

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

PHEASANTS AND THE FARMER.

(Richard L. Pocock.)

Farming is a branch of knowledge of which I confess I am profoundly ignorant, but in my experience as a gun-lover I can say that I have usually found farmers both here and in other countries good sportsmen, and I have to thank more than one British Columbia farmer for many a day's good sport through his hospitality. In fact it is often a matter of wonderment that the farmers as a class are so ready to extend the hospitality of their coverts to us "townee" sportsmen, and are as tolerant as they have often shown themselves to be of the abuse of that hospitality of which it must be confessed some of our less responsible gunners are at times guilty. If we wish to retain the privilege of enjoying pheasant shooting on this island without having to be the possessors of large private preserves, it is certainly up to us to keep on good terms with the farmers by doing all in our power to see that their hospitality is not abused in any way.

At the same time I think there should be a certain amount of give and take on both sides, and that the argument which is often used by certain of the agriculturists, and finds its echo in the daily press, to the effect that pheasants are the enemies of the farmer, and that farmers object to feeding pheasants for the city sportsmen to come and shoot is made a little too much of. It is conceded by anyone who knows the nature and habits of pheasants that they undoubtedly flourish best where there are extensive agricultural lands to attract and hold them, but it by no means follows that their frequenting of such lands should be set down as depredation, and certainly, if the statement is true, that pheasants are looked upon "by the majority of the cultivators of the soil as one of their most inveterate enemies" there can be no doubt that this majority must be making a mistake. Lord Lilford says "it would be absurd to deny that grain forms the favorite food of the pheasant, and it is well known that a field of standing beans will draw the pheasants for miles," but there is another side to the question, and it would be equally absurd to deny that, for the grain to which the pheasant helps himself, he pays well by the good he does the agriculturist in destroying noxious insects and the roots of noxious weeds, of which he is very fond.

Tegetmeier, the recognized authority on pheasants in the old world, is equally convinced that grain is not the favorite food of the omnivorous pheasant, although of course he is at no pains to deny that they do take tribute from the farmer in return for the good work they do for him in destroying his real enemies. In Tegetmeier on Pheasants we read: "The value of pheasants to the agriculturist is scarcely sufficiently appreciated, the birds destroy enormous numbers of injurious insects—upwards of twelve hundred wireworms have been taken out of the crop of a pheasant, if this number was consumed at a single meal, the total destroyed must be almost incredible. There is no doubt that insects are preferred to grain. One pheasant shot at the close of the shooting season had in its crop 726 wireworms, one acorn, one small, nine berries, and three grains of wheat. Mr. F. Bond states that he took out of the crop of a pheasant 440 grubs of the crane fly or daddy long-legs—these larvae are exceedingly destructive to the roots of the grass on lawns and pastures.

Pheasants in their natural state are essentially forest birds, coming into the open tracts in search of food and retreating into the thick underwood at the slightest cause for alarm."

Though the common pheasants of China the descendants of which we have here, undoubtedly flourish best where they are close to cultivated land, still being in their natural state "essentially forest birds" this is by no means necessary to their welfare, as I have shot them in their native country in considerable numbers in mountainous country where they would have to travel a great distance to get the opportunity to take toll from the farmer. The Chinese farmers, thrifty, frugal, folk who will not willingly waste a grain of anything, evidently do not regard the pheasants there, which are thicker than wild pheasants anywhere in the world, as their natural enemies, or they would wage a remorseless war on them and would probably have exterminated them centuries ago, instead of taking no pains at all to keep them off their fields. Of course it may be said against this that, the principal crop of the country being rice, which is grown under water until just before ripening, there is no need to protect it against the birds; this is true enough so far as it goes, but the Chinese farmers raise large crops on the higher ground of other grain besides rice, such as wheat, rye, maize etc., the young shoots of which the pheasants of all kinds are very partial to. I have shot common pheasants, golden pheasants, and Reeves' pheasants with crops stuffed with the young green shoots of these kinds of grain, so that I have at times wondered why the farmers seemed to look with indifference on the way the pheasants were helping themselves. Probably they learnt many centuries before we were civilized that they were not the losers in the long run or they would have protected themselves by the use of traps and other ingenious instruments of war against the feathered enemy.

