

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

MILD SPORT IN NORTHERN NATAL

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RD BLLIS

ELLIS.

It was a glorious winter's morning in Vryheid, Northern Natal. Alas! I must also nfess that it was a Sunday, but that day leaving men more free from duty than any her gets one into bad habits.

We looked at the cloudless sky, the sunlit country, and took in the fresh crisp snap of the air. My sister was not inclined to turn nut, but my brother-in-law and I decided we must have a shoot.

There was a big vlei within three miles: would go there and find out whether anything was left for us. There had been too many troops stationed at Vryheid for much to escape the many eager sportsmen.

Indeed, when I went up to Vryheid, seven uenths after the Boer War ended, there was le game to be found for miles round the -country town. A few small buck, a partge or quail here and there; now and then, good fortune, wild duck. With the excepn of pigeons, that was about all one could pe would give the keenest shot a chance.

With game so scarce the Boer farmers ere reluctant to give any guns permission go on their land-very naturally. Luckily - was most popular with these late eneies, now peaceful neighbors. They were always ready to welcome him at their farms, he could have a try for what little was eft to shoot.

We decided to walk-whether or not as a oncession to Sunday I forget-and setting off riskly reached our vlei before the bright, early feeling of the day had gone."

Our thoughts were upon what luck we night expect, not upon our surroundings as we vent; but really it was quite a historic road. .

The road itself was improved, no doubt, but the scene could be very little changed since that March of 1879 when Colonel Buller's nounted force went along its rough way in the lawn to attack Hlobane, the big hill, fifteen niles ahead as we walked eastward.

Fatal Hlobane, from which trap our men ad escaped over this same undulating ground, in the evening dusk-all that were not lying lead on the mountain crest, or the grassy nek and slopes below.

There was no Vryheid in those days, it was ng before Dutch rule in Northern Zululand as this district was then). Behind our road before, at that time all was wild, open untry. Our men were flying to Kambula, Sir Evelyn Wood's entrenched camp, which was eight miles to the northwest of where Vryheid now stands. It was from Kambula that Buller's small force had gone out against Hlobane.

the veldt beyond was brown with winter drought.

It was all very well to admire the picture, but our object was to get the duck. If they rose from the water and scattered in the opposite direction there would be no hope of a shot; they must be driven towards the gun. We made our plan of campaign in a whis-

per. Softly did I creep still further to the right until I could get round to the other side of the viei and back towards the road, without disturbing the duck.

Of course I had to find my way by marks outside the marsh; the pool was hidden from me almost all the time. My brother-in-law and the dogs were to remain where I left them until I had time to get round-the vlei was so broken up and the reeds so high we could not see each other any more than I could see the duck.

At last I judged my circuit wide enough and slipped through the smaller pools towards the centre, making my way with difficulty be-tween the thick reeds. It was no easy thing to approach without noise, splashing through water the depth of which was hiddeen hy green growth.

However, I was wary, and it was all right. As I came out by clearer water there were the duck, and beyond them a distant waving of the tall rushes showed that T---- was closing in from the other side.

Out I came in full view; there was a great splashing, a flapping of wings, and up rose the astonished duck in a compact body that spread our gracefully as they left the water.

I could not resist watching them scatter apart as they sailed away. Then down I went as a flash in my eyes and a report on the opposite side of the pool hurried my movements by their warning. I lay nearly flat in a bed of reeds while a second shot told me we had secured a brace.

Then, as there was silence, I picked myself up, much to my brother-in-law's relief. I was right in the sun, and he only caught sight of me as he fired the first shot. I dropped so suddenly and vanished so completely he thought I was hit, which did not prevent his bagging the second duck. I should have been most disgusted if it had.

Thinking that the dense reeds made driving rather too dangerous, and not wishing to give me a peppering, T---- went off on a solitary prowl along the vlei, taking only the dogs. While I waited, quite content with our past success and my occupation, drying my wet legs in the sun.

