

HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

DANGERS OF THE WOODS

(By Richard L. Pocock.)

A Trick to the Tenderfoot.

"SPEAKING of cold snaps reminds me of the first winter I put in in the country, and a little experience in the backwoods of West Kootenay." Thus the tenderfoot. "That was one on the tenderfoot alright that time when you all got skunked on the banks of the old Kootenay, but listen to this little story. I don't want to boast, but I like to get my own back occasionally, and the tenderfoot species do not always deserve quite all the ridicule some of you old-timers are sometimes so lavish of.

"I was, I suppose, as green a chechaco then as the average, though I must say I never packed around the small arsenal of your other friend, and, knowing my greenness as far as woodcraft was concerned, I had a proper respect for the superior knowledge and experience of the old-timers, and never missed an opportunity of listening to their words of wisdom.

"Having spent the summer prospecting, and located one or two claims with the help and supervision of a genuine old-time miner who knew his business if anyone did, and having formed a close friendship with my older partner, I was quick to agree to but in the winter with him trapping in the hills some miles below Nelson, and made up my mind to have a taste of the genuine Canadian winter life which I had read about before leaving the old land.

"The place we chose to build our cabin was about four thousand feet above the lake level, as far as I could judge, and the winter snow started before we had the roof on, so that we did not have an over and above comfortable time finishing the habitation which was to be our home until the thaw came in the spring, but that is not the story that I want to tell, as, although that meant considerable hardship and discomfort, it could not be said to involve us in any danger.

"Suffice it to say that we eventually got the cabin finished and made as snug and comfortable as possible, and had our line of traps out before the snow had fallen to a depth of more than about a foot, so that it was possible, though not easy, to make the round of the traps without snowshoes. We had already caught quite a few martens, good skins too, when, as the snow continued to fall practically without intermission, my partner thought it about time that we were provided with snowshoes; why we had not provided these in the first place I do not know, as I left all these details to his superior wisdom, but I presume it was because he did not expect the snowfall to come upon us until a little later; after the cabin was completed. My suggestion (tenderfoot-like) was that we hurried to town before the snow became any deeper and bought some, but this did not seem good to the old-timer; he informed me that the clear thing for the mountains was ski, and that he was quite capable of making a couple of pair for us, which he certainly was, and which he proceeded to do with considerable skill, especially considering the limited number of tools he had to work with.

"While he was making them, and while I was practising on them, the snow was continuing to fall, and you know the way it does snow in the mountains of the Kootenays. Have you ever tried to ski? It is a fascinating pastime, and, when you first start in you will find it exciting enough on a hillside trying to dodge the trees and keep your nose out of the deep drifts; they are magnificent things when you get a little used to them on a down grade which is not too steep, provided there are no obstacles in the way, and you can keep your feet together and counteract the curious form of magnetic attraction which appears to draw them irresistibly one on each side of every tree which appears in the path, and also provided you are able to stop yourself when you want to, a feat which I usually accomplished by a windmill-like exhibition of acrobatics.

"However, to be brief, after a few days of practising under the tuition of the manufacturer of the things, I managed to get on fairly well on the level or a down grade which was not too steep, and my guide, philosopher and friend decided that I was sufficiently advanced to accompany him on the trip to town for mail and some few necessities which had been left out of the outfit.

"The distance was about six miles through the woods to the track of the Nelson-Robson branch of the C. P. R., and from there about seven miles along the track. I got down the hill alright without breaking any limbs or anything more serious than a few dozen falls into the nice wet snow, but while on the journey I was doing some tall thinking about the possibility of climbing uphill again on these seven foot long pieces of concrete slippers.

"Having arrived safe in town and got our mail and the other ictas, I had the temerity to suggest that I thought it would be a good scheme to invest in a pair of bear-paws, the webbed snowshoes of the mountains, to take back with us, as I feared that to climb a steep mountain-side on ski, for me at any rate would be a physical impossibility. My suggestion seemed to hurt the feelings of my companion and hurt his pride—the pride he took in the manufacture of the infernal things; he assured me that it was the easiest thing in the world to climb on them if they were only muffled with sacking; so, reluctantly and with some misgivings, the tenderfoot bowed once more to the superior wisdom of the old hand, and we start-

ed forth for the return journey, accompanied by a French-Canadian friend of his with a pair of prairie snowshoes, who thought he would like to pay us a visit and see our success with the traps.

