

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

AFTER THE AUERHAHN

The charm of hunting—aside from the chase of dangerous game, which has a charm of its own—seems to lie partly in the difficulties met and overcome. When you want a woodmouse with all your heart (as you do, perhaps, for the biggest trout in the pool) and the woodmouse, trained by much dodging of snares and foxes, keeps you watching and scheming for a week before you get him or lose him, there is more honest sport in the hunt than in getting a deer for your table when all you have to do is to paddle swiftly and silently around the alder point and take him as he jumps from the lily pads.

To me the charm of hunting the auerhahn once was, first, that it offered difficulties. You had to get up early in the morning and depend upon yourself instead of on a keeper. Then the auerhahn is wild and shy, shyest of all feathered game, and I have never yet met the man who has shot one. After hunting hare and deer in German preserves, where killing alone is called sport, where you have to be careful not to shoot north, for the village is there; nor south, for the horse is there; nor east, for your host is there behind a tree; nor southwest, for a multitude of reasons, one learns to welcome a bit of real hunting.

Lastly, it offered a chance to discover something about a rare bird, of which almost nothing is known. So when the Baron offered me my choice of a reh (deer) hunt, in which "we ought to get twenty, but will probably get more," or a try at this wild bird which we would probably not see and almost certainly not shoot, I chose the latter and went to bed early—which is against good German usage.

The dictionaries call the auerhahn the mountain-cock. The Baron, however, says the dictionaries know nothing about it. Moreover, he has both birds in his preserves. The mountain-cock is the berghahn, a large black pheasant, wild and hard to shoot. The berghahn is meant when one speaks of the capercaillie in Europe. The auerhahn is much larger, dark brown in color, and wilder than a wood's raven.

Certain parts of Bavaria and the Black Forest are the only localities where one may still be reasonably sure of hearing the auerhahn in a week's hunting. One may sometimes be heard booming from a bit of remote forest in other parts of Germany, but that is the exception. Only the birds' extraordinary wildness has saved them from extinction long ago, for nothing is done, nor can be done, I think, towards artificial stocking. The young birds would simply die or beat themselves to death if confined in the presence of men.

It was one morning in late April, on the edge of the Black Forest region, that I tried my first hunt. We were off at three in the morning, four of us, each with driver and gamekeeper. The mists hung low in the sleeping villages as we rattled along; on the winding roads the air was heavy with night smells of the woods. Max, the keeper, in answer to my questions, explaining the nature of the hunt and of my own duties if I expected a shot.

"You see, Herr Doktor, this is the only way you can hunt the auerhahn"—this in answer to my surprise at spring hunting. "It's no use to hunt him in the woods with pointers. Donnerwetter! he has ears like a witch and also eyes. I have been keeper twenty years in these woods and I never saw him except at this time, and in this way. Sometimes I have heard his wings at a distance, but not often. He is a silent kerl and keeps to himself."

"Only in April or May he falls in love—then he makes a fool of himself and sometimes gets shot. He flies into a big tree at daylight and makes a racket to rouse a policeman. While he calls he knows nothing else; he is deaf and blind. Then you must run hard. But stop running before he stops calling; else you will lose him. If you stir, if a leaf stirs, he hears it and is off over the mountain."

A half hour's drive brought us to a foot-path leading up the mountain, where the Baron and his friends left us with a cherry weidmansluck! as they disappeared in the darkness. For each hunter a separate carriage had been brought, for the birds are found singly and generally miles apart.

We pushed rapidly upward, Max and I, till the heavier mixed growth of the summit was reached, when we stole on much more cautiously, stopping often to listen. It was curious hunting, this creeping through the still, dark woods in which not a bird had yet awakened, and depending on our overstrained ears as if we were stalking a camp of hostile Indians, instead of a wild wood's bird. Every few minutes Max turned to whisper caution against noise, though what with his heavy boots and his ignorance of stalking methods, he seemed to me to be making noise enough to alarm less sensitive ears than the auerhahn's. Certainly he could never have stalked a red deer that way—to say nothing of a beaver.

The path opens as we ascend, and now a rugged dark line is seen faintly outlined against the sky. It is the hilltop between us and the morning. We are both listening with heads bent, Max for the first sounds of our game and I for a faint rustle below that tells of a deer stealing away from its covert, when from far up among the firs a heavy booming sound comes rushing downward through the startled woods.

