

HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

A TRUE BEAR STORY

(By Richard L. Pocock.)



WHEN a man has the temerity to write stories of fishing and hunting, he must make up his mind to say goodbye to any reputation he may have for veracity. Why this should be so I know not, but certain it is that, ever since the days of

Jonah, those who speak of write of fish and game must make a liberal allowance for discount when telling the tale of their exploits. Fish-stories and bear-stories seem to be looked upon with about equal suspicion. One can lie all day about grouse or deer, moose or wapiti or bighorn, and never have a suspicion of doubt cast upon one's narrative; but spin a perfectly true yarn about a big trout or a ferocious grizzly and you must inevitably face the cold smile of polite incredulity.

This bear-story is strictly true. Some ten or eleven years ago it was my fortune to have as a partner in prospecting and working some Kootenay mining claims, an old-time placer hunter, hunter, and trapper, who had been in most of the mining excitement of the last two generations or so, and who possessed, together with a perfect knowledge of woodcraft, an abundant fund of dry humor, and an almost inexhaustible supply of excellent camp-fire stories—stories of hardship and adventure, the sudden making of fortunes and the equally sudden loss of them, tales of bad men in frontier mining-camps, tales of adventure in forest and mountain, tales which rang true, told as they were by such a man, a typical hardy prospector of many years' experience, wonderful and unlikely though some of them might sound to the city dweller, fresh from the roar of the traffic and the glare of the lights of London town.

It was late in the fall and the two of us, old Jack and myself, had just finished building a log-cabin on a claim in the mountains, some few miles from Nelson, where we were about to spend the winter developing a "hole in the ground" into the best mine ever.

We were on a last visit to town for a few days' rest before starting in on the winter's work up in the snow, and were enjoying the warmth of the big box stove in the Nelson hotel, then kept by Steve White, of the White Tally-Ho line, and swopping yarns. One or two of the crowd were "chechaco," and none of them knew the old man so well as I, and it was some time before we got him warmed up to yarn-spinning, but after a few doses of his favorite nose-pint he began to get reminiscent of old days at Cripple Creek and Boise Basin, Cariboo and Fraser river bars. Interspersed with his tales of men and mines were tales of traps and guns, and it was these latter that specially interested one of the younger members of the party, who, fresh from the Old Country with the latest West End equipment, had never seen a bear outside a cage, but was abundantly eager to come to close quarters with one in its wild state.

As the old man had been talking, the tenderfoot had chipped in once or twice with expressions and exclamations indicative of incredulity, so that, knowing old Jack's pride and touchiness in this particular, I felt rather alarmed for the harmony of the gathering, when, at a pause in the conversation, he tackled the old-timer thus: "I say, old chap, can't you give us a good bear-story—a really true one this time, you know?"

There was an ominous silence for half-a-minute or so, and then Jack, looking straight at his challenger with a solemn face and not a twinkle in his eye, answered slowly, "Well, yes, I guess so. I do know a few stories about bears which might interest ye, and I'll just tell ye one which is true as Gospel and which I hope ye'll find no difficulty in believing."

"It was just a few years ago; I was prospecting and hunting up in the Big Bend country, when I ran across an old pardner o' mine, by name Jim Smart, who had got tired o' tramping the blessed mountains with a pack on his back, and had taken up a bit of land and cleared an acre or so, where he had planted a few fruit-trees and raised a few spuds and such like in the summer, and hunted and trapped some in the winter. We had drifted into talk about old times, and we'd done a bit of hunting together in old days, Jim and me had. 'Talking of hunting,' says Jim, 'there's an old bear browsing round here somewhere, right now. I seed his tracks down there by the potato-patch this morning, and mebbe if you was to take down old Betsy Anne, and take a mosey round the hill back there while I cook the supper you might run across him. There's quite a few deer round too, and I'm plumb out o' fresh meat.'

"Well, I catches up the old gun, Betsy Anne was his name for her, and went out for a stroll, never thinking to run across no bear, mind you, but just for a look round the ranch, so to speak. I started off down to the bottom of his garden and over the fence through some skunk cabbage, where I could see the bear had been having a feed, but I didn't see no bear. Then I struck up, catcornered across the hill into the big timber, but I never seed no bear. So I kep' on up to the top, and, after circling round a bit, started down again in the direction of old Jim's shanty, came through the woods and down into the bottom. Given up even thinkin' about bear by this time, and was more concerned in thinkin' about the pork and beans that I knew would be bubbling on the stove, and the good hot coffee and biscuits that Jim was a while at makin', when, walkin' on without noticing much, I came right down onto old Jim's clearing and the edge of his potato-

patch. Now I never expected, as you may imagine, to see no bear there right in Jim's garden near the shack and with him raising a racket with the fry-pan and tin plates, and so forth. It never entered my mind as at all possible that I should see any bear that evening, and, would you believe it now, young feller, no more I didn't, neither, no more I didn't. No, sirree Bob! neither hide nor hair of one."