"Luckily for us there was an early morning train which landed us at the foot of the mountain trail at about ten a.m. That left us about six and a half hours of daylight to make the five to six miles to the cabin.

"The first short hill I negotiated successfully but slowly—crab fashion. After that there was quite a long stretch of almost level country which would have been comparatively easy to an expert. My ankles were, however, getting more and more tired, and I found it increasingly difficult to keep pushing along at a pace to keep up with the others; at last, as they were obviously growing impatient of the slow progress I was making I begged them to push ahead and leave me to follow at my own pace; I felt sure that I could get there, somehow, in the trail they broke, and told them not to be at all uneasy about me, but to go ahead and get the fire going and I would follow behind as fast as I was able. If I did not turn up until after dark they were to come down the trail, again to meet me with a lantern.

"After a little show of reluctance, they yielded to my persuasions and soon forged ahead of me; as soon as they were out of sight I took counsel with myself and abandoned the cause of my misery at the first little slope, and left them sticking up in the snow in case I ever felt like coming back to them at some future date. After that I ploughed along in my own primitive fashion on my flat feet slowly but surely; even though the trail was broken more or less by those in front it was a hard grind, though I was free from the irritation of slipping back one foot at least for every two forward as I had hitherto been doing.

"Crossing a creek which was not yet completely frozen over, a drink of ice water was a fine refresher and put new life into me, better than any whiskey (the worst thing possible to indulge in on a trip of this sort—it goes to your legs every time and does no good at all in the way of putting new life in you)—and a slow and monotonous plod brought me at last to the foot of the last long climb at about three o'clock in the afternoon. After another drink here I girded my loins for the last great effort and started up the hill; on the first bench I spotted something sticking up in the snow at the side of the trail which did not look quite natural to me, and when I came up to it, I was amused and I must confess rather pleased to see that it was a pair of ski—my superior in wisdom and experience had evidently also decided to abandon them and trust to his ordinary means of locomotion to carry him to the top of the hill.

"About a third of the way up, when I was still going comparatively strong in knee-deep snow, I heard voices ahead of me to my intense disgust; here, I thought, were the other two coming back to meet me, and I felt quite capable of making to the end of the journey before dark and without assistance. It riled me to think they were coming to help me when I needed no help.

"As the voices came nearer I shouted to them asking what they were coming back for, I was alright and they need not worry, but go back and keep a good fire going. The reply was less polite than forcible, your old-timers are certainly artists in language. Coming back nothing (imagine the ornamental remarks, which are unprintable), they were still going up; all very well for me to get fresh and funny about it, they had been breaking the trail for me, all I had to do was to follow. Now that sounds all very well, but I can assure you that in that kind of snow the man breaking the trail on good snowshoes certainly ought not to have a harder time, to put it mildly, than the man who follows him in ordinary footgear. Be that as it may, when I reached them, I found the ski expert just about all in, incapable even of bad language, and desiring nothing but to be allowed to sit down and rest. The French Canadian was a little better, but had had about all he wanted, and it was up to the tenderfoot to make a supreme effort to save the situation.

"The procession changed its order; first the chechaco on his flat feet breaking the trail for the native-born on webs, followed slowly and painfully by the ski expert, also on his flat feet. I do not wish to pile on the agony or hold myself up as a hero in any way, but merely to show you that sometimes the despised tenderfoot scores an occasional trick.

"The story has often been told of the persuasions, entreaties, objurgations, and even stronger measures that have often to be resorted to to get a man along in the snow when the thermometer is away down in the depths. We used them all; when we were still a considerable distance from camp, darkness overtook us, and I had in places to feel for the blazes on the trees. At last the cabin door was reached and we staggered in; it was the tenderfoot who lighted the fire; it was the tenderfoot who fetched the water, and it was not until the tenderfoot had made and administered some hot Bovril that the visitor was able to bear a hand to help put the ski man to bed.

"He was a good man and a good partner, and I have no wish to rub it in or make myself out a hero. But remember, a tenderfoot may not know all about the backwoods; but a man who has rowed a hard boatrace, played a hard football match, and held up his end in a critical moment at play is not necessarily merely a 'college dude,' he has probably got some grit in him, although he does not know it all as soon as he first makes the acquaintance of

a totally different life, and the man with grit may make amusing mistakes, but is never wholly contemptible."