"Schnell! Schnell! There he is; come on!"

yells Max, all noise and excitement in a minute, and away he goes crashing after the sound with racket enough to awaken the seven sleepers. Instead of following him, I stand in the path trying to define the curious call. It suggests the drum of a partridge close by, only much heavier, as if a thunderbolt should rumble its wings. With the whirring comes a faint clicking sound, as if voice and wings are both in use at once. The booming sound ceases suddenly, before I can determine how it is made. With it the crashing in the bushes ceases also.

A Nervous Guide

Poor Max, finding himself alone, was in terror lest I should alarm the game by disobeying instructions, for once the auerhahn is heard, you must not stir a muscle except when he is booming. Max knew of my love of the wild things and had questioned and listened for hours to my accounts of New World animals and hunting. He had set his honest heart on my getting this one, which he assured me afterwards was probably the only old cock on the whole mountain. I almost ran against him in the darkness before he learned my whereabouts, and then he almost had a fit, so great was his fear that I would alarm the shy game and drive it away.

The German hunter, so far as I have met and known him, knows nothing of stalking or still-hunting. Max would listen incredulously when I told him that you can walk upon any animal if you first learn to walk like an animal, and he would say finally: "Wait till you try the auerhahn." Now that the chance had come, he was scared into a perspiration lest I should attempt it. He was motioning imploringly for silence when the heavy booming rang through the woods again. With a shout for me to follow, Max was off, as if he were a coon-hunter and heard the eager yapping that tells of a treed coon, which belongs to the first man that finds him.

It was clear now that the bird was so far away that with ordinary caution no ears, however keen, could detect us. Only a nose was equal to that task. But it would be presumptuous, and of no use besides, to suggest that to a German gamekeeper, so I let Max run and listened again. When I found him a second time he kept fast hold of my arm till the call began, apparently much nearer than before. Like the partridge's drumming, it is strangely deceptive as to distance and location.

By this time the excitement of the hunt had gotten hold of me, making me forget the naturalist. I dashed after the keeper, our nerves tingling exuberantly as the bushes crashed about us and the heavy whirring rushed by our ears continuously. Then we stopped with hearts thumping audibly in the silence and darkness of the morning woods.

So we went for half an hour, now rushing on heedlessly, now cowering with bated breath, now with quick thrills of expectancy tingling down our backs as the strange throbbing call rolled down upon us, till it seemed as if some fierce, unknown beast were up there challenging our advance. And I repeated to myself that this was curious hunting—almost as exciting as moose-calling.

We were now near the auerhahn evidently, though it was still too dark to find him in the treetops, when he began calling again I spoke hurriedly to Max:

"I'm going over yonder among the pines. The trees will show better there against the light. Stay here; and if you see him, come tell me." I was off with the rifle before he could object (as he certainly would have done) to having the hunt taken out of his hands. In Germany everything should proceed officially, according to exact rules.

I found a place in the pines where some big treetops showed clearly against the light and began to examine them. How easily one can pick out the different trees by the characteristic turn of their small twigs. Even their shadows in the moonlight are as good as a botanical description, or better. That strong crook there, now, could belong only to an oak; and that close clump of leaves—hold on! oaks haven't any leaves yet.

The supposed clump starts into sudden vibration as my eyes search it suspiciously; the startling call goes booming, rumbling through the woods again and echoing back from the hills.

It grew quiet after a moment, and the figure of a large bird slowly outlines itself on the oak branch, but vague and shadowy in the gloom of the fading night. Suddenly he crouches, there is a flash of wings over his head, and the booming begins again with the clucking and calling. There is no doubt now. The sound proceeds from the wings, as a partridge drums, but whether he strikes them together over his back, or against his sides, or upon the branch beneath him is impossible to tell. Probably upon his sides, like a challenging rooster; but as with the grouse, the movement is too swift for eyes to follow.

