

BEAR HUNTING ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

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HUNTERS
ON
VANCOUVER
ISLAND

FRESH FISH ALWAYS AVAILABLE

BEAR HUNTERS CAMP, V. I.

I was up at Cowichan, and the subject was started by the sight of a pile of bearskins on the hotel veranda that some hunter had just brought down from up the lake. Opinions were varied as to the sport-giving qualities of the common black bear of the country, several of those present venturing to describe him as a very tame sort of quarry to hunt and so easily killed as to afford very little sport to the hunter. This evidently made one of the party, who has hunted as much on Vancouver Island as to make him an authority on its game, uneasy, and, after a short pause, he delivered himself of the following narrative, as nearly as I can reproduce his words:

This is a true story. Of course if you do not want to believe it, you do not have to, but truth is often stranger than fiction, especially where bears are concerned, and facts are facts for a fact.

We were on an exploring survey, and my chum and myself had been sent to find out a pass across a range of mountains, and see if it was possible to take horses across. This was a pass from Comox Lake on Vancouver Island to Buttle's Lake, a part of this island where no white man had ever traveled. Well, I won't say never, "hardly ever" would perhaps be safer, as I assure you I wish to be absolutely accurate in telling this yarn, which is perfectly true in every particular, and I must tell you of a little incident that happened to me when I arrived here first from the old sod.

I had persuaded another man to go with me to climb a peak in the centre of the island. It took us three whole days to reach it, and, as we saw no sign of anyone having ever been in there before, we thought we were the first to have climbed the peak. We went to work and built a huge cairn, putting our names and the date in an empty yeast powder can at the bottom; which done, we rested from our labors, had a smoke and smiled at one another in mutual admiration.

Just as we turned to descend, to our disgust and amazement we spotted three empty Bass' beer bottles, lying snugly against a rock, and seeming to smile at us in mockery. Solemnly we wended our way back to our cairn and kicked the wretched thing to pieces. Since then I build no cairns and cut my initials on no trees.

But to return to our "muttons" or rather our bear.

We were likely to be absent two or three days examining this pass. I told you of, so I thought I would borrow a rifle from the main camp in case we should run across any game, but the only rifle I could make was a .45 Webley army revolver and the six cartridges only that were in the chambers, the camp rifle having got damaged, and the supply of revolver ammunition run short.

The first day out we had a tough dig following the course of a swift stream; the going was very bad and rough, in places nothing but a canyon; quite out of the question for horses, tough enough for men with packs on their backs, but that is how most of the packing is done on the island, and hard work it is, too. It's a hard way to serve the Lord, for a man to make a mule of himself—but about that bear.

We had just got the tent up and had started a fire, when my chum's dog (spaniel, he called him, but I think he was mostly dog, just plain dog) got very excited all of a sudden. As we looked up, a large black bear was coming towards us, but he stopped when he saw us, turned round, and did a bolt. As soon as he began to run, the spaniel—dog, that is—was after him, yelping to beat the band. The bear seemed a bit surprised, and jumped for a small alder, about ten inches through, and climbed up it about twenty feet. I was running after the dog, brandishing the revolver, and, when he got up the alder, I got right under him. The old bear was resting his head on his paw and the tree was swaying to and fro quite a bit with its

weight, so I suppose that is why, although I thought I had a good bead on him when I fired, I only succeeded in shooting him through the paw, whereupon he descended hurriedly, in fact I may say fell. As he fell I jumped to one side and let him have another shot; but it seemed to have no effect as he went off gallily on three legs with the dog right on his heels. Being hard pressed by the dog, and having only three legs to make his exit on, he made for a great big fir tree, five feet through at the very least, and clambered up to the first limb about fifty feet from the ground, and awaited events. Having lots of time and thinking him my meat, I took things very leisurely and fixed up a good rest for the revolver on a small stump. Taking what I thought was a sure shot behind the bear's ear, I fired, with no apparent result except that the bear seemed to smile with derision. I blazed away until I had used up all the cartridges, and the bear still seemed pleased and amused at the proceedings, but, to my intense satisfaction, great drops of blood came dripping down the tree, and I felt sure it was only a matter of minutes when he would fall.

