I would think how happy they must be. Very occasionally in those youthful days it befell me that I found the catch overflowing from the creel into the landing net, though it never got so far as sacks, so I measured the supposed happiness of those men of the east by my own lesser sensations. Later I learnt what their feelings must be more accurately. A holiday spent on the Broads showed me that bream in sacks are not all that distant fancy supposed, that they may even become an embarrassment, so the early ambition has passed from me. The fascination of bream-fishing between the darkest hour and the time of rising sun is still among my beliefs; the dark river flowing sullenly beneath a veil of mist-smoke, the long rod resting on the sedges, the black-tipped float poised ready for the dive, the sky gradually becoming opalescent as the sun begins to stir, all these are parts of an irresistible charm. But I do not now want twenty or thirty bream weighing 60lb. as a reward for early rising. Rather is my ambition to kill one vast one in that twilight of the gods. Let them give me a ten-pounder and who wills may have the rest. They do not give me a ten-pounder, and I take it that my ambition is likely to remain alive. It will not perish by fulfilment as a few less high aims have.

The bream illustration serves to show the general change that I suppose inevitably comes about with years. I do not now want to catch more fish of a kind in a day than ever I have caught before—no, that is not quite accurate—I do want to catch twelve salmon some day, so that I may know what it feels like, among other reasons. But of other fish I am not greedy—I only want to catch those that are enormous each after his kind. Your thirty-five pound chub, your four-pound perch, your seven-pound fluke, your ten-pound trout fairly caught with fly—those are the fellows that give me sleepless nights. These are the perpetual great ambitions, and they will, I expect, live, like the desire for a ten-pound bream, as long as I do.

But there are other lesser ambitions, work-a-day affairs, which really have a sporting chance of coming off. There is one for every day of trout fishing, and it varies from 1lb. to several pounds. Just at this time last year I very nearly realized such an ambition. In that very corner of the world whose identity Caradoc guards as his most inviolable secret, but to which he led me, as it were, blindfold, I discovered a truly great fish. It lived in a tiny stream which feeds a mill, and rose impressively in the deep water at the mill head. The ordinary trout of the land are five to the pound on a good day, so I determined to catch the monster, and by that deed to live in the songs of local bards for ever. The undertaking was not altogether an easy one, because the stream was much bushed and overhung, but at last, after two or three fruitless visits, I succeeded in getting a fly to the fish at a fortunate moment. It was taken, and for a brief space of time I had the happy thrill of being attached to something big as to be unmanageable on the very fine gut and light rod, and then the fly came away. It was sad, very sad, but I will do the company full justice. When I related the story in the evening they heard me with a respect which was flattering. They were good enough to admit that I knew a pound trout when I had hold of him, and generous enough to concede that even to have had hold of him was no small feat. After all, I got as much glory out of the encounter as I deserved, and bore myself under the laurels with, I hope, a pride which was no more than reasonable in one who could not be unconscious of merit.

Unfortunately the story has a conclusion. On the morrow my occasional called me back to town, but the others remained. And more, they only think that they persecuted it. I believe one of them got a rise from it. That, however, is not the important thing. The serious side of the case was shown when at last one day the sun shone and no breeze ruffled the water. The one of the persecutors crawled up to attack my fish as usual, and suddenly saw it. It basked on the surface; it had red fins and silvery scales; it was, in fact, a chub, and very much despise chub in those parts, so to this day they mock at me grievously whenever they happen to think of me and fishing and ambitions.

That ambition is therefore gone (I hope the chub is gone, too), but I have another which I hardly dare to mention. Under the flat lives (I saw him with these eyes) a trout which would outweigh twelve of his normal brethren. Ere many days are past, if Fortune is kind, a March brown presented at the exact moment. But I will say no more, except that this time I know it is not a chub. I saw spots.—H. T. S.

## THE RED MAN'S CANOE

No canoe in the world, for general all around utility in all waters, or for beauty and grace in outline, ever attained to the perfection of the canoe devised and developed by our Northern tribes. This is the type which played so important a part in the civilizing of the United States and Canada and survives today, in growing popularity, with its original model and lines unchanged.

The birch canoe was the supreme product of the red man's ingenuity and skill, and the white man, backed by centuries of training in the arts and crafts of civilization, has never been able to invent so good an implement for the purpose for which it was designed, nor with all his experiments has he ever improved upon



## Sportsman's Calendar

JULY

Trout, Salmon, Grilse, Bass.

One of the two best months for sea-trout fishing in the estuaries and inlets.

the Indian model. Canvas, it is true, has taken the place of birch bark as a covering, but shape and lines have undergone no change; and if tradition says aright, it was an Indian who first substituted canvas for birch bark, at a time when, because of depleted forests, bark was no longer obtainable.

Of the origin of this type of canoe we know nothing. It was born, of course, as all things useful are born, of necessity. It had reached its growth and complete development before the discovery of America, and the early explorers of the New World found it when they came fully matured in all the perfection of utility and symmetry that it possesses today.

In "Hiawatha's Sailing" Longfellow has recorded the Indian legend of its birth.—Outing.

## THE FIRST FISHERMAN

Beside a vast and primal sea  
A solitary savage he

Who gathered for his tribes rude need  
The daily dole of raw seaweed.

He watched the great tides rise and fall,  
And spoke the truth—or not at all!

Along the awful shore he ran  
A simple pre-Pelagian;

A thing primeval, undefiled,  
Straightforward as a little child—

Until one morn he made a grab  
And caught a mesozoic crab!

Then—told the tribe at close of day  
A bigger one had got away!

From him have sprung (I own a bias  
To ways the cult of rod and fly has)  
All fishermen—and Ananias!  
—Punch.

## CHARITY

When the night wind gently whispers solemn  
Vespers through the pines,  
And the yellow stars are shining overhead,  
And the pine knots flare and flicker in the fitful fire that shines,  
O'er the crumbling bars of rubies glowing red;

When the day of sport is ended, and you sit and  
Roast your shins,  
With a sense of satisfaction in your soul;  
When the ruddy faces gather, and a fishin' yarn begins  
By some "Ananias" wielder of the pole—

If a fellow in the circle, with imagination wrought,  
And with "chesty" intonation to each word,  
Wildly tells about a minnow or a "pumpkin seed" he caught—  
Just convince him 'twas the best you ever heard.

Don't you drop a tarpon story or a yarn of "yellowtail"  
Down upon his humble fable, to debance;  
For perhaps the only reason that he never caught a whale.  
Was because he really never had a chance.  
Carlyle C. McIntyre, in Field and Stream.

## A MOTH

(By Clinton Schollard)  
On wafts of mingled myrrh and musk  
I flutter up and down the dusk;  
I see the pale primrose break  
The sheathing beryl of its husk.

An entity that cleaves and clings,  
I taste the rose's inner springs;  
At the weird gleam of maris's fires  
I sing the pollen from my wings.

Remote, scarce tangible, and shy,  
Evasive as a cream am I—  
A little haunting dream of love  
That passes as it wanders by.

Light as the spindrift of the sea,  
At dawn I faint, at dawn I flee  
Into the vague, the outer void,  
Like a blown wraith of memory.