Presently I lay down on the warm earth, which made such a simple, natural resting place. The wind sang in the reeds, and there was a faint ripple from the breeze-swept pool. felt more than heard, as I stretched myself luxuriously upon the dry sand. There came a patter of bare feet; and a native woman, her water-pot balanced lightly upon her head, stopped and looked at me. She had the quick eye of those who dwell in the wilderness, and had discovered from the road that someone or something was hidden among the undergrowth. I half opened my eyes and took in the picture she made. The tall, well-formed figure, a model in bronze, the raw ochre blanket draped so gracefully yet unconsciously, the red-brown water-pot. All set in vivid relief against the sunlit background of cobalt blue

to bring a boy to carry our bag; its size was unlikely to cause us inconvenience. There was little variety in food at Vryheid

in those days; any contribution to the larder was acceptable. We were sure of a warm welcome, our appetites for lunch were excellent, and we had had a very pleasant morning. Even the crack shot, whose bag of driven

birds has beaten all his rivals, can hardly say more than that, profound as might be his contempt for our morning of mild sport .- Rosamond Southey.

## A MORNING AFTER BEAR IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES.

I had just moved into a new block of jungle, and for three days had been surveying the vicinity of my camping ground, with view to getting an idea of the lie of the land, and the distribution and varieties of the game of the neighborhood.

This was then, the fourth day of my exploration, and from what I had seen to date, the prospects of sport did not seem particularly rosy. At 5.30 a. m. I hurriedly demolished a boiled egg, washed it down with a cup of cocoa, and having thrust five cartridges into the magazine of my Winchester, sallied out to see what the day may bring forth. proposed making for a distant bit of gently undulating ground covered wih "wait-a-bit" thorns and scattered babul treets, where I thought, as did also the natives, I might very likely come across a sambhur or chital.

It was still dark, so starting off in the required direction, by a dusty and broken bul-lock track, we tramped by the light of a waning moon. Dawn was just visible creeping over the distant horizon when we had traversed a distance of some three miles. A sud-den and ominous rootling in the long grass on the left of the track on the edge of a nullah brought me to a sudden standstill.

I personally thought it was an old pig investigating some succulent root, but the shikari, with a gesture of warning, pronounc-ed the word "baloo." Not having seen the sign of a bear in my previous perambulations I thought the shikari was merely a good-natured liar, anxious to propitiate the despondent Sahib, and was just on the point of saying so in so many words. But at that moment there came a grumble from the long grass that was quite unmistakable "baloo language" so I crept cautiously into the jungle towards the sound, the native following in my foot-I had not pogressed more than 15 yards

before I saw a bear moving through a patch of thin grass just in front of me.

"Baloo! Baloo! Sahib!" shouted the shikari in vast excitement. Up went my rifle. and I pulled the trigger, laying as best I could on the momentary glimpse of shaggy black coat shambling through the long grass. An awe-inspiring growl followed, presumably signifying in the language of bears a torrent of oaths, and getting on to his hind legs, he spun round, peering over the grass to see whence the obnoxious blow had fallen. J realized at once what had happened. I had launched a three hundred grain dose of lead into the old gentleman's posterior, and he was filled with a very natural and righteous indignation! Spotting me at once, without a moment's hesitation he made straight towards where I was standing, the redoubtable shikari, with equal promptitude, disappearing from my side in consternation, leaving me to settle the matter alone. I laid again on the advancing foe as he shambled towards me along the edge of the nullah, and, loosing off, hit him in the chest. The blow turned him right over, and he disappeared into the nullah with a crash. Thinking I had him stiff, I struggled down to inspect the corpse. One should, however, never count one's chickens before they are hatched, for, beyond a trail of blood running a short distance down the nullah, I never saw any signs of the old gentleman again. I fear he must have died in one of the numerous caves from the effects of his wounds, as he was unquestionably hard hit. I was much disappointed, as he was a fine specimen, and somewhat disgusted, I continued on my way. Having searched for some time through the patch of jungle where I had hoped to find a sambhur, I sat down disconsolately, as the sun was now getting unpleasantly warm, and meditated over many things, chiefly about bear shooting in long grass! Before returning to camp to have something to eat, I decided to walk down the long narrow nullah, on the edge of which I was sitting, on the off chance of finding some denizen of the forest seeking a shady place for his midday siesta. This I proceeded to do, and had not gone far before I came across quite fresh tracks of bear in the sand, seeing Bruin himself almost immediately afterwards in the distance, routing along amidst the thick leaves. Leaving the shikari behind, I hurried forward as silently as was possible amongst the teak leaves, to try and get within shot. In this I was not successful, but succeeded in catching a glimpse of what looked like another bear, also meandering down the nullah. The undergrowth got thicker and thicker, until the idea of walking up to get a shot became manifestly absurd.

