

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

## RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

(Richard L. Pocock)

Today, the last day of the old year, brings to an end the game-shooting season, January First being in the closed season for the first time for years, New Year's Day having until this year been the final winding-up day for the field shooter. For two months more it will be lawful to shoot ducks and snipe, while geese have to take their chances against the wiles of the sportsman at any time of year, that is on the shores of Vancouver Island and adjacent Islands; on the mainland they now enjoy the same measure of protection as ducks.

Looking back over the shooting season of 1911, sportsmen have little ground for complaint, small game of all sorts was as plentiful as it has been in recent years, and the weather was kindly, the little bit of hard weather which he sent us by mistake for a more eastern climate affording the duck-hunters an unusually early opportunity of getting even with the widgeon and the pintail, some very excellent bags having been made during the cold snap at the best-known resorts handy to Victoria.

The opening of the season in Saanich was the signal for a vast army of hunters of all sorts and sizes to get afield, and those who were brave enough to go out on the opening day for pheasants describe the Saanich peninsula as a vast battlefield, one army veteran assuring me that a body of troops could not have made a greater demonstration. However, it did not necessarily follow that the enemy suffered decimation; fewer guns would probably have done more destruction among their ranks, and in the subsequent weeks, when the great majority had tired of the game, the more ardent and regular habitués of the chase found excellent sport throughout the season. Cock pheasants were plentiful and quail in large coveys "all over the place."

Pheasant shooting was well up to the average in all the districts where they are to be shot, and quail are more than holding their own—a most satisfactory state of things, as these little birds afford most excellent sporting shooting and appeal very little to the pot-hunter.

September the fifteenth being chosen by the authorities for the opening day for grouse, afforded the opportunity of several days' first-class shooting before the birds took to the security of the tall timber away back, and from all reports it would seem that the blues have not suffered over much from the chances of a good stock being bred for next year.

Deer seem as plentiful as ever, it being a continual wonder to note the large numbers brought in regularly every season by week-end hunters on the line of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway.

When the legislature meets next session, it is hoped that they will find time to give their attention to a new Game Act. At present the law seems to the layman such a jumble of amendments and orders-in-council that it would take a pretty sharp lawyer to get a clear idea on many points with which it is concerned; all sorts of riddles are at times propounded to us in this office with regard to the game law, so that we invariably find it safer to refer the questioners to headquarters for answer. For instance, it is not always easy to know whether one is lawfully shooting a willow grouse in the Highlands or Esquimalt districts, or poaching it in Saanich municipality, and, if it is necessary to get a permit from the Reeve to shoot in North Saanich municipality, and North Saanich municipality does not legally exist, what are we to do about it?

We were promised a new Game Act last year, but something blocked it, I know not what; and we should like very much to have it this year, and would respectfully suggest that the opinions of competent sportsmen with a knowledge of local conditions and the needs of the game, should be listened to, before any regulation becomes law.

In any case, whether we get a new Act or have to put up with the present way of opening the season by order-in-council, we hope that the unfortunate delay in publishing the regulations which irritated so many the last two seasons, will not be repeated. The best time to get an idea of the stock of small game and the advisability of opening the season on various kinds of game in various districts is shortly after the breeding season, and not just a few days before the usual opening date for shooting. We could do well with a few more game wardens to enforce respect for the law; those we have did excellent work this last year, and were the means of bringing not a few offenders to justice, thus giving salutary lessons to other would-be lawbreakers, but the present staff is altogether too small to be thoroughly efficient.

Two suggestions have been made for alterations in the opening season, the first being that we should have an open season on ducks on the first of September, the reason being that, in this month, large numbers of the best kind of ducks, not the flying-jub kind, appear off the Vancouver Island coast in the best of condition, and are allowed to proceed in safety further south to swell the bags of United States duck-shooting clubs. The argument against this, that it does not do to give the poacher an excuse to go out with his gun for one kind of game before the others are in season, and that it is best to open the season for everything on the same date, carries little weight so long as the season for ducks is pro-

longed for two months after it is closed for everything else. If a duck-shooter is liable to shoot a pheasant in September, he is just as liable to commit the same offence in January.