We waited until about ten o'clock at night, and, as he showed no sign of coming down, we put our great heads together and decided to try and smoke him out. But, in spite of a huge fire piled up with green boughs, Mr. Bruin declined our invitation to descend, so we reluctantly left him where he was and turned in to get some sleep. The next morning he was still in the same place, but we could not budge him and there was work to be done, so we had perforce to leave him and proceed with our exploring; by dusk, however, of the same day we were back at the same spot and found that our old friend remained as a permanent feature of the landscape; yes, and was still there at daylight next morning, so that we naturally concluded that he must be very badly wounded, as by then he had been in the same place up the tree for two whole nights and a day.

The tree, as I have said was five feet through if it was an inch, and we had only a small two-pound surveyor's axe with us, but there was nothing for it, that bear had to come down, and if he would not come without the tree, the tree must come too. We tackled it like little men after a good breakfast, taking spells of half an hour each, until, after five hours' work, the old fir began to crack, and our friend the enemy roused himself as if he had begun to take some interest in the proceedings. As the tree was falling, he climbed up along the trunk, and, as it fell with a mighty crash into a beaver swamp, we felt sure at last our object was accomplished and the bear killed. But not a bit of it; the tree had fallen into about four feet of water and mud, and presently, out he comes, covered in mud and slush and looking a sorry object indeed, but by no means done for yet. He climbed up on to the tree trunk and proceeded deliberately to paw the mud out of his eyes. I grabbed the axe and ran along the tree, and, when I got close to him, made a mighty sweep at his head. The log was wet and slippery, and missing my footing, I succeeded merely in cutting off one of his ears, and fell in the mud one side as he jumped in on the other.

I yelled to my friend, who had armed himself with a big club, to stop him, but he was otherwise engaged, being busy looking for a tree to climb himself, and that was the last I saw of the bear, who seized the opportunity to make his final exit covered in mud and glory, leaving his assailants vanquished and discomfited on the field.

MOTOR-BOAT POACHING

Editor Colonist—Allow me, through the medium of your paper, to draw the attention of sportsmen and our provincial authorities to the drain upon our game reserves by American tourists during the summer months. In an edition of the "Motor Boat," published in New York, I find a description of a trip in a gasoline launch through B. C. waters, by one

H. K. Todd. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Giles and H. K. Todd and his spouse. These people only boast of the hunting they enjoyed during the month of July, and even describe the killing of deer without apparent fear or remorse. That this sort of thing goes on to a considerable extent, residents of Nanaimo are well aware, as this is a favorite place for these tourists to obtain their supplies, and other fishermen and woodsmen besides myself constantly meet these unscrupulous destroyers of game, in the outlying districts, armed with gun or rifle in pursuit of feathered and other game. Cannot the Island sportsmen and game clubs bring pressure to bear upon the Government to equip and operate a fast boat from a central point, such as this, to run down a few of these marauders and bring them to account. With our rapidly increasing population, it will be difficult enough to preserve our game without allowing such unwarrantable destruction.

H. McDONALD.

Nanaimo, B. C., July 4, 1908.

A more shameless confession of the breach of the laws of hospitality, humanity and sport, not to mention the laws of the country of which they were the temporary guests during their poaching expedition, than that contained in the article referred to by our correspondent in the foregoing letter, it has never been our lot to read.

Unfortunately we have not sufficient space in this page to reproduce the whole article, but, as the subject is one that is in our opinion so most important one, we take the liberty of supplementing Mr. McDonald's most timely criticism and suggestion.

The story of the trip referred to in his letter is one of (to quote the article) "a six weeks' trip to the head of Vancouver Island and the British Columbia inlets, the trip being planned for months ahead." The party "left the dock on Sunday morning, July 8, 1906." On July 16 this party of "sportsmen" "coasted along the island (Vancouver) for thirty miles, securing up an even dozen deer." That evening they "had venison steak for dinner." Further on in the story they troled for salmon, and mark the solitude of the party lest they should kill "such fine fish unnecessarily!" They each of them caught just one. As there were only four in the party, and as they say that the largest fish must have weighed thirty pounds, it certainly looks as though the British air had given them good appetites. On July 18th they "had the fun of getting some grouse." Shortly after this they met another party of poachers from Seattle on board the fifty-foot launch Totom, who gave them a quarter of venison and told them where to get a deer if they wanted more meat. Their next stop was at Nelson Island, where they recount the bagging of yet another unseasonable deer.