Even Lord Lilford when writing of pheasants although he says it would be absurd to deny that grain forms their favorite food, still says that "the pheasant, where not preserved in unreasonable numbers, is a good friend to

the farmer, from the enormous number of wireworms and other noxious insects which it devours, to say nothing of its liking for the roots of various weeds."

THE WHITENESS OF ARCTIC GAME

It has been one of the puzzles of natural history, in a direction in which sportsmen are interested, to explain why nearly all Arctic animals are white—a color scarcely known elsewhere in the world except among sea-birds—or else become white in winter. There have been several explanations satisfactory to their makers: but most of them seem inadequate when we come to examine the facts of the case. The mammals and birds which are able to survive an Arctic winter are few. The polar bear, barren-grounds wolf, Arctic fox, ermine-weasel, sable and wolverine; the musk-ox, mountain goat, Dall's bighorn sheep, polar and varying hares, and lemming-mice; and the snow-bunting with a few small seed and bud-eating forest birds, complete the list.

Of these, those truly polar animals, the ice-bear, wolf, polar hare, sheep, owl and falcons, are white all the year round, as also is the goat of the Arctic mountain-tops; while the fox, weasel (whose winter coat gives us the beautiful ermine fur), caribou, varying hare, lemming-mice, ptarmigans and grey phalarope,

being most often killed, while the whitest specimens survived to transmit their tendency to offspring, more and more likely to remain white, or to turn white in winter. But the difficulty of accounting for the exceptions I have noted and a fuller knowledge of hunting habits, have weakened the general faith in this explanation. That is, many naturalists now think the whiteness of Arctic animals is due to the direct effect of coldness and dryness, and that inherited tendencies have little to do with it.

They will point, for instance, to such a curious fact as this: Those weasels which live as far south as New Jersey, will almost never turn, while those of central New England will sometimes do so, and sometimes not, or will become only partly white. A captive weasel which would surely become white in Canada would surely not do so in Virginia.

The rapidity of the transformation is another strange thing. While it is true that the change is ordinarily brought about in the weasel, hares and lemming-mice by the outgrowth of a new winter coat of white hairs, which do not replace, but thicken and partly overlie the older hairs, these latter turn white at the tips and slowly white downward. While the weather remains mild this goes on imperceptibly, but if a "cold snap" with snow, comes, the animal will become perfectly white



Mr. J. J. Holgate's Setter, "Mallwyd Ned"

turn white, or nearly so, as soon as the snow comes, and remain so until their spring molt. The sable, wolverine, musk-ox and raven alone remain in colored dress, and the snow-bunting loses the redness of its summer plumage.

Now these are curious circumstances. The mere fact of a different dress in winter from that worn in summer is not surprising, for some seasonal change is seen in almost all animals; but it is remarkable that in so large a number of otherwise unrelated and very different animals the change should uniformly be toward white.

It has seemed to everyone that the explanation must be connected with the climatic conditions. Mr. Darwin stated it succinctly in his "Descent of Man":

"No one doubts that the quadrupeds inhabiting snow-clad regions have been rendered white to protect them from their enemies, or to favor their stealing on their prey. In regions where snow never lies for long, a white coat would be injurious; consequently, species of this color are extremely rare in the hotter parts of the world. It deserves notice that many quadrupeds inhabiting moderately cold regions, although they do not assume a white winter dress, become paler during this season; and this apparently is the direct result of the conditions to which they have long been exposed."

The ptarmigan, the hare, the lemming, the snow-bunting and the phalarope, are ground-keeping animals, which are liable to attack from all the beasts and birds of prey of their neighborhood. The less conspicuous their plumage makes them in a world of white, the more of them will escape from the teeth and claws ever trying to seize them. On the other hand, in their white or greyish winter coats, the Arctic wolves and foxes, the ermine, owl and falcons, have a better chance to come unobserved within striking distance of their prey than if they were dark-colored.