FISHING WITH CORMORANTS IN JAPAN

Having long felt a keen desire to witness this interesting sport, I was naturally glad to seize the opportunity of doing so when visiting Japan last year. With this idea in view, accompanied by my wife, I went to Nagoya and Gifu early in June to await the advent of a favorable night. At this time there was a spell of very wet weather, and it was three days before the flooded and turbulent river became practicable for fishing. Although the torrential rain had only ceased at noon of the third day, by nightfall the mountain stream had almost regained its normal size, for, like all the quick-running Japanese rivers, the Nagara very soon rids itself of surplus water.

The night in question, June 8, was intensely dark, for the sky remained very much overcast, and the clouds were brooding low over the landscape. When, therefore, we left our hotel at eleven and made our way in rickshas through the straggling and dimly-lighted streets of Gifu the view beyond the town was completely obscured, and we could see nothing of the beautiful pine-clad hills and the wide fertile valley through which the Nagara runs. But this was well, for on bright, moonlit nights the fishermen always remain at home, these conditions precluding all possibility of a large catch.

Arriving at the quayside we found a boat awaiting us, having been previously ordered by our Japanese friend, who had kindly made all arrangements necessary for our comfort. This boat proved to be a large one, but, being shaped like a broad, flat-bottomed punt, she drew very few inches of water, and was therefore eminently suited for the navigation of this shallow river. Her furniture was very limited, under the shelter of a canopy a few rugs had been spread upon the boards, and upon these we were able to recline at full length. A couple of paper lanterns hung beneath the awning, and cast a soft, rose-tinted light into the obscurity. No sooner had we taken our places than the two men in charge pushed her into the swift current and the next moment we realized that they were forcing the boat up stream by means of poles. At each powerful thrust of their arms the poles struck the river bed with a sharp, clanging sound, while at the same time the water rushed noisily beneath the bows. In this way, forever hugging the right bank and favoring all the quieter shadows, we progressed slowly for upwards of an hour.

The midsummer night was delightfully soft and warm, but a sultry breeze just fanned our faces, and could be heard rustling the leaves in a distant grove of bamboos. Over the paddy fields on the further bank the faint blue lights of a myriad fire-flies could be seen twinkling like so many stars, while above the murmur of the river the loud, musical drone of singing frogs was faintly audible.

Our destination was a point about a mile above Gifu, in daylight commanding a view of a long stretch of water, though now we could barely see the dim outline of the hills towering above us. On looking about us we discovered that at least a dozen boats had already congregated at the same place, evidently bent on the same errand as ourselves. These boats were almost exactly similar to our own, but the light from their round-bellied lanterns showed that they were packed with a picturesque throng of laughing, merry-making Japanese, and the sound of their revelry soon came pleasantly to us from all sides. A passionate love of sight-seeing is an innate characteristic of this race, and cormorant fishing, as alone practised on the Nagara, seems to especially appeal to their sense of the weird and grotesque. I am told that from the middle of May to October (which is the fishing season) a similar concourse of heavily-laden boats may be seen leaving the quay at Gifu every night, and that during August, when the fishing is at its best, the numbers are increased ten-fold, while once a year the Mikado himself honors the scene with a visit.

The home of the fishermen (who always work in company) is about ten miles above the town of Gifu, and each evening, when the conditions are favorable, they drift down the river to a point some ten miles below, covering in this way about twenty miles of ground. They return again at their leisure during the daytime. Those wishing to see the performance proceed up stream for rather over a mile, where they await the arrival of the boats, joining the fishermen as they float down to the town of Gifu. This was exactly what we intended to do.

We had not waited long when our Japanese friend suddenly pointed into the darkness. "See, they come!" he said. Away to the north the night was relieved by a faint, ruddy glow, at first scarcely perceptible, but momentarily increasing in brightness. A few minutes later seven small pin-points of light showed one by one round a distant curve of the river, and grew steadily larger as they drifted towards us. In a very short while we saw that these lights were really flaming braziers; great iron baskets of fire, standing out about 2 ft. from the prow of each boat. In the light of these glaring fires a number of dark objects could be made out moving hither and thither over the water, and at the same time our ears were assailed by strange cries and the clattering sound of oars being knocked against the sides of the boats, all this being done to encourage the birds in their labors.