DOG TRAINING AND ITS COST

There is a popular fallacy among a large class of sportsmen to the effect that the training of a dog is a very simple and inexpensive matter, and that if it were not for the fact that they were too busy to give the pup the time the "exorbitant" charges of trainers and handlers could be avoided.

How many men who make this statement have considered the matter from a purely practical and business standpoint? The only point that presents itself at a glance is the time it takes. That being obvious, we will take it under consideration first. We will assume that the pup has reached the age when serious work can be commenced, and he is sent to a trainer to be made into a dog "that will be a bird dog."

Now, as there is a great diversity of opinion as to when a dog should begin his education, it is more than probable that the dog's age is not within several months one way or the other of the trainer's idea of the proper age for that particular dog; however, he must get the pup in shape by the time the season opens or within a certain time which suits the owner's convenience. Then it is that the element of time begins to loom up like a lighthouse in a fog.

The average pup at six months—which is the time so many sportsmen deem it proper to begin training—is so undeveloped that it will take several weeks of observation to determine as to what methods will apply to his particular case. He must be taken day after day to localities where he can find game; his hunting instinct being strong, he will find it, give chase, and lose himself for periods varying from fifteen minutes to hours without end. He may be nervous and high-strung, and the first rush of a bunch of birds will frighten him almost into a spasm, and he takes to his heels. The latter case is much the hardest to deal with and may require months of work to overcome. Should this occur in the dry season, when scenting conditions are at their worst, it is almost hopeless to attempt game work until the rains come, and in the interval every effort must be made to overcome the timidity by constant and gentle yard-work. Right here a mistake in his treatment may in five minutes undo the work of weeks, and the whole proceeding have to be gone over again.

It is not my intention to write a treatise on training, but I wish simply to give a general idea of the cost and some of the difficulties which make the prices asked for trained dogs, and for training dogs, seem high to the uninitiated, when in reality the trainer makes but very little profit when his time is computed at \$3.00 per day.

Yard training must proceed step by step, lesson by lesson, and each lesson must be thoroughly learned by the pupil before the next one is taken up. The pup must be made to know that he must do certain things instantly and without hesitation, and when he knows that he must be kept in practice. Some lessons must be repeated every day for a week before the pup realizes what is expected of him; if the proceeding is distasteful to him he will be several days before he will make any attempt to obey the order without the force which put him through the motions of the lesson in the beginning.

These lessons, with a pup, can not be carried much over an hour or the pup becomes confused, frightened, tired out, and sullen, and goes from bad to worse. He must then be given time to rest and think it over. After that comes his run, to put him in good spirits and to let him have a chance on game.

The yard work complete, and the pup under control by whistle and order, he is then ready to begin the actual finding, pointing staunchly, and retrieving game for his handler—heretofore it has been for his own amusement. Another month's work with the gun and he is broken, but not finished. He has his diploma from the faculty of his college, he has a good foundation to work on, and he is ready to enter the employment of the sportsman who understands the work and has the time to put the finishing touches on him and give him the experience he needs; but for the man who only goes out about three times a season he needs experience, change of locality, different cover, to be hunted in company with strange dogs, to be steadied down, to become impressed with the idea that to lose his head is a crime—and these things will take more time, much work, and some ammunition.

Now this has taken at least two hours a day for three months; allowing ten hours for a working day at \$3.00 per day, we have 600 a day, or in three months of 26 working days we find a total of \$46.80 worth of time alone. The dog's feed will amount to nearly \$10, for he must be kept in condition, and he must have food that agrees with him; if his coat is rough he must have a raw egg night and morning; he will have had at least 100 shots fired over him (cost, \$2.40); he may need a little medicine or he may need a good deal or none at all, but it is safe to add 50 cents to the total for medicine. The trainer must keep a horse, as a rule, or perhaps two, in order that he may take his dogs and himself to different game fields; he must have game on his own ground or he must "stand in" with owners of good bird grounds. He has put out in time and

cash \$59.70, or in round numbers \$60.00, and if he asks \$75.00 for his services he has a balance of \$15.00 with which to buy horse feed, build kennels, pay for chickens killed by pups, and pay for his advertising.