When the Bird Is Deaf

I raise the rifle slowly as he stops. "But wait! Robin Hood himself, or Davy Crockett, would miss once at least with this gloom and distance. Let's see if he really is so deaf to all but his own music." So I wait till he begins calling again, cover him as carefully as I can, and fire. The report breaks in on the morning stillness with a startling crash. It leaps across the valley, echo hurls it back again, then it leaps to the mountain and goes rumbling like thunder up over the treetops and out of hearing. But the booming call goes steady

ly on and the flicker of wings on the oak branch is rapid as ever. I have just time to slip in another shell before he ceases suddenly and becomes apparently part of the tree again.

I think he must have smelled the powder, as crows are supposed to do; or it may be he caught an echo long since beyond my hearing, for he moved uneasily up and down the branch and waited a long time before calling again. Then the sound seemed curiously faint and far away as if from beyond the mountain. It seemed to satisfy him, however, for after listening a moment he broke out into the full booming challenge.

I fired again and missed. As I raised the rifle for another try the call ceased abruptly, as if the auerhahn were dissatisfied, as birds often are, with his own performance. Behind me I heard a slight rustle where Max drew himself back to cover. It seemed impossible that any ears a hundred yards away could have detected it, but I saw the big bird drew himself sharply up as if he were being stretched into a string just as a turkey does when alarmed. The next instant—before I could press the trigger—he was whizzing like a bullet over the crest of the mountain.

Poor Max was full of vain sorrow at his blunder. It was a bit hard, to be sure, not to get the auerhahn after such a stalk, and of course I felt dead sure of him the next shot. What hunter ever missed twice and lost his third chance without the same sweet consciousness? Nevertheless, the hunt was the most delightful that I ever had in the country of rules and red tape—so much to see and learn, so much more sport than potting a dozen red-deer from a chair as they came to feed in the open glades. All the other hunters came back also empty-handed. Only one had heard a bird calling, but had alarmed him before getting within range.

So, though I have seen and heard and shot at the auerhahn, I have small idea what the auerhahn is like, and the lack is the more vexatious because I cannot find anybody who will tell me clearly what I have missed. Next season, when the auerhahn falls in love again, I shall set myself a more difficult task than shooting him. It is to stalk him without a gun (and without a keeper); and to watch him till he stops calling, and his mate comes, whom nobody ever sees; to follow them into the glade, where I am sure he will strut, and spread his tail and make himself big with vain pride, just as our own wild turkey does before the mate who has come to his calling. And that will be good hunting; for no human eyes have ever yet seen it.

"Donnerwetter!" says the Baron when I tell him my intention and all about the turkey's courting. "When you do that I shall send you to catch the elms that dance in that same glade in the moonlight. You may be right, though, about the courting. Anyway, you shall have your invitation when the spring comes."—William J. Long in Outing.

HEDGEHOG A LA CANAYEN

"Louis," inquired the tenderfoot, "did you ever cook a hedgehog?"

"No, m'sieur, but I have many tam begin. Dat's not ver' easy 'ting, to cook hedgehog. But ma fadder—"

"I understand that all you have to do is to fry them quick in hot, deep fat."

"Wall, I dunno me 'bout dat. P'raps. All de same, I radder chew me de spruce gum. But de fadder of me, he's de mos' bes' cook for hedgehog was never seen. He's tole plenty deep, but dat's p'raps too long story."

"No, go ahead. I want to find out."

"Wall, de firs' 'ting you got to skin heem, an' dat's purty mean job. It mak' you mad when de quill stick in de hand. But she's not ver' bad if you got pinchers. Nex' you put heem in a pail wit' plenty salt water and let heem soak, oh, mebbe all night. It tak' long tam for soak hedgehog enough—"

"How much of him do you take?"

"Oh, jes' de legs. Dat's all dere is. An' after he's soak, he's wash off in clean water and den he's boil in more salt water—"

"How long?"

"Well, what you call par-boil, mebbe tree, four hour. After dat he's boil in some more water wit' ver' leetle salt and some vinegar. Dat's for mak' heem tender—"

"How much vinegar?"

"For chicken mos' likely one, two spoon, but I tink me ma fadder say for hedgehog 'bout one cup. Anyhow, he's boil dere wit' nice piece pork and mebbe some onion."

"That's not a par-boil, is it?"

"Oh, mon Dieu, no! 'Bout six, eight hour. Dat give you plenty tam for gettin' de bakin' hole ready, an' de fimes' place for dat's in de side of a hill. When everyt'ing's done, you put heem in a kettle wit' some pork on top an' some flour and leetle water dat he's boil in an' mak' de cover ver' tight."

