

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## PASSING COMMENTS

(Richard L. Pocock)

### Summer Shooting of Wild Pigeons

It has been the practice of sportsmen in all innocence to shoot the wild pigeons which visit our coast in the summer whenever it was possible to get them. They are found in considerable numbers in many places right at the present time, and quite a few have been shot lately. Most men have been under the impression that they do not breed here and that, as they were migratory birds, and also fond of the farmers' young oats, they were quite justified in shooting them. I have never shot any myself, but certainly should have until quite recently if I had had the chance. In the last few days, however, two good sportsmen, who are readers of this page, have called my attention to the fact that there is no doubt that these birds do breed here, and that therefore they consider, and rightly so, that they should not be shot until after they have finished breeding. There is a story, the origin of which I have been unable to trace, that there is a standing offer of a thousand dollars reward for any nest of these birds (the banded pigeon is, I believe, their proper name), found on this coast; so that there seems a good chance for a man who is a good hand with the climbing irons to make a little easy money. There is no desire to condemn or to criticize those who have shot them in the summer time in the past, as they seem to be birds about which very little is known here, and enthusiastic sportsmen, who have been in the habit of shooting them, have done so without any doubt at all in the firm belief that they were not breeding. The two sportsmen mentioned above were both accustomed to shoot these pigeons until they, one by chance and the other by deliberate investigation, proved to their own satisfaction that they are regular breeders in the country, several of the last lot of pigeons shot by them being found on dissection to contain eggs; since when, being the good sportsmen that most of our coast gunners are, they have given up pigeon shooting until they can be sure that the birds have finished breeding, and are desirous of having the attention of others called to the matter in order that they may follow suit. No sportsman will feel comfortable if he thinks he may have killed a bird whose young ones are crying for food in its nest; therefore it is certain that the proof that these pigeons do breed here being positive and indisputable, we shall all call pigeon-shooting off until August at least, when I understand that they should be fair game for the gun from those who know their habits better than I can claim to do.

### Cowichan Hatchery

Fishermen have every reason to be pleased at the establishing of the game fish hatchery by the Dominion Government at the lower end of Cowichan lake. Men who know the Cowichan realize what a splendid stream it is, and what an attraction it will always be to anglers from this and other lands; if its natural wealth of game fish is cherished and improved. First-class game fishing is as great a drawing card as good big game shooting, and easier to maintain. The establishing of this hatchery and the making of the fish ladders at Shawigan are two excellent steps in the direction of improving the fishing in nearby waters. The making of the Shawigan fish ladders has been proved to have had good results. What we want now is proper enforcing of the laws for the protection of game fish in places where they are notoriously and openly set at naught. It is no good hatching fish if the "irresponsibles" are allowed to catch and kill the fish turned out before they are of lawful size.

### A Bag Limit

It has been suggested by a well-known local sportsman that in framing the new Game Act, it would be well to impose a day bag limit to apply on all sorts of game. This has of course been suggested before, and the objection generally brought against it is that it would be practically impossible to enforce such a limit, if imposed by law. In answer to this, this gentleman very aptly points out that it is practically impossible to enforce any law in its entirety. There will always be law-breakers who are not detected, especially offenders against the game law, which is very difficult to enforce properly in a country such as British Columbia, where there are such enormous tracts of wild country, even within close distance of the settled districts. But all laws have a moral effect, and all laws are respected by the majority of good citizens, even though they might see no harm in doing what is prohibited by such laws did they not exist. If there were a bag limit imposed, no good sportsman would exceed it, while a large proportion of those who would exceed it if they could, would be deterred from doing so by fear of detection, not necessarily by a game warden who would bring them to justice, but by other shooting men in whose eyes they would be shamed. It is certainly a suggestion which should not be lightly set aside as impracticable, just because of the difficulty of rigidly enforcing it. Personally I have never in my life shot more than ten grouse or pheasants in one day, here or in any other country, and do not want to. Two or three brace of these birds seems to me to be a fair bag for anyone, but I have seen a man stagger on to the E. & N. train with a load of grouse as heavy as a good buck not so many years ago, and heard him boast of having killed over sixty in one day's shooting. That is not my idea of good sportsmanship in a free game country, and I think that it should be made impossible for the future, and have there-

fore much pleasure in publishing this sportsman's suggestion for the consideration of others who are interested in good sport and a fair field for both game and hunter.