The musk-oxen keep in compact bands, and defend one another, as do also the caribou, but neither is conspicuously colored. The sable retains his rich brown coat, but he hunts only in the trees of the dark forest, where color matters little one way or the other; the wolverine hunts on the ground, but he is so strong that he can get food by digging up small animals in their burrows, tearing to pieces the houses of the musk-rats, etc., and need not depend on that combination of strategy and swiftness needed by the others. As for the raven, his solid black seems to resist change, as it does in the black tail-tip of the ermine, the wing-quills of the snow-bunting and wherever else it occurs; as a consequence the raven has had to learn to subsist in winter largely on carrion, for living prey is mostly beyond his powers of capture.

Mr. Darwin and most of his followers assume that here was a case of "protective coloration," and that it had come about through the process of natural selection, by those individuals of each kind least inclined to change

in a few days. It would seem certain that this was the effect of cold.

The birds may acquire the winter white in either of two ways. The phalarope becomes grey with the autumnal molt; but the ptarmigan undergoes two moltings besides that of spring, exchanging first a grey suit for the reddish one of early summer, and then having this replaced by pure white. The snow-bunting gets its winter dress by the wearing away of the little red edges of the feathers, leaving only solid black or white to show when winter arrives.

When one considers these various methods of change, as well as the differences among the animals affected, the explanation is not so easy as at first it appears to be.—Ernest Ingersoll in Recreation.

LION HUNTING WITH THE WANDEROBO TRIBE

In British East Africa the Wanderobo people are outcasts from other tribes who have taken to the forest. They are to be met with in bands about fifty strong, and build small "manjatia," or huts, the whole tribe comprising about 200 or 300 in all, within a radius of about thirty miles. The majority have wives and own packs of dogs. Their arms consist of bows and arrows and a short, heavy sword called a "semi." The bows are about 5 ft. in height, the strings are composed of sinews out of game, while the arrows are about 3 ft. in length, terminated with a barbed tip of iron smeared with poison. They live almost entirely on meat and honey, and generally hunt singly or in pairs, the old men as a rule remaining in camp. They leave at break of day, before the children are awake, as it is reckoned bad luck if a baby cries when the hunter is leaving, and nine times out of ten they will not go out after a child has cried. About 6 p.m. they return home with the spoils of the chase, which they willingly share.

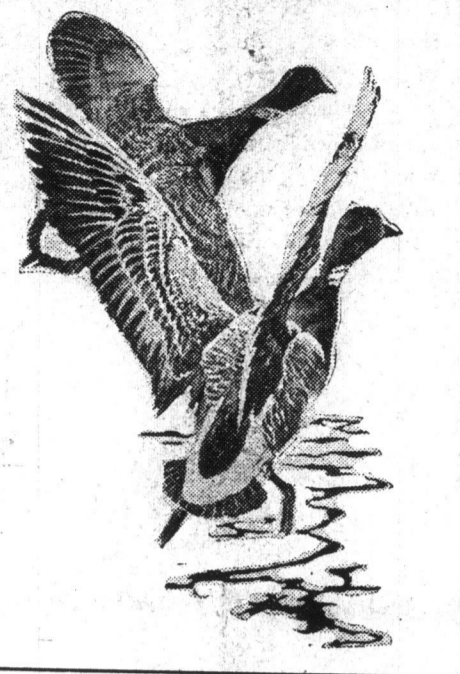
These Wanderobo folk are very wild, and will not admit any stranger into their camp. Having heard rumors about them, I determined to try and find them, being well acquainted with the part of the country in which they lived. While resting in the forest I heard one of them following a honey bird, so waited for him, and, seizing my opportunity, sprang out and captured him. He fought and bit and struggled to get away, and it took me some time to explain that I wanted to be friends with him. At last I quieted him, and persuaded him to show me where the others were encamped. When we reached the spot there was a rush for arms, and I was within an ace of having an arrow sent through me; but as I spoke their language I soon got them to crowd around me. Then I gave the women and children some colored beads, the men some iron wire for arrow heads, and to some of the old men I gave blankets. I had some fat oxen with me, for my real mission was to trade for ivory, so I killed one and gave them the meat,