"How long does he stay there?"

"All night, an' ma fadder he say dat if de bakin' hole's not cool off too moche, he's better by noon. Dat's why, ma fren, dere's so many hedgehog. It's ver' hard for cook heem good. But long 'bout noon it's tam for mak' de gravy, wit' flour, an' water he's boil in, an' leetle butter if you got it, an' some pepper."

"When you go for pull heem out de hole, you mus' kick de dog away, or you have all dis 'trouble' for not'n." Den he's put on de beeg plate wit' pork an' onion and plenty gravy. An' de nex' 'ting—"

Louis suddenly arose to kick together the

brands of the fire and pattered unaccountably with the sticks on the farther side.

"Yes, what next?" insisted the tenderfoot.

"I should think it would be about done."

"Wall, no," drawled Louis from the darkness beyond the fire. "De fadder of me, he always say de nex' 'bes' 'ting is 't'row de tam 'ting in de lak'."—W. S. C. in Outing.

18 LB. DOLLY VARDEN TROUT

A magnificent specimen of the Dolly Varden trout was taken from Lake Pend D'Oreille, Ida., one day last summer by Judge G. W. Stocker of Spokane, Wash. The beauty weighed eighteen pounds and measured one inch over three feet from tip to tip. The fish struck at a pearl spoonhook and fought three hours before the fortunate angler, playing it carefully, succeeded in boating his prize. Judge Stocker's fishing companion was W. H. Witt, and the two landed about thirty-five pounds of trout. Aside from the big fellow the fishes averaged about one pound each.—The American Field.

LION HUNTING OVER HOUNDS

Although the killing of lions over hounds has often been talked of, it has only recently become an accomplished fact.

Granted that dogs have often played an important part in connection with lion shooting, but the actual laying on of a pack of hounds to a lion's trail is a distinct novelty.

The hounds used by Mr. Paul J. Rainey are spoken of in the East African paper as Russian bearhounds, but what these are like must be left to the imagination of all but a lucky few.

No doubt the foxhound blood enters into their composition to a great extent, as they have excellent noses.

It would appear that the mode of procedure is to put down baits, which are visited early next morning, and if a lion's spoor is found, the hounds are laid on the trail, which they appear to follow keenly. As soon as the pack come up with the lion a second pack, which have been held in reserve, and which consist of various crossbred tykes of "low degree," go in yapping and worrying the "Lord of the Forest," till he breaks cover and falls a victim to the waiting gunner.

It appears that Mr. Rainey and party with two packs accounted for twenty-seven lions in a very short time; this in the game reserve, beside others shot outside the closed area.

The shooting over hounds strikes one as less dangerous than shooting lions in the ordinary way, but it is perhaps this spice of danger which gives zest to the sport.

The idea of getting a "good run" with a lion and hounds is scarcely to be expected, but as aids to the gunner they are a great success.

Leo does not lend himself to much running, though he has a fine turn of speed in his first bounds when charging.

Hearing of such bags makes one fancy that the lordly lion may be weeded down too fine, but it must be borne in mind that there are many parts of East Africa where ticks, flies and climate make the use of hounds well nigh impossible.

The Athi Plains seem to be particularly suitable to hound work.

The gunners who go with the lionhounds are mounted on either mules or ponies, and usually dismount to shoot, though some ponies are steady and will let you shoot from them but you may guess when using a rifle it does not do to take risks.

HOCKERILL.

A WOLF HUNTING STORY

I was down in Fort William at New Year's time disposing of my fall catch of furs, and while there I met the genial host of the Empire Hotel, a local hunter and a fisherman of some repute. After some liquid refreshment I told him of the fine hunting and fishing to be had at my camp on the English River, and of the many wolves and bears that daily visited the camp in search of a good fat hotelman for breakfast. Nothing daunted this knight of the black bottle determined to accompany me north to make his fortune out of wolf scalps and bear hides.

On the morning of January 5th mine host his friend Cloufus and myself, with a full dog team and five hundred pounds of provisions boarded the Grand Trunk Pacific local out of West Fort William which was to take us one hundred miles up the line. From there we were to continue our journey by dog train.