### A TROUT FISHING EXPERIENCE

To every fisherman who has plied rod and line for a number of years there arrive from time to time unusual experiences. It may be the capture of that gold salmon, which to most of us comes only in our dreams. Forty pounds, be it said, will not be the limit of weight assigned to the monster in the event of its escape. But, apart from the silvery salmon, the most remarkable that ever came under the writer's observation occurred in India. He was staying at Hangrote, at the junction of the Poonch and Jhelum rivers. One of the party ran and lost—through the tackle breaking—a heavy mahseer. A prodigious fish it was, according to its would-be captor; it must, he said, have weighed at least 50 lb. A day or two later another of the party hooked and landed a mahseer which turned the scales at 28 lb. It took a spoon bait, and on examination it was seen that the treble hooks of the spoon had not touched the fish. A spoon bait was already fixed in its mouth. To it was attached a yard or so of treble gut trace. One of the hooks of the second spoon had caught the eye of a swivel on the trace hanging from the mahseer's mouth, and in this strange fashion the fish was landed. Fisherman No. 1 was forced to acknowledge the spoon found in the mahseer's mouth as his property, but failed to give a satisfactory explanation of the difference between the actual weight of the fish and his estimate. But we all know that it is invariably the biggest fish which escape. On the banks of a Welsh stream, with the trout rising freely, I was once placed in an unpleasant predicament. As though by the weird spell of some demon of the river, rod, reel, and line mysteriously and completely disappeared.

My first sight of the water was not encouraging, nor did the appearance of the sky augur well. It had rained heavily all night. Large masses of dark cloud still hung sullenly overhead, menacing further downpours, their motion before a cold northerly breeze scarcely perceptible. And what of the famous trout stream which only on this particular day I was privileged to exploit? Its swollen, muddy current broiled noisily or swept smoothly between the trees and bushes, which in this part of its course grew thickly upon either bank. Obviously the fly was useless in this raging water. Unless in the summer time, when rivers run fine and clear, worm fishing for trout is beneath the notice of true disciples of old Isaak. There remained only the minnow. With the natural article I was not provided; but a search resulted in the discovery of a solitary specimen of the Devon pattern, and this was duly attached to the trace. The affinity that flights of treble hooks display for trees, bushes, stones—anything but the legitimate quarry—is really remarkable. It is needless to particularize regarding the number of trees that were climbed in order to recover that precious Devon minnow, or to record exactly the remarks that were addressed to it. Sufficient to say, that at length it found a permanent home near the top of a gaunt, bare tree, which would have defied the efforts of anything but a squirrel to ascend it.

Early in the afternoon the weather cleared up. The wind changed, the heavy clouds began to disperse, and fitful glimpses of sunshine lit up the colored water. Three not particularly well-conditioned trout were contained in the basket when at length I put up a cast of flies. For the tail I selected a February red, which I have always found a useful pattern in colored water early in the season; the inevitable March brown came next, and a dun hackle was attached as third dropper. The river hereabouts presented an attractive and "trouty" appearance, but it was heavily wooded on either bank, rendering casting a matter of some difficulty. Wading as far out as possible, I hooked, after a cast or two, a nice trout close to the opposite bank, and presently the little steelyard fixed its weight a trifle over 1 lb. A golden beauty it was, in prime condition. At the next cast I rose another, evidently a larger fish, and, becoming incautions in my enthusiasm, the trees behind escaped my recollection. Swish! I reeled up, waded ashore, and inspected the offending tree. It could easily be climbed. The line was caught in a branch that overhung the pool. The rod was laid down carefully, with the butt resting on the bank, and the point on a large stone, round which the current whirled sharply. After ten minutes of hacking and sawing with a rather blunt knife, the branch in which the flies were caught fell with a big splash into the river. I descended leisurely. To my astonishment, no vestige of rod, branch, or line was to be seen. They had vanished, apparently, into space. The water was still too much colored for the bottom to be distinguished; the depth was about 2 ft., and the current fairly strong. It was obvious that the branch had floated down stream, pulling the rod into the water, but I anticipated no difficulty in finding it. But a careful and prolonged search proved wholly unavailing, and, seating myself on the bank, I proceeded to light a pipe and consider the situation. It was certainly a curious one. The trout were beginning to take, the best of the day was before me, and here was I minus the means of fishing. An angler who had served his novitiate more years ago than he cared to remember had lost his rod like any heedless boy, and was left lamenting eight miles from home with a landing net, fly book, and basket containing four trout! I resolved to make a final effort to recover my missing property.