The other suggested alteration is in the closing date for deer-shooting; habitual deer-hunters knowing only too well that at present the date for closing is unduly delayed. In December the bucks are poor and hardly fit for food, while the does are undoubtedly in fawn. This assertion will be borne out by all the natural history authorities of the country who have given the matter their attention. Many think it unsportsmanlike to shoot a doe at all, except when necessary for food; but, surely, all will agree that it is the very reverse of sportsmanlike to shoot a doe knowing that it is carrying young!

The number of shooting accidents, fatal or otherwise, this season was so appalling as to arrest the attention of citizens of all persuasions, sporting and non-sporting, and several suggestions were put forward in the daily press for measures of prevention, chief among them being the institution of a gun license. The need for a gun license has been urged at intervals for several years in this page, chiefly in the interests of the game; but it does not seem to be all that is desired as a remedial measure for the accident crop which comes up every year. It would seem that the mere payment of a sum of money for the privilege of carrying a gun will not make a man less careless of his own and others' safety, so that it should be made compulsory for any one who wishes to use a gun to obtain a permit, whether paid for or free, which should never be issued to anyone who could not prove himself to the government official entrusted with the issuing of it, familiar not only with the use and proper way of handling a gun, but also sufficiently aware of its capabilities for danger as to make him a fit and proper person to be allowed to carry firearms. The age limit should in all cases be strictly enforced, as, without a doubt, a great many accidents are caused by boys being allowed to carry arms before they are old enough. Even if they have no accident in boyhood, carelessness of youth becomes a habit and grows up with them into manhood.

## SMALL BORES VS. LARGE BORES

The small bore shotgun is becoming very popular in the last year or two and many letters from its champions are constantly appearing in all the leading publications devoted to outdoor pursuits. It has seemed to the writer that many people have allowed their enthusiasm to carry them somewhat beyond the proven fact.

There are certain advantages that every one must concede are held by the small bore guns. For example, most people are able to handle, point and swing the lighter guns more rapidly and more accurately than the 12 gauge. The small bores are less burdensome to carry, and, what is perhaps more important than the lightness of the gun, is the light weight and small bulk of the ammunition. These advantages of the small bore are obvious, and probably no one will dispute any of them.

It is also claimed that the small bore gun propels its charge of shot at a higher velocity than the larger bore. This fact, I think, has several times been proven to be true by careful experiments, but the important qualification should be borne in mind that these experiments were, apparently, all made with specially loaded ammunition, intended to produce the best results of which the gun was capable. I say that apparently the experiments have been made with ammunition so loaded. This has been stated to be the fact with regard to all tables of velocities which have come to the notice of the writer, and it is probably true of all such experiments for the reason that the ammunition factories adopt the 12 gauge as standard, and load all other sizes—not to bring out the best that is in the gun—but to produce approximately the same velocity as the twelve. This statement regarding factory standardization, I have frequently seen in print, and experiments with different sizes of factory loaded shells will tend very strongly to verify it. Besides a 12 gauge Fox and the 12 gauge hammer Remington which preceded it, the writer has used at different times a 16 Remington, a 16 Tobin, a 20 Parker and a 28 Parker, which last gun he still has. He has shot ducks, including sprig, widgeon and mallard, with all these guns, and has shot geese with all of them but the 28. That has so far never been used on geese, but there is no doubt that reasonably good results could be had on geese with it. To get the advantage of increased velocity, it is necessary with all these guns to load your own shells or have them specially loaded. The Selby factory, at least, which controls the ammunition business on this part of the coast, (Bakersfield, Cal.) will not load the necessary amount of powder and shot under any consideration, and in order to get the required amount of powder and lead into the shells, the writer has found it necessary either to stint the wadding or load a dense powder in a bulk shell; I have had the best results in the 16 with three drams of bulk powder, or its equivalent in dense powder, and seven-eighths of an ounce of shot, although I find the 16 will handle an ounce of shot with three drams of powder very nicely. With the 20, my best results were with two and three-quarters bulk or its equivalent, and seven-eighths of an ounce of

shot. With the 28, 2 1/4 drams of powder and 3/4 ounce of shot. With these loads the little guns give surprising results, but it has been my experience that for range and killing power, none of them will equal the 12, nor will any one of them equal the size next larger. Of course, the little guns have their advantages over the 12, but range and killing power, according to my experience, are not in the list. The reason for this, as my experience has tended to indicate, brings this letter to the point where I think the small gun advocates have allowed their enthusiasm to carry them beyond the facts.