As the bizarre flotilla came more within our ken we saw that the seven boats were floating down stream abreast of one another, and that they each contained three standing men, one steering and the other two in charge of cormorants. The great braziers, now close upon us, illumined the darkness with a vivid glare, and the wood fires could be heard crackling loudly as they showered thousands of sparks into the water. The whole produced a peculiarly weird effect, and one not easily forgotten. The head fisherman in each boat stood in the forepart of his craft, a brightly lit figure against the indigo background. In his hand he held twelve leads, which were attached to as many cormorants by collars round their necks. As the birds were diving and swimming in all directions, it was quite marvelous to witness the dexterity with which he kept the reins from becoming hopelessly entangled, as one would imagine would inevitably be the case, as the birds criss-crossed in the water. His hands seemed for ever at work, sorting the lines with almost lightning rapidity. The second fisherman, apparently a younger and less experienced man, controlled only four birds, and had a much easier task.

If the cormorants showed signs of becoming inactive their owners encouraged them with uncouth cries; but this was hardly needed, for they were diving every few seconds, and with really extraordinary energy. Judging by the success of their efforts, the water must have been teeming with fish, doubtless attracted by the light of the braziers. The gullets of the birds very soon became distended with the fish they had captured—the collar, of course, effectually prevented them from swallowing their prey outright. When replete the birds would swim idly on the surface of the water, and, noting this, the fisherman would immediately haul them into the boat, the birds protesting feebly to this proceeding by uttering sundry croaks of annoyance. Holding the bird firmly by the body, he would then deftly run his fingers along the neck, by which means the wretched bird was forced to disgorge all its fish. The cormorant would thereupon be thrown back into the water to continue its work.

During the night a single bird will catch large quantities of fish, and, seeing that over a hundred birds are used, the whole catch is very considerable, and brings in a rich harvest for their owners, which perhaps more than compensates them for many months of enforced idleness. When the night's fishing is concluded the cormorants are rewarded by a meal, and are given all the small, unmarketable fish. But by this time many of them are already partly satisfied, for the very tiny fish can, of course, pass through the collar and are swallowed during the evening's work. Each individual is known by a name, and, furthermore, has its own recognized place on the gunwale of the boat. When fed they sit quietly in a row, preening themselves and occasionally exchanging a friendly peck or croak with their neighbors. They entirely ignore the presence of mankind, and are apparently quite fearless.

The particular kind of fish caught by these cormorants is known as "ai," and is highly prized by the Japanese gourmets, consequently it commands a comparatively high price in the markets. In size it averages only 6 in. to 8 in., perhaps less, and hardly ever exceeds 12 in. in length. To us it looked, and, indeed, tasted, something like a smelt; but I believe it really belongs to the family Salmonidae, being known to ichthyologists as *Plecoglossus altivelis*, Temminck and Schlegel. It is apparently migratory, and does not run up from the sea until about May. It is said to increase rapidly in size as the summer advances, so that the bigger fish are not caught until the latter end of the season.—Collingwood Ingram

FRENCH, ENGLISH, AND HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGES

With regard to the question now being discussed in British Columbia as to whether French partridges drive out the English birds, I can assure readers from my own experience that there is no truth in this allegation. Indeed, quite the reverse is the case, for I have invariably found that the two varieties live together perfectly amicably, and that if either species is inclined to be the aggressor it is the English bird.

If it were the case that the French birds drive out the English ones the French partridges would have been shot out in Britain years ago. Instead of that, French and English birds are found together on many large estates today throughout the United Kingdom. Time and again I have seen both varieties feeding most amicably together, and at the end of a day's shooting taken as many of one species as of the other out of the game bag.

The present controversy in British Columbia on the respective merits of the two birds was thrashed out in Britain some years ago, and the principal fault or crime brought against Master Frenchman was his very ungamey habit of using his red legs instead of his wings. This fault brought another fault into the light, and condemned red legs in the eyes of all good sportsmen.

Now, when fresh blood is required in the Old Country from the continent the Hungarian is preferred and meets with the readiest sale, not because red legs drives the English native bird out, but because the Hungarian and English birds are so much alike in habits, size, and plumage, that it is difficult to tell one from the other. Like the English bird they "lie very close" to dogs, the covey rising together with that titting whirr of wings which is so attractive to all sportsmen, but very disconcerting to the amateur. I have more than once walked

right into the middle of a covey, especially in the early part of the season (September), and had them rise all around me.