He has earned his wages and his profit (if any) by work of the hardest kind—for the trainer does not get sport out of hunting with unbroken dogs. He only kills game for the effect it will have on the dog, and his entire attention is taken up with developing the good qualities and correcting the faults in his pupil, so he has little time to enjoy sport as sport. He may and usually does enjoy his work, but sport and work are too entirely different things, and the enjoyment gotten out of each is of a totally different nature.

I do not see how the man who devotes his entire time to the training of bird dogs can turn out a well broken pup for less money than \$75.00 and really deliver the goods. Of course dogs can be brought to a certain degree of perfection in less time, but their accomplishments are few and of a superficial nature; in fact, they are high-school graduates instead of collegians. In the right hands they will develop, but they do not always fall into the right hands.

The man who takes one or two dogs to train as a side issue, and has time on his hands that would otherwise be unremunerative, can and often does turn out well-trained dogs, but he usually takes them with the understanding that the owner gets them when they are broken. He takes his own time and probably shoots over the dog a whole season before he is considered finished. He may charge less than the professional, but he will be much longer about it, and unless he is a rarity the dog hunts entirely to his notion and not to the owner's. Also, men who do not make a business of training and can train and will train are scarce.

American Field states that "the man who charges \$100 to train a dog and does it properly earns every cent, and we really do not see how it can be done for less. A first-class article can not be bought for a second-hand price."

Well-broken, experienced dogs can sometimes be bought for considerably less than the cost of training; they are thrown on the market by the owners—sportsmen, usually who are moving to a gameless country, moving to the city; setters sold because owner wants a pointer, and, vice versa, dogs sold because owner wants a bitch, and so on—not because they are not worth \$100 or more, but because of personal reasons of the owner; for well-bred dogs cost something to breed as well as to train.

For instance, I have before me a letter from a prominent Eastern breeder who says in reference to a dog now owned by me, "I paid out \$1,200 in cash to produce that litter."

Someone may say that paying for pedigree is all nonsense; that dogs with no pedigree at all are known to him to be wonders in the field. That may be so, and I have seen remarkably good dogs of no pedigree—but they were accidents of breeding. There is no animal known that will breed back so far as the dog, and the good dog of no pedigree is simply a throwback to some ancestor of good blood. Mr. Bryson, the owner of old Gladstone, stated in a recent article that Gladstone always produced one liver-and-white pup, although there was no liver and white in his pedigree for three generations. I gave a bitch to a friend of mine and in her pedigree Gladstone appears in the fifth generation. Bred twice to a dog with Gladstone in his fifth generation, she has produced one liver-and-white pup in each litter, making the throwback nine generations, for there is no liver and white on either side back to Gladstone. Now the dog of no pedigree may reproduce his kind several generations hence, but the man who wants to raise pups does not want to struggle through five generations of curs to produce one good dog.

I do not mean by this that all litters throw back to some remote ancestor, but I do mean that in the dog of no breeding the scrub blood will predominate to such an extent that he will produce scrubs. The scrubs in his case have simply produced him by accident. Pedigree dogs—or I should say properly bred dogs—are not bred haphazard simply because both sire and dam have a family tree, but are bred by careful selection of individuals and strains of blood. The problem of the breeder is to combine the best qualities of the different strains and eliminate the faults. This takes time and money; one strain crossed on a line of bitches may turn out simply mediocre hunters and of wrong conformation, and to find that out takes over a year, means the purchase of a dog or a heavy stud fee and express charges, and the "results" are either given away or sold for a song. After several tries the breeder secures the strain he wants; he knows it to be good and he knows what it has cost him to produce it, so he sets his prices accordingly, and as the prices of all things are very closely related to the cost of production, it is surprising that there are so many good pups on the market at prices that, when all is said, are only a reasonable profit on the capital invested.—F. F. Wilson, in Western Field.