These few extracts from the party's own account of their trip speak for themselves, and comment may appear unnecessary; but for the benefit of any of their friends who may be ignorant or as careless as themselves of the laws of common decency we would like just to point out the entire absence of any excuse for the taking of game out of season that they were guilty of on this "Honey-moon Trip" in other people's, i.e., the Canadian nation's, preserves.

At the season when they took this trip, the deer are quite out of condition, the does have little fawns at their sides, the bucks are in the velvet, the grouse have broods of young ones too small as yet to take care of themselves, and the hide of the bears, the only sort of game they would be likely to come across that was not out of season, would be worthless. The party, which could afford to buy and equip an expensive motorboat, could well afford to take with them an ample supply of provisions, while by their own showing they could get all the legitimate sport that any real sportsman could desire by devoting their attention to the trout and salmon.

How long is this sort of thing to be allowed? They dare not do it in their own country. They have to come to our country, where we trust more to a man's honor, and then they go home and brag about the shameless way that they have broken not only the laws of the country they have visited, but also all the canons of sport and fair-play to game. This is not an isolated instance, as others can testify as well as Mr. McDonald. How long are the authorities going to keep their eyes shut to this sort of thing is a question that more than one sportsman and lover of fair-play is asking. It is regrettable that the account of this marauders' expedition was not brought to our notice sooner, but it is useless to argue that the same sort of thing is not still going on, as there is abundant evidence to the contrary.

THE RECOLLECTION OF SOME "FIRSTS."

Every sportsman has had his red-letter days, but as men's ideas of the real meaning of sport vary, so varies the full significance of the red ink used in marking their diaries.

To some gunners, perhaps (though with reluctance) we should write, most gunners, the red letter is used to mark merely the making of an extra large bag. Yet are there who deny the mere killing of game and catching of fish to make a man a sportsman. We are told that it is ridiculous to criticize an un-sportsmanlike, as some of us who love a long day's tramp with a favorite dog-friend are apt to do, the big battues where driven birds are slaughtered by the thousand, we are told that it is much more difficult to hit a driven bird than one flushed at easy range by dogs, and we do not dispute it. It is a different game from ours, that is all, and we are content; though possibly the skill required to bring our birds to bag is less than our friend behind his butt must needs possess the total up a score sufficiently enormous to save him from the displeasure of his host's gamekeeper, and ensure a repetition of his invitation another season. Yet, methinks, and he be a true sportsman, the immensity of the day's bag must often cause a revulsion of feeling and sicken him with the satiety of slaughter.

To such a one the causes for marking with a red letter some few days in our modest diary of sport might cause a smile of pity or contemptuous wonder, for the red is not by any means the sign of wholesale bloodshed. It marks some day notable for having in some way afforded us a special delight. At times maybe this may well have been caused by a smaller percentage of misses than our usual, but those days on which the red ink has been used with the most lavish hand were days on which we have scored a "first," or bagged some sort of game hitherto never a victim to our skill or patience. Perhaps this betrays more the instinct of the collector than the sportsman, but so it is. Chacun a son gout. For us, ever since the days of our first school-boy's catapult, it has been our special interest to get the first of any new quarry, and the delight of subsequent bags of that same sort of quarry have never given us one tenth of the satisfaction we obtained from bringing down the first specimen.

The first poor little cheeping sparrow that fell a victim to a glass marble from that same catapult filled our youthful bosom with a wondrous pride; but to slay other little sparrows after that was but tame sport, and our attentions were at once turned to game more worthy of our tried and proven aim. When the last day of one summer's holidays was made the happiest of the lot by the successful slaying of a fine fat water rat with the same dread weapon that had been the undoing of the poor little new-fledged sparrow, our cup of happiness was full.

There were some firsts scored in the years immediately succeeding these early triumphs on which perhaps it were better not to dwell too long. Our first fine English pheasant (must we confess it?) fell ignominiously from its ill-chosen roosting perch in the dusk of evening to a pellet from an air-gun, and there were other tragedies over which it were better to keep the veil close drawn.

Shall we take the old diary and turn its pages awhile? Here is the day on which we shot our first bird on the wing—a sparrowhawk; there it is yonder in its glass case over that door.