Baloo could lie doggo, I returned to the shikari and held a council of war. I suggested that if we could only scrape together a few more men, it was quite on the cards that we might beat the bears out, as I thought it highly probable that they were about to settle down for a midday snooze. He might, he thought, be able to get a few men if he went to a village some four miles distant, but did not sound at all confident of finding them. I packed him off, however, and sat down in the shade and thought matters over.

After waiting what seemed an eternity of time, the shikari returned with a few bedraggled "jungle wallahs," and after explaining what I wanted done, I sent them to the far end of the nullah by a circuitous route, and climbing myself into an adjacent tree, awaited results. I had been sitting thus some twenty minutes when a rustle in the neighboring undergrowth betokened something on the move. That moment I saw a bear, and the next moment the Baloo saw me, and, turning about rapidly before I could loose off at him, hurriedly retraced his steps. Again I waited expectantly, and could hear the beaters coming through the brushwood quite close to me.

A minute later I was rewarded by the sight of three, bears-father, mother and stalwart firstborn-scuffling through the trees towards me. Twisting my legs into a reef knot, and steadying myself on my perch with a leg and a couple of fingers of one hand I awaited their arrival at a fairly open piece of ground some 40 yards from my position.

I had just managed to screw myself into a moderately possible posture from which to fire, when the family entered the danger zone. Father was leading, then came mother with her well developed young hopeful beside her.

Bang! Bang! Father and mother both went over on their backs, but the youngster hurried on, having first stopped for a moment to have a look at his unfortunate relatives from behind a tree. The big fellow was dead as the proverbial door nail, but his wife was making the most fearful noise, like a lost soul in purgatory, rolling the while from side to side. Next moment she was on her legs again, invisible in the bushes and ambling off after her fast-retreating cub.

I literally fell out of that tree, and leaving the dead bear where he was, hurried off after the other two. We found blood tracks almost immediately, and started off on a burning scent. After going some two miles, there was a check. No signs of blood anywhere, but on casting, a shout from one of the niggers announced a discovery. Under a thorn bush was a big pool of blood, quite fresh, and pointing to the fact that Bruin must have had a long halt and could not be very far in front. The natives were getting excited by this-time, and a sudden yell from one who was wandering round in a big cast announced further signs. Only a few drops of blood on a teak leaf, but sufficient to start everyone off on the trail again, the scent getting better and hotter as we went, struggling over enormous boulders and loose rocks. I was personally getting somewhat exhausted, owing to the heat and the bad going, when a wild shout from the shikari who was in front made me redouble my efforts to catch him up. He was so. out of breath from exertion combined with excitement that speech failed him, but he pointed ahead with a shaking finger, and there sure enough was a big black form slopping along through the trees a hundred yards ahead. Pulling myself together, I stumbled on as quickly as I could, and after progressing a hundred and fifty yards practically fell down the sandy slopes of a steep nullah, and then I saw, some seventy-five yards in front of me the two bears legging it for all they were worth. It was clearly my last chance, for the place was a honeycomb of caves and rocks, and already the cub was lost to view round a corner, so putting up my rifle, I pulled on the big bear. Down she went, howling hideously, but was up and off again the next instant. How I ever managed to hit her at this juncture will forever remain a mystery to me. I was so out of breath that my rifle was wobbling and shaking, and the foresight seemed to be all over the countryside at once. There was, however, that they were hard hit, and were making tracks down the nullah at a distinctly slower pace than before. Nothing remained to be done but to run as fast as my tottering legs would carry me through the heavy sand and do my best to catch them up. As luck would have it, I did not have to run far, for on rounding a bend in the nullah I saw both turn sharply in under a big heap of boulders. A minute later I was up, only to find them esconced in a dark cave, whence came many and gruesome noises. At that moment a big black form appeared with a lurch in the mouth of the cave, and with a final awful grumble collapsed stone dead in the entrance almost at my feet. The shikari and other men having arrived by now, and having explained how matters stood, I decided on trying to remove the carcase from the mouth of the cave and see what effect it would have on the remaining bear inside. The natives had the long-handled axes which they carry in the jungle; so, armed with these, I ranged the men round the cave's month, and we cautiously started prob-