It is the common claim that the small bores are more sportsmanlike than the 12; that it is harder to get a bird into the pattern with one of them, but that, once hit, there is less chance for the bird to get away crippled. This is on the theory that the small gun makes approximately the same pattern, so far as concerns distribution of shot, as the 12, but covers a smaller radius. If this were true, there would be nothing to offset the advantage of increased velocity, and the 28, if properly loaded, would, when held right, kill cleaner and at farther ranges than the 12. Right here is where I think the small bore man is wrong. Mr. Greener in his booklet called "The Modern Shot Gun" states that at a given range the small bore will spread its smaller charge of shot over practically the same radius as the 12 spreads its larger load of shot, and spreads it thinner. The book was, I believe, written before the days of nitro powder, but the writer has tried hundreds of experiments which have shown almost uniformly, the same results. I believe any candid person who will take a good 12 gun and a good 28, load them for their best results with the same size shot, and target them both at 40 yards, will find that he has verified what I have stated. Say, for instance, he uses No. 7 shot; he will find that the width of the 28 pattern is virtually the same as that of the 12; he will find a slight—very slight—difference in penetration in favor of the 28, but he will find scarcely room for a quail to get through the 12 pattern while there will be spots where a mallard duck could go through the 28 pattern unscathed. Also he will find—as for the claim that it is harder to hit with the little gun—that as many of the deadly spots in that 28 pattern are on the outside diameter of the 28 pattern as are near the centre. In other words, it's just as easy to get a bird into your pattern with a 28 as with a 12. You won't hit your bird with any shot so often at long range with the 28 as with the 12, but it is blind luck, and not marksmanship, that presides over that feature of the game.

If you concede that the little gun will not reach so far nor kill so far as the 12, and when you use one, you don't try to kill so far, then there may be room to claim that the little gun is more sportsmanlike. This is a debatable question, however, for there is plenty of room to claim that it is harder to estimate the necessary lead on a bird and hit it at 40 yards with a gun deadly at that range, than to hit the same bird at 25 yards with a 25-yard gun. But the point about passing up the distant bird is not the point made by most of the small bore advocates. They say the little guns will kill cleaner and as far as the 12. In this I believe they are wrong, and they are not only doing an injustice to some mighty fine little arms by setting a mark for them beyond their limitations, but they are succeeding, to some extent, in making things unpleasant for those of us who still want to lug our good old twelve to the duck and goose ground.—F. E. Borton in Outdoor Life.

## SMALL GAME ALONG PUJAUB STREAMS

In a dry land like the Northern Punjab all the interest and charm of the country lies along the courses of its streams. There the vegetation is at its best, and there most of the wild birds collect. There is no such thing as arid desolation beside running water, but if you go away from the water it is easy to find plenty of dreary enough desert in the north of India. The rainfall of these regions is but scanty, under the best monsoon conditions, so that the period during which the brown becomes moderately green is correspondingly short. A rail journey from Jhodpur, via Luni, to Karachi by the metre gauge will give one a very good idea of desolation. Along this route are wayside stations where the only water obtainable is drawn up in leather buckets from wells of immense depth. The country is undulating and sandy, dotted with straggly tufts of dry yellow grass. Here and there may be seen larger tussocks of very coarse bladed grass, the color of which is a dark greyish brown. Such few trees and bushes as exist are stunted thorns, almost leafless and incapable of giving shade. Not a bird is to be seen, and not a sound breaks the desolate silence.

Probably the only animals one would find when exploring the inhospitable country would be a few chinkara, for these gazelles seem to be almost able to do without water, or at all events in some localities only drink at long intervals.