The conductor kindly let us off at mile post one hundred at a quarter after four, p.m., and we bundled off our stuff into four or five feet of snow. My friend, after we had dug him out of the snow and got him on the track, wanted to know where the camp was. "We camp right here," said I.

There was nothing else for it that night as the heavy fall of snow had obliterated the trail. We set to work to make camp and cook supper, no light job either with the temperature at thirty-five or forty below zero, and the snow four or five feet deep.

With the aid of our snow shoes we soon cleared a space of ten or twelve feet square and piled in good dry Jack Pine, enough to keep a fire going all night. Balsam boughs were stuck up in the snow to the north, west and east sides as a wind brake and with a good fire going we were quite comfortable.



We made a very hearty supper from bacon, bread and good strong tea.

"This is the first time I ever eat with mitts on," remarked my friend.

"And I guess by the feel of it you'd do well to sleep with them on too," was Cloufus' reply.

"Now boys on with your snow shoes and we'll gather balsam boughs for our beds."

By this time it was getting pretty dark. Before we had succeeded in getting the shoes on, a lone wolf away to the west let out a "kie yie!" and was answered by one of its kind not very far north. The cry was taken up by half a dozen more.

You should have seen our friend dig out his big 405.

"Surely you are not going to take a gun along to cut brush?" objected Cloufus.

My friend scorned to answer. By this time he was trying to jam his hunting knife into the magazines of his rifle. He had evidently got the knife and cartridge mixed up. The dogs commenced to sneak in from their snow beds, and one, a half breed husky, let out a "kie yie." My friend, nervous and frightened, I suppose, jumped into the middle of the fire and "Bang" went his big 405.

A miss of an inch is as good as a mile. I felt a big chunk of lead and metal go zip by my head. Cloufus dug head first into a pile of blankets.

"Do you think I hit him?" asked my friend in a stage whisper.

"You certainly came very close!" said I.

By this time the fire had eaten through his moccasins and eight pairs of socks. He let out a yell that would have done credit to a northwest Indian on the war path, and swung that big 405 around in such a loose and careless way that I took Cloufus' place and got as many blankets between that big gun and myself as possible.

Such a night as we put in!—frozen on one side, roasted on the other. My friend had brought along a sleeping bag but try as we might we could not get him into it. He weighs in the neighborhood of three hundred pounds and the bag had evidently been made for some one the size of Sir Wilfrid. After working an hour or two we slit it up the middle, rolled two pairs of blankets around its owner folded up the sleeping bag as a bed, then tied the whole with ropes. I would then very willingly have given ten dollars to have heard the wolves kick up a racket but the ornery critters were mum.

Not to be outdone, I took old Baziago, the half breed husky, back into the timber about a hundred yards and gave him a few wallops and he certainly did do himself and his forefathers credit. While he did his best, however, my friend had him beaten by a thousand miles.

At seven we packed up and made camp late in the afternoon. For ten days my companions fairly wallowed in the gore of wolves, bears and rabbits—principally rabbits. There is however a wolf head mounted in the Empire Hotel which goes to prove the prowess of its proprietor. Nearby hangs its tail—or another tale.—Rod and Gun.

TO A FAVORITE RETRIEVER

Strong indeed is the runner that baffles your wonderful nose.

You'll follow him hell for leather through the thickest stuff that grows;
Cold does not daunt you, nor danger, at the time of the evening flight,
When you plunge into ice and water for your master's left and right.

You've crouched in the draughty grouse-butt,
you've sat behind the fence,
You've stood in some hottish corners besides the woodlands dense;

And you never moved an eyelid when the hares came scurrying by,
And you only cocked one silky ear when you saw a rabbit die.

It isn't exactly easy, I can see by your wistful eye,

When birds come flying past us, and—your master lets them fly,
To just sit still and do nothing, but you're worth your weight in gold,
For, however strong temptation, you never go till you're told.

You're black as a heap of coal dust, black as a naked nigger,
But never a whiter sportsman watched for the pull of a trigger;
You're only a poor dumb bow-wow, but you'd put some men to shame,

For there's brains in that broad, deep forehead when you ponder the tricks of game.

—ALAN R. HAIG BROWN.

The inhabitants of Ceylon consume about two million cocoanuts daily.