December 15-Last day for deer-shooting. December 31-Last day for pheasants, grouse, and quail. After November it is illegal to sell ducks, geese, snipe.

ing about with some long saplings on which a hook had been cut, to try and get a hold on the dead bear and drag her out.

This operation was viewed with extreme disfavor by the cub, who expressed his disapproval in distinctly bad language, and so abusive and truculent did he ultimately become that the shikari said he did not think it was good "bundobust" (neither did I.!) to go on until we had arrived at a satisfactory understanding with the gentleman in question.

It was then that I suddenly realized that I had fired all five rounds in my magazine, and had no more ammunition with me. There was undoubtedly another bear in the cave full of vitality, judging by the periodical outbursts of growling 'and grumbling which seemingly came from the bowels of the earth. I was four miles from camp, the remainder of the ammunition for the particular rifle I was using being under lock and key, in a place from which I alone could extract it.

How I cursed myself for being such an ass as to leave camp with so few rounds, and the time honored maxim came home to me very forcibly that, 'in the jungle it is usually, the unexpected that occurs."

"Well, there was nothing for it, so off I trekked and did that eight miles in record time, arriving back again so beat that I could scarcely stand.

The situation on my arrival was unchanged, so getting a cinch on the dead bear again with the saplings, the natives started slowly dragging her inch by inch to the cave's mouth whilst I awaited developments with my piece at the ready.

where it was overwhelmed by a huge impi from Ulundi.

This impi was able to get up while Bullet's men were engaged with local Zulus on the mountain summit. Very cleverly did these Illobane warriors retire into the background; then, when Buller's force saw the great impi approaching and endeavored to retreat, adance upon the British. One must see Hloane to realize how marvelous it was that any f our men left the hill alive!

On our left as we passed over a rise was he South Lancashire Hill (the Zunguin of the Zulu War), held by our soldiers during the late Boer War. Often attacked, and in one fierce struggle nearly lost-never quite.

But our minds were turned to a lesser form sport than war, and the South Lancashire ill received little attention. The only animal ife that I ever remember seeing upon its leights being dassies (the coney of the Bible), and one cannot classify coneys as game-even the nimble little beasts would allow themelves to be approached near enough for a

We hoped for a duck, or by good fortune a race of partridges. Much of a bag we could not expect, but it would be hard to return mpty-handed. We had no intention of a blank lav if it could be avoided.

We had two dogs, Bruce, an Irish setter, well-trained reliable animal, and Jerrythe latter, an Irish terrier, possessed of no knowledge of work with guns; but as nothing would have persuaded him to remain at home we did not waste words, accepting his presence with resignation. He was keen as dog ould be, only lacking experience.

The vlei-our destination-was a stretch of ced-grown marsh and open pools, which ran ight across our road. From one end to the ther it was a mile or more in length, but only 300 yards or so in breadth. Our road wound brough the strip of low land by its driest belt, which was not quite the middle but somewhere near it.