Up in the north round about Nowshera, Attock, Campbellpore, and Rawal Pindi, the country, though arid enough on the hills, is comparatively fertile in the valleys while there are plenty of interesting streams and small rivers wandering along the courses of which is delightful to anyone fond of rough sport.

The amount of shooting to be got is of course limited but in the scanty bag there will always be plenty of variety, while there will be ample matter to interest one all the time.

Hordes of birds migrate to and from India every year, and a great proportion of these invasions and retreats are like the human ones have been by the north. Consequently numbers of duck and quail pass over the Punjab in their migrations, and enough of them rest on the way to give the small game shooter ample sport. Although no immense duck haunted swamps are to be found along the courses of the rapid streams of the Northern Punjab like those of say the great valley of the Ganges yet there are plenty of charming little jheels, each of which hold their quota of teal and snipe. Some of the brooks are quite small and wind in zigzagging loops through flat valleys—I have one such in mind where I have spent many a happy day; the Goondal Stream, near Hadji Shah, in the Attock district. This devious rivulet is narrow with steep clay banks, so that it is almost invisible from a short distance. Wandering along its serpentine twists one never knows that a spot-bill or malarid may not fly up round the next corner and so there is delightful and excited anticipation all the time. A great variety of duck are to be met with along these Punjab streams, but as a rule in ones and twos and at long intervals. Besides duck there are numberless other birds, some of them worthy objects of shikar, others not. I have met with the European peewit, or green plover, in the Northern Punjab (the only part of India I have ever seen it in). The small Oriental form of the golden plover is also occasionally met with. That curious and handsomely colored bird, the painted snipe is not at all uncommon. Then there are various kind of rails, and the bittern is often come across in grassy jheels. Among the winter visitors are cranes, and I have often seen sarks feeding among the cornfields along the banks of the Indus. They are however very shy and wary, quite different in their habits from the same great birds which stalk confidentially to and fro among the crops of the Hindu farmers in the United Provinces; there they are regarded as sacred, like the peacocks, and so have little fear of man.

The Punjab jheels and rivers are full of reptile as well as bird life. Turtle are as plentiful as in the great rivers further south, and in the large still pools attain the same enormous dimensions. The swamps hold numbers of snakes, which subsist largely on the unfortunate frogs which like the same moist places. More than once have I added specimens of the deadly Russell's viper to my bag when snipe shooting near Rawal Pindi. I have also come across those great amphibious lizards the cabraboys, which though somewhat resembling the monitors of Southern India, so much esteemed as a food by certain native castes, are I believe foul feeding in their habits, and therefore not eatable.

The low lying cornfields of the Punjab are resorted to by thousands of grey quail during their great migrations. The natives keep large numbers in captivity which they use as call birds. This use of tame quail to call down the migrating flocks as they pass overhead makes the quail shooting in the Pindi and Attock districts somewhat artificial in character. So many cages, each with a call bird in it are put out overnight and the sportsman goes to the ground in the morning not only certain that he will get plenty of shooting but knowing the exact fields in which the wild quail will be found. Indeed the call birds are always put out in crops which are just the right height to give the alighting flocks sufficient covert yet not so high and thick that it will be too difficult to gather the birds as they are shot. Such certainty robs the sport of a good deal of its charm, and moreover the quail of the Punjab valleys all seem to fly exactly the same. When put up they go straight away at just about the height of the shooter's eye. However it is often possible to improve the shooting by flushing the quail towards a line of trees so that they have to rise well to clear them.

Colonies of blue rock pigeons inhabit many of the clay cliffs which are a feature of this part of India. These give occasional chances for the shot gun, or opportunities for the exercise of considerable skill if they are stalked with a miniature rifle. They are shy birds in the north, shy as wood pigeons at home, so that they must be shot at long distances.

Coots, moorhens, redshanks, greenshanks, sandpipers of different kinds and pheasant-tailed jacobas are all to be found during a walk along a Punjab stream. The ubiquitous red wattle plover or did-he-do-it is also of course common; in fact I do not remember any part of India where they were not to be found. I have occasionally met with the game looking little grey plover; once I succeeded in getting four of them. In the evenings the little Seese partridges come down to drink so that one may get occasional shots at them, even when not seeking them in their proper haunts on the stony hillsides. Once on the banks of Sohan I came across Seese thus, and added a brace and a half of these excellent little birds to a bag which I had only expected to contain waterfowl.

