

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Ontario Game Laws.

To THE EDITOR OF ROD AND GUN :

I join heartily with your correspondents of last month in the general condemnation of the Ontario Game Law. I have thought very strongly on this subject for a long time, and am pleased to know that the sportsmen of Ontario will have an opportunity given them in your columns, of expressing themselves in this matter.

The difficulty, with us in Ontario, is and has been, that we have no association of sportsmen and until now no Canadian journal sufficiently interested in the wants of Ontario sportsmen, through whom they could make their wants, as a body, known. Those who have assumed to mould our game laws, have done so, apparently, in entire ignorance of what sportsmen required, or in direct disregard of their wishes in the matter. When I say "sportsmen" I mean what that word should always imply, namely, a body of men whose first care is for the preservation and propagation of the game, and with whom the sport of killing the game is a secondary consideration. Further, I think, the Ontario Game Commission, which must be looked upon as the step-father of Ontario game legislation, displays in the numerous game laws we are afflicted with a marvellous ignorance of the best methods of game preservation.

No better instance of this is necessary than in the laws on the statute book regulating the killing of deer, which has been so emphatically condemned by all your correspondents last month. The idea of allowing only two weeks of moose hunting, every three years, with the immense moose territory possessed by Ontario, is too absurd for argument. Then why, in the name of common sense, is the hunting of red deer, as well as the moose, confined to only two weeks. If the number each licensee is limited to kill, as it is, what difference does it make whether a hunter gets his legal amount during the first week of October or the last week in November. Cut the limit down to one red deer each, if such is necessary to keep up the supply, but give a man an opportunity to do his hunting at a time most convenient for himself, and when the weather is most favorable. Not every one who would like to take a week in the woods can get away from business at the particular fortnight fixed for him by statute, and sometimes the weather during that particular two weeks is, as it was in mooseland this year, too stormy for any decent hunting, in fact too bad most of the time to allow any hunting at all.

In regard to other game birds and animals, the law might be not only made clearer, so that it would not require a Philadelphia lawyer to understand it, but might be improved in many respects. It should be made clear that the use of a gun in hunting cotton-tail rabbits during the close season of other game is prohibited. The present law may mean this, but it does not say so. It says: "Notwithstanding anything in this Act, any person may during close season take or kill the wood hare or cotton-tail rabbit by any other means than by the use of guns or other firearms"; and yet, in the whole Act, there is no close season on this animal, and the sub-section could certainly not be construed to refer to the close season on any other game.

The open season on grouse and quail might properly be put two weeks later and the sale of all game birds and animals should be absolutely prohibited. It is, in my opinion, simply saving at the spigot and losing at the bung hole, to place such narrow restrictions on the hunting of game and allow the market hunter to get in his deadly work. "BLUEBIRD."

THE RIFLES OF THE FOREST.

As we lay on the damp, sweet-smelling fir boughs, feet to the fire, my esteemed friend Bernard Wabis, whose winter address is, by-the-bye, sixty miles from nowhere, up there in the frozen north, beyond Temiskaming, gave me his opinion upon rifles and the shooting thereof.

"Forty-four (W.C.F.) big enough for anything. Hit moose in right place, him dead, sure; kill him 300, 400 yards. Forty-five (45-70-405) make too much row; hurt too much."

Now, Bernard, though young in years, is old, very old, in experience. He may not know much, but what he does know was taught him in a school kept by Dame Nature, and in her establishment mistakes have to be paid for, and are not often repeated by apt pupils. As for the pupils who are not apt, they simply die, and there is an end to them. Knowing these things, I always treat Bernard's opinions on matters connected with the noble art of hunting, with respect, though I do not believe he is sound in his geology; because he says stones grew where they are, and laughed cynically at my claims for his recognition of an ice age, and of a great continental glacier. The "Old Indians," as he calls his ancestors, handed down no traditions of such things, which is proof conclusive in Bernard's mind that I am mistaken. Neither is he an evolutionist; on the contrary, he holds stoutly to a liberal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, and believes that there were never any red trout in Temiskaming Lake, nor White Fish in Sucker Lake, simply because they were not put there. But Bernard has many a time when he was learning, seen his dinner walk away from him on account of a poor shot, and often in later years feasted on moose mulligatawny as a reward for burning straight powder, so when he says that 44 W.C.F. is good enough for any moose, you may take my word for it he knows what he is talking about. There is but one condition he imposes, and you would have blood on the black knife you must hit the moose in the right place. This I confess is not always easy. Moose have a most reprehensible habit of moving just as the trigger is being pulled, sometimes, indeed, they are so wantonly depraved as to decline to await a fellow's convenience, and one must shoot with a pulse fluttering from bad conditions and excitement, and then, of course, even a 17 pound elephant rifle might fail to bag. After making some hits and many misses, I am forced to conclude, picking the shot and taking pains is a surer way to moose steak pie, or venison pasty, than lugging about a great, clumsy weapon whose only claim to preference is that it could probably rake a big bull from stem to stern, and make a hole big enough to put your fist in.

To-day most of our forest Indians are using the 44 W.C.F. on moose, caribou, deer and bear, and are quite satisfied with their rifles; in the mountains and on the prairie where the ranges are longer, the old reliable 45-70-405, or the newer 30-30 W.C.F. have the call, hence we may conclude, safely, that as a rib tickler, the W.C.F. is a success, and as far as power goes, sufficient for our wants; not that I advocate the 44, or use it myself; its advantages do not appeal to me as much as they do to the Indian hunters, and I am willing to sacrifice something for a rifle that will simplify the ever difficult problem of range finding, and to do the business, even when the shot has not been placed just where it should have been. The point I would make is simply this: there is no absolute need to carry a heavy rifle of big calibre into the woods, seeing that a lighter one will do all that is needful, if held tolerably straight.

For years my favorite rifle was a double .450 express. It was a magnificent weapon; quite accurate up to 150 yards, and