Landing net in hand, I waded slowly down stream, searching out each nook and eddy, but still without success. I was now more than thirty yards below the spot where the rod had been, and could go no further as the water was already lapping to the top of the waders. In despair, I made for the bank, intending to resign myself to the inevitable and make tracks for home, when I felt something gently pressing against my leg. Reaching down my hand, I was rejoiced to lay hold of the reel line. Following it up, I came presently to the rod, lying in nearly 3 ft. of water, and with most of the line pulled off the reel. Had the progress of the line not been arrested in some weeds, low's special creations—might have travelled. All is well that ends well. The flies were intact. I was quickly at work again, and warned by past misfortune, paid due heed to the trees. The further proceedings were chiefly interesting to the fisherman. The trout were taking in great style, and by the time the lengthening shadows warned me to make for home and dinner a weighty load of fish was in the basket. But to such burdens the angler submits with surprising equanimity.

It is commonly maintained that with the wet fly it is advisable always to work up stream. In bright weather, when rivers are low, this is unquestionably the best course to pursue; so shall you most readily avoid the sharp eyes of the trout and needless disturbance of the water. But when streams are clear after a flood the case is different. As the result of personal experience, I believe that, in such circumstances, the man who fishes down stream will kill two trout for one caught by an angler who adopts the other plan. In practice, however, it is not desirable to direct each cast downwards. It all depends on the pool or likely reach the angler should form a plan of campaign, commencing at the top or bottom, wading from one side to another if need be, searching out the far backwaters and the quiet glides among the trees, where the best trout often have their home. And always he should have an eye for rising trout, and cast over them, whenever practicable, from a point opposite to or below the rise. But the fact remains that in fairly strong, slightly colored water the bulk of the trout will be caught as the flies swing round with the current or are worked gently against it. Even when trout are taking the artificial fly freely it sometimes happens on northern waters that none are to be seen rising in themselves, a fact which emphasizes in a peculiar degree the difference between the uses of the dry fly and the wet. It is undoubtedly the case that to mark down your fish, stalk it adroitly, and kill it with a clever imitation of the insects upon which it is feeding represents the highest form of science in angling. Yet more often than not perhaps the fish is gulped with some other pattern than the fly on the water; moreover, when many winged insects are about, it is not always easy to decide upon which the trout are feeding. Long prior to the modern cult of the dry fly expert fishermen on northern streams were accustomed when opportunity offered to stalk and cover rising trout. They would even dry their flies and get the range by two or three casts through the air, knowing that the moment of the fly's alighting on the water was the most deadly. And in such cases they relied on the tail fly, and endeavored to place it accordingly. The truth is, first-rate exponents of either system have little to learn about the catching of trout. The master of the wet fly would quickly acquire the knack of using the dry fly, and, under suitable conditions, would often find it serviceable on northern streams. After all, the object is to kill fish, and, apart from habit and inclination, there would not seem to be any good reason for invariably adhering either to one plan or the other.—R.C.D. in The Field.

### A FISHY STORY

The following is an absolutely true story. I have related it a number of times to friends of mine, and I regret to say never yet have found a single person that believed it. You, my kind reader, may believe it or not—I don't care whether you do or not, but it is true just the same.

"Elija! Elija! If you want that pickered baked for dinner, you will have to chop some wood, and right off, too."

"What's that?" asked Elija, and there was astonishment, doubt and fear, all expressed in his voice. "What have you done with all that wood I cut yesterday?"