One cannot dismiss the Punjab streams without reference to that grand game bird, the imperial sandgrouse. Hiding beside a favorite watering pool on a keen winter morning and shooting these great sandgrouse as they



## Sportsman's Calendar

DECEMBER

December 15—Last day for deer-shooting.  
December 31—Last day for pheasants, grouse, and quail.  
After November it is illegal to sell ducks, geese, snipe.

sweep up at sixty miles an hour is most exhilarating sport. They probably travel on their long pointed wings as fast as any game bird known, and certainly are harder to kill clean than any bird of their size that I know. I have knocked over these sandgrouse with a charge of No. 4 from a choke bored gun, and seen them fall well crumpled up with a thump on the hard ground; then while my attention was being taken up with fresh birds coming in those apparently defunct have revived and flown off never to be seen again. The explorer of Punjab streams will find occupation for the rod as well as for the gun. These small rivers hold plenty of mahseer as well as other kinds of fish. The mahseer are not large certainly but the little fellows of half a pound to three pounds often take a fly spoon readily, and one may enjoy excellent sport with a light trout rod. If the water is not clear enough for spoon fish can still be got by using exactly the same methods as those practiced for taking grayling in our own rivers. That is a fine gut cast, small hook, single pellet of shot, and tiny float the size of a marble. Instead however of a worm or gentle the bait is a pellet of paste. There are numbers of little flour mills along these Punjab streams, and the mahseer get used to feeding on paste regularly. In the still pools one can also catch large catfish and murril. Both these kinds of fish take a live bait readily.—Fleur-de-Lys.

## HERE'S ANOTHER ONE

In a recent issue of Rod and Gun is published the following fish story from Sky Glen Cape Breton which is noted for the large size of the trout to be found in its streams:

A certain gentleman who is a resident of Sky Glen told me that at one time he owned a dog of no particular breed, just a dog, a very wise old fellow who was always anxious to lend a helping hand whenever his master needed assistance. He was only a small cur, but a terror to any animal whom he caught in the act of trespassing. One day his owner made up his mind to go fishing a sport in which he seldom indulged. The dog, as a matter of course, accompanied him. The fish were soon biting well and the dog appeared to enjoy the sport as much as the angler. Suddenly a monster trout hooked on and the gear was not strong enough to pull the trout out of Cape Breton fashion, which is to yank him out if the neck will stand the strain. In this case the neck stood the strain all right but the fish was bound to stay in its native element and the nearest approach to landing the trout was to see it raise its head out of the water and then have it disappear the next minute. This performance was repeated several times while the dog stood on the bank of the stream wagging his tail and seeming to say, "Don't lose him. He's a beauty." The last time the fish's head appeared above the water the dog did not wait to see it disappear but made a sudden spring and grabbed the trout by the back of the neck. The additional weight added to the strain already on the line broke it, and away went trout, dog and all, followed by a burst of very unparliamentary language on the part of the fisherman left standing disconsolate on the bank. The dog held on with the tenacity of a bulldog, and after reaching a shallow part of the stream he succeeded in dragging his struggling captive safe to shore where after coughing out the water that he had swallowed, he looked up in his master's face with an expression that plainly said: "Pretty nice trout that."

While deepening a pond on a farm a few miles west of Welland, Ont., a peculiar find was made. The find was a horn, eight feet in length, and a true half circle, two feet, two in. around the large end. When weighed it tipped the scales at one hundred and fifty pounds. The horn was in good state of preservation and fifteen wrinkles circling it at the big end could easily be distinguished. The finder was offered a large sum for his find but preferred to retain it for the present.

Casey—Now, phwat wu'd ye do in a case loike that?

Clancy—Loike phwat?  
Casey—Th' walkin' diligigate tills me to strouke, an' me ould woman orders me to ke-ape on witrkin.—Western Christian Advocate