which put them all at ease. I did not mention to them that I wanted to buy ivory, or they would have all cleared in the night. I told them I had come to shoot lions, and then, when they promised to show me some in the morning, we turned in. They were ready at five in the morning, and informed me that there was an old "man-eater" in the neighborhood, and that he had killed three people out of their camp. We accordingly started out to look for him. After travelling for about four miles we began to see plenty of game. I shot a couple of topi, and let some of the old men who had come with us to skin them and take the meat back for the women and children. Then they spotted some vultures in the air, and told me that that meant there were lions on a kill. Three started ahead, and we followed slowly. All at once one of the leaders beckoned me to come on. He told me to follow quietly, as there were lions ahead. He led me up to the other two men, who were crouching in the grass, and they pointed out two lions, at a distance of about fifty yards, feeding on a female waterbuck. They heard me, and sprang in front of the carcass, giving me a splendid shot. I let the first lion have both barrels of my 500 Express, and he went down. The other tried to make for the bush, but as he ran I stopped him with a bullet in the hindquarters, when he turned and came straight at us. The Wanderobo had their bows ready strung, and just as I fired they released their arrows. My shot broke a foreleg, but the lion was immediately riddled with arrows. He seemed just to draw up and then expired. I had no idea their poison was so deadly. They took off the skins, and we started back for camp. On the way I killed a fine waterbuck, and found on measurement the horns that they taped again. The natives were delighted with the meat, of which they never seemed to have enough. I saw that I had made a good impression upon them, but thought I would wait a little longer before broaching the subject of ivory. That night I was made "blood brother" with old Labber-sonie, the chief of the tribe. I was delighted with my scheme, as I knew then he would be bound to sell me all his ivory. I turned in about eleven o'clock, feeling pretty tired, but had only just closed my eyes when I heard frightful screams and shouts. My first thoughts were that the Wanderobo were about to attack me, and as I was lying down in my clothes I seized the rifle and went outside the tent. The noise was at the huts, and I proceeded thence, shouting all the time and asking what was the matter. They informed me that the "man-eater" had carried off a girl. I proposed that we should get firebrands and endeavor to find him. So the women carried flaming sticks, and we searched till about four o'clock in the morning, but with no success. I then returned and had some coffee, determined as soon as it was light to continue the search till we found the lion. As soon, therefore, as daylight appeared we picked up the trail.

The Wanderobo are the most wonderful trackers in the world. Those who have tried tracking know how difficult it is to follow a trail with the wind blowing, but these men found not the slightest trouble in stooping down and following fast. Then came a frightful sight—the leg of a girl. The beast must have been disturbed by us in the night, but from this place it was easy to follow. We came up with him lying in a clump of bushes, and when he heard us he came straight out to do battle. I told the Wanderobo they were not to shoot, as I wanted to kill him myself. He was a magnificent black-maned lion, the mane just sweeping the ground. When about sixty yards from us he sat down like a dog and looked at us. So I started to creep up to him, and when I was within forty yards he laid down for a spring, his tail beating vigorously all the time, accompanied by a short purring noise. I knew I had to fire now, or it would be all up with me, so I aimed for the head, and got him clean through the chest. He just turned over quite dead. I had no tape measure with me, but judged him to be about 11 ft. 6 in. After this there was great rejoicing amongst the Wanderobo. They called a meeting of all the men and made me a chief amongst them.—A. Jordan in Field.