"Ei you think," returned Mrs. Elija, "that an armful of wood is going to do the cooking for this family for a month you are very much mistaken." And the screen door closed with a bang that gave the necessary emphasis to her words to cause Elija to lay aside his pipe and the fish pole he had been trying to mend, and walk towards the woodpile, saying as he went, "Wish to goodness I had brought along the cussed stove and a barrel of gasoline; these Durn that old farmer anyhow, for saying they was a good cook stove and plenty of wood here. Durn him, but I'll know better next time!" He chopped diligently for a few moments and then aimed a vicious blow at a particularly tough piece, he reached a little too far, missed it entirely and broke the axe handle a long splitting break that left nothing curable in the way of a break or axe handle either.

This does not seem much of an accident, but when you consider that we were five long country miles from the store, and that shattering axe was all that stood between us and starva-

tion, it becomes more than a mere accident; it became a monumental disaster. "Nothin' left fer me to do 'cept straddle that hoss and go and get an axe handle," said Elija. "You better finish mendin' that pole and dig some bait and when I get back we'll go and get some blue gills."

This was the last I heard from Elija for several hours (a hundred he said), but at last he returned, and I heard him out in front scraping off the mud from his legs and shedding profane family like autumn leaves. "What do you think?" he shouted, "that fool store-keeper didn't have an axe handle—said he would have 'em in a couple of days or so. Couple of days! think of that; might just as well have said two hundred years—and here we are down to crackers. Get that pole fixed?"

The pole was fixed, the worms ready, and we went silently down to the boat, pushed off and rowed to the blue gill ground without saying a word. There are times when silence is truly golden; this was one of them. We anchored and began fishing; almost immediately Elija had a bite; I saw his bobber go down, rise for a moment, and then go down again; this time to stay, but although he seemed to be looking straight at it he did not apparently see. He was dreaming of axe handles, poor man, and did not miss the bobber.

"Haven't you got a bite?" I asked.

"Min-min," he said with tight closed lips, and I knew he was holding up a mouthful of tobacco juice as a man hordes his gold. But just at that moment he struck, and struck hard; there was an explosion of wrath, a cataract of tobacco juice, and "Snagged," by Elija, "Wouldn't that frost you? Last good hook I got!" he wailed. "Wish I could fall in the cussed lake and drown; this is certainly my Jonah day! Couldn't even drown, only get wet and my belly full of dirty water, then he pulled out and rolled on a barrel and have to go on from side to side, trying to disengage it from the root or stump, of whatever it was. It suddenly became loosened and he raised it slowly to the surface.

"Look! Look!" he whispered, as with eyes resembling a pair of door knobs he pointed with trembling finger at the object with which his line had become entangled. "Does that look like an axe handle to you, or have I gone clean daffy?" And there, as sure as I hope that Teddy R. will be our next president, I saw the turn grip of a fine axe handle, and, furthermore, there was a good sharp axe on the other end of it, too.

With a sob of relief I pulled towards home with Elija sitting in the stern clasp that heaven-sent axe to his breast like a sleeping child.

Later as we were sitting down to a bountiful supper, he said, "Tell you what it is, I ain't goin' to do any more kickin' after this. I'm goin' to be patient and resigned. The Bible is true, every word of it; there is an unseen power that guides us and shapes our ends and that notes every a sparrow's fall, but," and he squirmed a little on his chair, "I wonder why in thunder I couldn't have found that axe before I rode that hoss to town and blistered my back."

"Elija Murray," interrupted his wife, "air you going to ask the blessing?"

He looked across the table at me, gave me the American eye wink and said, "You ask it, Bill; I'm all fussed."—Outer's Book.

### A SPORTSMAN'S PLATFORM

#### Fifteen Cardinal Principles Affecting Wild Game and Its Pursuit

The wild animal life of today is not ours to do with as we please. The original stock is given to us in trust, for the benefit both of the present and the future. We must render an accounting of this trust to those who come after us.

1. Judging from the rate at which the wild creatures of North America are now being destroyed, fifty years hence there will be no large game left in the United States nor in Canada outside of rigidly protected game preserves. It is therefore the duty of every good citizen to promote the protection of forests and wild life, and the creation of game preserves, while a supply of game remains. Every man who finds pleasure in hunting or fishing should be willing to spend both time and money in active work for the protection of forests, fish and game.

2. The sale of game is incompatible with the perpetual preservation of a proper stock of game; therefore it should be prohibited, by law and by public sentiment.