SALMON ANGLERS IN ICELAND

Beyond knowing that Iceland was an island in the region of the Arctic circle, some hundreds of miles north of Scotland, our knowledge of the country, until we had looked up particulars in "Murray," was decidedly hazy. We certainly had no notion that it was one-sixth larger than Ireland, that the country was so thickly populated as to contain two human beings to the square mile, and that there

were no musk ox on the island. We must have confused Iceland with Greenland, for we rather expected to find these animals and Eskimos the only inhabitants. Towards the end of June we sailed from Granton in one of Simon's trading and cattle boats, which had accommodation for ten or a dozen passengers. Besides ourselves, there were on board two parties of sportsmen bound for Reykjavik, which town we reached after a voyage lasting four days. We were not much impressed with our first view of it, though on our return from a two months' stay in the north it looked more imposing. It consists for the most part of one-story wooden houses, and looks like a small fishing village, though there are a few stone buildings, the cathedral, Althing house, Latin school, etc. The streets are narrow, with open drains on either side, and everywhere there is a strong odour of bad fish.

After landing passengers and cargo, we steamed up the west coast of the island, calling at Isafjord and a few other trading stations, and, finally, disembarking at Skagastrand, from which we had an eighty-mile ride to our destination, Storri Borg, in the Humavath Sysla, which we reached on the second day, having stayed one night at a farm on the way. As the pack ponies had to be sent for our baggage and tents, we stayed for the first week in the part of the farmhouse reserved for guests. This farmhouse was built with turf walls from six feet to eight feet thick, lined inside with match boarding, and having wooden gables, like all the Icelandic farmhouses. Our quarters were clean and comfortable, though not luxurious, and rather scantily furnished. Our host, Pieter Christopherson, was educated in Scotland, and spent some years in that country, so he spoke English fluently; but he told us that he had great difficulty in reading. This was hardly to be wondered at, since the only English literature he possessed was a number of copies of an American scientific journal entitled the Literary Microcosm, which despised words of less than three syllables, and most of the contents of which were incomprehensible to the ordinary layman. At the farm we lived in the lap of luxury (for Iceland) as far as food was concerned—white bread, salmon, char, trout, ducks, and occasional chunks of mutton for a change from the produce of our rods and guns. One thing we did not stomach at first—the butter made from sheep's milk. But one can get accustomed to most things in time, and we got to like even the sheep's butter, though it was white as lard, and tasted exactly like mutton suet.

After prospecting our country, we decided that the ride of four miles to the river and back every day would be a great waste of valuable time, and so we lost none in conveying our tents, etc., to the river bank. For the period of a month, during which we lived in stout, gipsy-type tents, and were assailed by every variety of weather, the Storri Borg river, fished with the usual Scotch flies, yielded sport quite beyond our expectations. We occasionally killed over 200 lb. of fish a day, and rarely less than 100 lb. Most of them were of fair average size, ranging from 10 lb. to 30 lb. Our heaviest was 34 lb., an ugly red brute, but we got many fish in the pink of condition of about 24 lb. No incident worth recording broke the monotony of our luck except that on one occasion a heavy fish, somewhat sensitive to the prick of the hook, went straight across the river in his first rush and beached himself high and dry on the far side, obliging the unwilling angler to wade across and administer the coup de grace in order to release his fly. On another occasion my own rod was put out of commission for a day owing to my neglect to bring a spare fly reel. Fishing from a high bank on a reach too deep for wading, a fish which I had played for some time, in his final effort to escape, ran out nearly all the line at such a pace that my reel jammed, and in the struggle to reel in the spindle broke off short. Fortunately, the fish—a 16 lb. salmon—was played out, and by drawing in the line by hand and leaving the slack trailing on the bank behind me I managed to bring him to the gaff without much trouble. In the evening I rode over to the farm with the reel, and one of the hands made a good job of it on my giving him an English shilling wherewith to do the brazing, as the Danish silver money contained too much alloy.

During this day I had made my first acquaintance with Arctic trout and char in a burn flowing from a big lake into the Laxa at the head of our water. These fish gave good sport, but this paled before an 8 lb. and a 10 lb. salmon, which I successfully brought to the gaff with my trout rod and light gut. When, thereafter, we sought out the trout as a change, we usually got between 15 lb. and 20 lb. a day without trouble, sometimes hooking a salmon. Conversely, in the big river we frequently hooked 2 lb. trout.