EXTINCT ANTELOPES IN AMERICA

A most unexpected discovery in regard to the geographical distribution of animals is recorded by Dr. J. C. Merriam in the Geological Bulletin, vol. v., No. 22, published by the University of California. Hitherto true antelopes of an Old World type have been quite unknown, either living or extinct, on the American continent. An expedition financed by Miss A. M. Alexander, and despatched to Nevada, has, however, led to the discovery in the Pliocene, or later Tertiary, formations of that state of portions of skulls and horn-cores of antelopes which appear to be undoubtedly related to the kudus and bushbucks of modern Africa. These remains indicate two distinct types, referable, as might have been expected, to extinct genera, for one of which the name "Dingoceros alexandree" has been proposed, while the other is described as "Sphenophalos nevadensis." The spiral twist of the horn-cores seem to indicate the former existence in that state of an antelope near akin to the sable and roan antelopes of South Africa. Nor is this all, for in the Pleistocene asphalt formations near Los Angeles, California, has been discovered the leg bone of a large bird identified by L. H. Miller in the publication already cited as that of a peacock referable to the typical Indo-Malay genus "Pavo." Although the typical members of both the tragelaphine and the hippotragine groups are wholly African at the



Sportsman's Calendar

MARCH

Sports for the Month—For the angler: Trout-fishing after March 25, grilse and spring salmon fishing. For the shooter: Geese and brant, which may be shot but not sold.

March 26—Opening day of trout-fishing season.

N.B.—March is one of the best months of the year for spring salmon trolling, and for brant shooting.

present time, the former have an outlying Indian representative in the aberrant nilgai, while the genus "Oryx" is common to Africa, Syria, and Arabia. In the early Pliocene both groups were, however, represented in southern and eastern Europe, as well as in northern India, and it must now be assumed that they also ranged over a large portion of central and northeastern Asia, since it may be taken as certain that the American forms, together with the peacock, entered the New World by way of Behring Strait, which was then bridged over. Probably they migrated at the same time as the elephants and mastodons, and, like the latter, seem to have enjoyed but a brief existence in their new home. The discovery is, moreover, of interest from another point of view, for it serves to confirm the opinion of the late Professor Huxley that the antelopes of Africa are comparatively modern immigrants into that continent, and that their original home was Europe and Asia.

A LITTLE DINNER

(Continued from Page Eight)

have been passed through a sieve after being carefully boiled; add a squeeze of lemon juice to the mixture and two teaspoonfuls of tomato catsup and put it into a buttered soufflé mould, leaving space for the meringue. Add a pinch of salt and a little pepper to the whites of the eggs and whisk them to a very stiff froth; pile them neatly on the artichoke mixture and bake in a moderately hot oven until the white of egg is a pale amber color, and serve directly, it is taken from the oven.

Apricot Cream.—Dissolve three ounces of loaf sugar in a quarter of a pint of apricot syrup and melt one ounce of isinglass in it. Have ready three-quarters of a pint (rather less than more) of bottled apricots which have been passed through a sieve; mix them with hot syrup and pour into a basin to cool, adding a tablespoonful of brandy and more sugar than the quantity named if the fruit is unswetened. Whip half a pint of cream until it is stiff, add a little powdered sugar to it and mix it lightly, but thoroughly, with the apricot pulp (which should be cold but not set) and pour into an ornamental mould. When firm turn the cream from the mould and decorate it with alternate lines of spikes of angelica and blanched almonds, which have been colored a golden brown in the oven, and surround with little heaps of iced whipped cream flavored with vanilla.

Oyster Bouchees.—Beard and scald some oysters (using the liquor from them) and put them aside to cool. Then flour them lightly and, after dipping them into beaten egg, cover them thickly with sieved breadcrumbs mixed with an equal proportion of grated cheese and seasoned with salt and cayenne, and fry the oysters quickly in a bath of boiling fat. Serve them separately on small round croutons of fried bread, which have been spread with a thin layer of anchovy paste and made hot in the oven; the oysters should be sent to the table as soon as they are ready.

Stern Guardian (to Willie, who has been promised a severe punishment)—Ah, you have brought your friends to ask me to let you off this time, eh?

Willie—No. They have all paid me a penny to see the whacking. So you can get on with it. See?

They are telling a story about Mr. Lloyd George's little daughter, to the effect that one night recently he had to say to her, "What's this I hear? You say you won't go to bed?" "Papa," was the reply of the statesman's offspring, "if you heard anything like that I have been misquoted."—London Opinion.