3. In the settled and civilized regions of North America, there is no real necessity for the consumption of wild game as human food; nor is there any good excuse for the sale of game for food purposes. The maintenance of hired laborers on wild game should be prohibited, everywhere, under severe penalties.

4. An Indian has no more right to kill wild game, or to subsist upon it all the year round, than any white man in the same locality. The Indian has no inherent or God-given ownership of the game of North America, any more than of its mineral resources; and he should be governed by the same game laws as white men.

5. No man can be a good citizen and also be a slaughterer of game or fishes beyond the narrow limits compatible with high-class sportsmanship.

6. The game-butcher or a market-hunter is an undesirable citizen, and should be treated as such.

7. The highest purpose which the killing of wild game and game fishes can hereafter be made to serve is in furnishing objects to



## Sportsman's Calendar

JUNE

Trout, salmon, grilse.

The best month for Sea-trout fishing.

overworked men for tramping and camping trips in the wilds; and the value of wild game as human food should no longer be regarded as an important factor in its pursuit.

9. If rightly conserved, wild game constitutes a valuable asset to any country which possesses it; and it is good statesmanship to protect it.

10. An ideal hunting trip consists of a good comrade, fine country, and a very few trophies per hunter.

11. In an ideal hunting trip, the death of the game is only an incident; and by no means is it really necessary to a successful outing.

12. The best hunter is the man who finds the most game, kills the least, and leaves behind him no wounded animals.

13. The killing of an animal means the end of its most interesting period. When the country is fine, pursuit is more interesting than possession.

14. The killing of a female hoofed animal, save for special preservation, is to be regarded as incompatible with the highest sportsmanship; and it should everywhere be prohibited by stringent laws.

15. A particularly fine photograph of a large wild animal in its haunts is entitled to more credit than the dead trophy of a similar animal. An animal that has been photographed never should be killed, unless previously wounded in the chase.

### TRAVELING BY THE COMPASS

Nine out of ten men finding themselves lost in the woods get into a panic and quarrel with the compass. They doubt the instrument, when, as a matter of fact, it is always right or nearly so. Otherwise how would the ocean traveler keep his pathway? Many an able-bodied man with otherwise splendid nerves and well found for a week in the woods has lost his way and took fright, as might be expected. What ought to have been only an interesting adventure, taken calmly and with coolness, has ended in a tragedy. He tore through the thicket and swamps in his senseless panic until he dropped and died in fright, hunger and exhaustion. Wherefore, take heed of what I am about to tell you.

Should you be tramping through a pathless forest on a cloudy day, and should the sun suddenly break from under a cloud in the north-west about noon, don't be scared. The last day is not at hand and the planets have not become mixed, only you are turned. You have gradually turned round until you are facing the northwest when you meant to travel south. It has, I confess, a muddling effect on the mind, but it has occurred to me on the Subway in New York on one occasion to get on the wrong side of the road and ride to South Ferry instead of Harlem, simply because I had turned completely round on a foggy day, and until I arrived at the stopping place I did not discover which way I had been traveling. That seems to be an absurd blunder, but it is not more so than the man who turns inadvertently round on his axis in the North woods.

In the woods if you suppress all panicky feelings the difficulty is easy to get along with. It is morally certain that you commenced swinging to southwest, then west to northwest. Had you continued on till you were heading a direct north, you could rectify your course by simply turning and following a due south course. But as you have now varied three-eighths of the circle, set the compass and travel by it to the southeast until you have by your judgment about made up the deviation, then go straight south and you will not go far wrong. Carry the compass in your hand and "line" your course carefully by landmarks, for the tendency to swerve from a straight course when one is once lost—and nearly always to the right—is a thing past understanding.—Recreation.

A colonel, on his tour of inspection, unexpectedly entered the drill room, where he came across a couple of soldiers, one of them reading a letter aloud, while the other was listening, and, at the same time, stopping up the ears of the reader.

"What are you doing there?" the puzzled officer inquired of the former.

"You see, colonel, I'm reading to Atkins, who can't read himself, a letter which has arrived by the afternoon's post from his sweetheart."

"And you, Atkins, what in the world are you doing?"

"Please, colonel, I am stopping up Murphy's ears with both hands, because I don't I don't want him to hear of what she has written."