All good things are short-lived, however, and after rather more than a month's fishing the river became too low for sport with the rod, so we were invited by the local "gentry" to have a day's netting. The "gentry"—local farmers—turned up in force, and, with Pieter and half a dozen of his men, we had a good muster to work the two nets. These were rather primitive affairs with large mesh, for all the world like long sheep nets, with pieces of charred wood for corks, and ponies' shank-bones threaded on to the bottom line instead of leads. The modus operandi was also primitive in the extreme. Ten or a dozen men held one net, which was three feet deep, across a comparatively shallow part of the river, while the rest of the men drove the salmon down,

drawing the other net along with them. During the first drive we assisted to hold the lower net, and at times this was no easy task. The salmon came down in such big droves as occasionally to knock a man off his legs, and sometimes a shoal or fifty or more big fish would charge the net, which was not over sound, and break right through between two men. When the drivers, with their net, reached the stop net and overlapped at one end, these two ends were brought round, and the two nets, thus forming a double wall, were rushed out on to the shallowing bank. At least nine out of ten of the fish managed to escape, owing to the mad excitement of the men and the rottenness of parts of the nets.

The next reach of the river to be netted contained the big pool, much too deep for the drag net to be of any use; but the farmers to a man jolly volunteered to drive it by riding their ponies through. We knew the pool intimately, having had many a morning swim there, and particularly that there were numerous ledges terminating abruptly in deep water, so we anticipated "sport" of a different kind, and were not disappointed. We took up our positions at the stop net, together with the less adventurous spirits, and those who had not acquired sufficient Dutch courage to face the deep water. Standing in comparatively shallow water below the big pool, we had a splendid view of the whole performance. The farmers rode abreast about six feet apart, and got on all right until they arrived nearly at the middle of the pool, when first one and then another disappeared from sight, pony and all, with a tremendous splash, which had the desired effect of driving every salmon out of the pool. Seventy-four salmon in all were taken with the nets and divided amongst the farmers.

Snow and storm drove us from Borg, and we began our return journey with a string of pack ponies tied head to tail, accompanied by Pieter as guide and our gillie to look after the ponies. Before we had gone many miles a heavy snowstorm came on and continued the whole day, confirming us reluctantly in the opinion that the time had really come for us to return to civilization. When about halfway to Bordeyri we met a solitary rider—one of the "two inhabitants to the square mile"—who pulled up and produced from his pocket a copy of the Field addressed to me, the only communication from home which we received while in Iceland, though, as we afterwards heard, a regular supply of weekly papers and many interesting letters had been sent, which we trust were duly added to the Literary Microcosm library at Storri Borg. We stopped at Melstadr for luncheon, and when we reached the fjord opposite Bordeyri saw the outline of the steamer, which had just come into the fjord, looming in the distance through the snowstorm. She had come round by the east coast, and her last port of call on this trip was Reykjavik, where she had to stay four days in order to take on board her cargo of between 600 and 700 ponies.

There was one belated sportsman on board, who very kindly invited us to spend the four spare days fishing with him at Reynivellir, and as we were not at all keen about the 160-mile ride to the Geysers and back on hired ponies we gratefully accepted his invitation. Our friend did not fancy the forty miles' ride to his fishing, and decided to take his heavy baggage by boat to Reynivellir, but was delayed by rough weather, and though we rode out and had two good days' fishing there, we never saw our host again, or had an opportunity of thanking him for his hospitality. As it would have taken too long to land our own ponies, which we took back with us, we hired two in Reykjavik, and engaged a guide to show us the way to Reynivellir. We could find our way back without any difficulty, being both endowed with the bump of locality, so we dismissed the guide as soon as we reached our new fishing quarters.

The salmon here did not run half the size of those at Borg, the average being only about 6 lb., while the Borg fish averaged nearly 18 lb. Everything in the south, except the ponies, was on a smaller scale than in the north, but the rivers were well stocked, the country was much more fertile, and the riding much easier than in the north. We caught some good baskets of white trout in addition to salmon. There were two rivers, both of which emptied into a big pool over a small waterfall before reaching the sea. My friend took the smaller river, which ran through a big lake, giving the water time to get aired, and got sixteen salmon the first morning. I took the big river, which had some snow water in it, and the salmon would not look at a fly; but I got some good white trout in the sea pool below. We expected our host to turn up every minute, and after the first morning we were not fishing in earnest, spending most of the time watching the salmon and sea trout leaping up the waterfall out of the sea pool.

When we sailed from Reykjavik the weather was stormy, and when we had been at sea two days we met such a heavy sea that we had to lay to for forty-eight hours. This extended the voyage to six days, and as the ship was provisioned and had a supply of fresh water only for four we were nearly reduced to meals of horseflesh. When we sighted the shores of Scotland the Icelanders were surprised to see trees, and when we arrived at Leith and they saw some big dray horses on the quay their astonishment was unbounded, as they had always supposed that there were no horses in the world bigger than their Iceland hestur.—Hugh Aldersey in the Field.



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