

# ROD AND GUN IN CANADA

DEVOTED  
TO  
THE  
FISHING  
GAME AND  
FOREST  
INTERESTS  
OF  
CANADA.

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## A SWAN VALLEY DEER HUNT IN 1900.

By A. Heneage Finch

"By the great horn spoon! I'll have him yet!" and he jumped up and flattened his nose against the half-cleaned old 8x10 negative which covered a hole about six inches square on the southern side of our "seven-by-nine." "I'll have him yet!" "Have what?" says I, as with difficulty I recalled my mind from the jungle, where I had been with "Mowgli," listening to the chattering of the "Banderlog." "There's another! and another!! Deer or wolves for sure!" and I jumped. "No, no, only snow flakes." And with "his eye in a fine frenzy rolling," he punched together the embers of our decaying fire, a performance sadly needed to keep out the cold, for our "shack" had been built of green cottonwood lumber, and during the past summer it had shrunk so badly that now the cracks nearly overlapped, and the four boards originally on the door had shrunk to two and a good-sized sliver. The roof was sodded, and during the past four or five days and nights it had rained almost incessantly. But a couple of pieces of old tent cloth protected the stove and bed from the muddy streams. Now the wind had veered round to the north-east and was gently blowing across Lake Winnipegosis, and the temperature had fallen nearly to the freezing point; the rain had ceased, and the welcome snow was falling in large feathery flakes. Soon the Duck Mountains, some three miles to the south, were obscured by falling snow and evening's gloom, and the sodden ground was steadily whitening.

My chum, who had but lately come from the "Oukl Sod," was very anxious to secure a pair of antlers before returning to bring out his bride to share in the pleasures, toils and profits of his new prairie home. He had bought a half section of railway land, had built a substantial house and stable, and had some forty acres ready for crop, and was now stopping with me for company till the sailing of his ship from Montreal, and he had but two days longer to remain.

For the past two weeks, since our short game season had opened, he had patiently—*patiently*, did I say? well, let it pass—scanned the heavens, and on five days had roamed the "hog's back" and adjoining scrub, where "mule deer" tracks, paths and beds were in abundant evidence. It was an ideal hunting ground, the billowy foothills of the "Ducks," whose top and side are covered with heavy spruce, and down whose northern side flowed three beautiful spring rivulets, gave shelter and food for large numbers of moose, elk and mule deer, or "jumpers," as they are locally called. The "coulees" were usually filled with a dense growth of willow, poplar and alder,

and their tops and sides covered with birch, hazel and a tangled mass of peas, vetches and convolvulus.

Hastily pulling back the bed covers, he secured from among the fragrant marsh hay which formed our couch, his carefully wrapped old Snider. Many sportsmen with their "30-30's" and "Lee straight pull's" had laughed at his "antiquated cannon," so he usually did not keep it on exhibition. But woe betide the luckless wolf, fox, or prairie chicken that came within its range. The barrel within was polished like a razor blade, and the coarse military sight was removed and replaced by a home-made peep sight fastened on by the tang screw. Since his coming our larder had never lacked a full supply of prairie chickens. Twenty-six shots bagged twenty-six birds, every one neatly beheaded by this deadly "cannon."

Everything was put in readiness for the coming sport. We retired, but not to sleep, our Hibernian was too excited, so opening our stove door—we were out of oil—which was perforce close to our "bunk," and piling in fresh wood, I read aloud from the "Jungle Book." About midnight I was startled by a deep sullen roar, which shook the jungle and made my hair rise. I listened and trembled. Again, close to my very ear, came that blood-curdling rending of the midnight gloom. The book dropped from my nerveless grasp and I awoke. My friend had succumbed to Morpheus and had given a couple of preliminary snores, which augured several hours peaceful slumber for him. He is possessed of—or by—the most terrible snore I ever heard. The nearest home-made approach to it I ever heard was for two boys to see-saw a heavy logging chain back and forth over a large box stove. Long before daylight his "war pipe" assumed a more musical jingle. The change again awakes me, and my chum at the same time leaps from the bed and starts to build the fire. The faithful alarm clock had aroused us both. Protruding our heads through one of the crevices in the door, we see the ground covered with about six inches of the beautiful. Hastily eating our bachelor breakfast, we wait for daylight and the coming sport.

Arrayed in Prince Albert coat, corduroy pants, seal skin cap, No. 14 moccasins on No. 8 feet, pants tied round ankle with binder twine, waist circled with canvas belt holding 24 Snider cartridges, at side a sheathless carving knife, at back a well-sharpened lathing hatchet, on shoulder his rusty Snider, eyes afire and cheeks aglow, my friend presents a unique figure. Oh, for my faithful kodak! Thus arrayed we sally forth, I to act as guide, look on and enjoy the sport. Moving eastward across some plowed ground, we enter the "scrub," which was here very thin and open, well grown with grass and