A frosty day near Christmas in an Essex wood. Mumps had been through the school that Christmas term, but had waited till the holidays by unjust fate before developing on the keeper of the diary; the symptoms were beginning to show and make themselves felt, but the temptation of the gardener's old single-barrel muzzle loader with six-penny worth of powder and shot was too great to be resisted. That expedition on that frosty day cost us dear, but the red letter is there for all that, for the joy of success paid us for the subsequent pains and poultries.

Turning the pages a little further a very different scene is called to mind. Across an ocean and a continent. Two men are crouching behind a tree-stump by the side of a small patch of grassy land at the head of an arm of the Pacific, at their backs dense forest clothing the slopes of a mighty mountain; through the grass meanders a tiny rivulet. Patiently they wait the setting of the sun and silently submit to the voracious mosquito. The woods are growing silent save for the buzzing of a fly, or the scream of a grey kingfisher working for a late supper. Suddenly

and silently a brown form emerges from the forest fringe a cricket pitch or less from the a bush, a rifle crack, and another first is scored, a pretty blacktail deer, the common deer of the British Columbia coast, truly a prize this to the man whose purse was never big enough in England to minister sufficiently to his sportsman's craving for rod and gun.

Many a cousin of this first buck has since fallen a victim to the same rifle, but none yet caused the heart to thump or the blood to race as did this first success after a series of abortive attempts.

Turn over a few more pages and notice here and there the red letter days that are marked; any one of these will be a danger signal in the years to come, if you do not wish the old sportsman's mind to wander back along the sands of time and the grey-beard's tongue to wag; for most of these are firsts which live always in his recollection, and the recounting of which recalls a keen delight.

Here maybe is the record of some days which stand out prominent through the heavy bag obtained by a combination of good luck and unusual skill, but the thrill of satisfaction was spoiled before the day was out by the constant reminder of the bag's weight provided by the insistence of its shoulder strap, and the keenness of the day's enjoyment was ruined by the undue fatigue caused by the over-numerous bodies of the slain.

The rich man may prefer his sport with luxury, others to find his game for him; others to drive it over his gun; others to collect it when dead; and a motor car to carry it home! But it was never thus with us. To enjoy our sport to the utmost we must woo Nature in her primitive moods. We like to make a good bag when we have worked for it, we love to see the working of a good dog and see his work and intelligence rewarded, but the reddest of all our red letter days will ever be those on which we scored a "first."

GROVER CLEVELAND

A phase of Mr. Cleveland's life in respect to sport throws light on his whole character. The exacting cares and responsibilities of the office of President of the United States have broken down the health of more than one occupant of the White House. President or etiquette or custom had set up certain unwritten and hampering standards for the guidance of presidents in their hours of rest.

Mr. Cleveland was very fond of hunting small game and of fishing, and naturally when there was an opportunity for a day or two of rest his thoughts turned to the forests and the streams he loved so well, for he knew that there were to be found the rest and recreation he craved. It required courage such as few men possess to turn his back on public sentiment and to follow out his own inclinations. No doubt he knew that the public was awakening to the fact that its busy men work too hard and need vacations. No doubt he knew that he was right and acted up to his beliefs. So he went shooting and fishing, and kept his mind and his body in condition to cope successfully with the problems that made him famous.

His example is now commonly followed by a constantly increasing number of professional and business men, who acknowledge that they work too hard to retain healthy minds and bodies without some form of outdoor relaxation and rest. These health restorers are found in the woods and by the waters, and no one need feel ashamed to say that he has searched for and found them in the manner followed by Grover Cleveland.—From Forest and Stream.

GAME-HOGS IN GO-CARTS

I noticed the other day in an American paper a cut of an automobile loaded down with deer, at least two does among them unless the photo lied; it was reproduced to show how the automobile could be used on Vancouver Island to facilitate the bringing home of game by sportsmen (?) and the photo was said to have been taken in Victoria.

It did not seem to me that the users of the car that "goes by smell" had anything to be particularly proud of; it is well known to most of us that are familiar with the deer of the coast that they present no very great difficulty in the hunting, and that the majority are shot at well under the eighty yards range. On the first of last September I could have shot three with ease at almost point-blank range, but I must say that had I done so and been able to bring them all home I should have felt very much ashamed of myself. We must have butchers, but there is no need for them in the woods.