This the French partridge does not very often allow either man or dog to do, generally running, instead of "lying close" and taking to the wing to the nearest rough ground to hide, such as in a fence, brushwood, thick grass or even into a bunch of nettles.

On a hot day Master Redlegs is utterly useless for sport, as very little running makes him as helpless as a duck. French partridges can then be picked up panting out of tufts of grass nettles and other thick herbage. The keeper's retriever on such a day will bring in as many unshot as shot birds. The second fault brought to light by the first is that in the first of the shooting season, when the coveys are not broken up and therefore are not wild, and the weather warm, red legs is an ideal game bird for the poacher, and, out here, the game hog. After a day's shooting, when scores of tired birds are hidden snugly away for the night in fence and other rough cover the poacher, with only the assistance of his lurcher dog, can make pretty certain of obtaining a fairly respectable bag before morning, unless the keepers are continually on the watch all night.

Although the French partridges are handsome, hardy game birds they are not, in my opinion, as satisfactory as the English or Hungarian for stocking a new country like Canada, not only for the reasons stated above, but because ground and wing vermin is excessive everywhere, and protection, strong protection throughout the year, must be given this bird, not so much against natural vermin but against two legged vermin, known here as game hogs, who, like the poacher, will find red legs an ideal bird to fill his bag with, especially in warm weather. British Columbia, or any other province in Canada, cannot give the protection required by this bird to insure a yearly increase and overflow. If such protection could be given I see no reason why the hardy red legs should not be introduced. But if not thoroughly protected the English or Hungarian birds would be the most preferable.

"America's Coming Game Bird" is the title of a little booklet containing many particulars about Hungarian partridges published by Messrs. Wenz and Mackensen, naturalists, Yardley, Pa. The future of our game birds has given great concern for some years to both Canadian and American sportsmen, and the latter particularly have made several experiments, the most successful of which have been with pheasants and Hungarian partridge. The partridges appear certain to have a great future before them on both sides of the line. Their whole history shows them to be suitable to American conditions. At first they were few in number in Europe, but the advance of agriculture favored them, and they spread until that continent is able to give an open season and export considerable quantities as well. They are hardy, prolific, a great benefit to the farming community, and thrive better under the protection of cultivation than in the wilderness. They are twice the size of ordinary quail, and combine with the good qualities which have served to make the Bob White such favorites, the added ability to withstand cold weather and hardships. The weight of an adult Hungarian partridge is about two to two and a quarter pounds, the length of the body being from twelve to fourteen inches and they measure from tip to tip of wings eighteen to twenty-two inches. It will be seen from this that they are more than twice the size of the Bob White. Their size and strength play a most important part in their adaptability to cold climates, because they can easily work themselves out of deep snow in which quail would perish. In their native country extreme variations of heat and cold are frequent, but the partridges do not seem to suffer from these changes. Their size, extreme hardness, high prolificness and swiftness on the wing, make the Hungarian partridge the ideal game bird for stocking purposes. Both parents are untiring guardians of their young, and owing to this care large proportions are reared, so that it doesn't take long to populate a whole district. The birds feed in coveys in the mornings and evenings, and towards noon retire to some secluded spot to take their ease and dust themselves. Partridges are easily pleased and can practically make their living anywhere. Few birds so strictly adhere to their once selected abode as the Hungarian partridges. Even their offspring do not wander away. Partridges are sociable, peaceful and affectionate and will amiably share territory with quail. For sport in the field partridges cannot be surpassed. They are more swift in flight than quail, and will lie much closer to cover. When flushed they fly like shot from a shell and at different angles. It requires a good marksman under favorable conditions to bag more than two of these swift birds on a raise. Hungarian partridges mate in pairs only, and not less than twelve pairs should be planted out in one section. The liberation requires to be carefully done, or the birds will continue to get as far away from their captor as possible till exhausted. The crates in which the birds are confined should be so loosened that the birds can escape themselves, and if food and water have been previously placed near by so that the birds can easily find the same on liberation they will almost invariably make their home where they found their first feed. Partridges can be successfully raised in captivity if reasonable care is taken. In their wild state they are hardly ever subject to disease, and when this occurs in captivity it shows faulty management. A varied diet is recommended.—Rod and Gun.