We tried to the right of the road first, making our way along the edge of the reeds. Very cautiously did we move among the bush and coarse grass, the dogs keeping close in to heel. Owing to it's being the dry season we could set about the swamp easily; of course we were wet up to our knees at once, but that was noth-

I believe that it was a partridge that we ancied we had seen and were trying to findcannot quite remember. Anyhow our first bject was forgotten completely when we iewed on a beautiful, open reach of waterduck, resting as peacefully and happily as hough no greedy sportsman was hankering after their plump little bodies.

A pretty sight they made-three brace at least-the blue sky above reflected upon the water around them. The shallow pool enclosed by waving reeds, green still, although +

I do not think that the woman was much surprised at the sight of me taking a siesta on the veldt. She murmured "Sa bona, Inkosikaas" ("Good-day," or literally, "I see you lady"), then passed on.

Doubtless she added my novel method of enjoying a morning's shooting to her kraal's stock of learning in white ways. T---- was only a few hundred yards away, and from occasional reports the woman must have known the object of our invasion of the vlei's peace. One often wonders what natives do really

think of us-raw natives who have never lived in 'towns among white people. They smile and show their snowy teeth, laugh gaily if noticed, but I believe firmly that most consider the ruling race quite mad, harmless-or harmful, as the case may be-lunatics.

I was left quiet for another pleasant interval, broken by rustling, snuffling noises among the reeds and tambooki grass. Out bounded -alas! for my dramatic instinct-not a lion; there were no lions within sixty miles-but

Jerry. The dog was tired of splashing about after birds in a nasty marsh; his idea of sport was turning out a good English rabbit. He had deserted my brother-in-law to come in search of me, leaving the vlei to those who liked such a wet spot.

I fear that Jerry's absence was not mourned; indeed, was regarded as likely to improve the chances of filling our bag.

And the terrier appreciated my warm couch as much as I did, drying himself in the sun's heat as I had done previously. We were excellent company till T- appeared. My brother-in-law had again been much puzzled as to what had become of me, until Bruce found out where Jerry and I were hidden. A brace of birds had been added to the bag, and we were content with our morning's sport. T-had shot big game (three lions had fallen to his gun), but if there is nothing big to shoot one must just make the best of glean-

ings. We were both quite satisfied with our fun, and took our spoils home for the pot in triumph. It had not been considered necessary

I therefore contented myself with scouting round, and having satisfied myself that there were no caves or neighboring rocks in which

As the corpse reached the mouth of the cavern a black hairy form, with a loud growl. lurched itself from out of the darkness and seemingly clutched at the retreating corpse of the big bear. Bang!

The natives had all run away, but when the dust and sand which had been kicked up had cleared off, there were two corpses instead of one at the cave's mouth.

Out into the daylight willing hands dragged the bodies, and having constructed three brushwood biers, a procession was formed and a start made for camp. Numerous other natives joined us during the return journey, springing apparently almost from nowhere, and by the time camp appeared in the distance the procession was of formidable dimensions, and that night the mud-walled village was, I fear, painted red, the result of bear's meat and "baksheesh."

And so ended a very amusing morning's shikar, more especially as it was quite unexpected.

Besides affording sport, it taught me a lesson I shall not forget in a hurry.

Never so long as I live shall I again start out from camp with an inadequate supply of ammunition! • ULYSSES.

## NOVEMBER WOODLANDS,

Now cold and drear the lonely woodlands lie, For Autumn's ruddy fires no longer flare, And ghostly gleam the birch-trees white and bare

Beneath the fading blue November sky. The budding grouse upon the poplars high Sweet sustenance and sanctuary share, For over is the cruel month of fear, And quiet reigns-save in the covert nigh A noisy squirrel scolds incessantly, And there beside the rocky leaf-clogged brook The chick-a-dee's shrill winter-warning strains Sound mournful mingling with its mirthless glee;

And all forlorn the lakes and rivers look, For Autumn's end is near, and daylight wanes. -George E. Longard, in Rod and Gun.

A farmer residing near Kingston, Ont., discovered a deer weighing one hundred and fifty pounds caught by the horns on the wire fence of one of his fields. Investigation showed that the deer had been kicked to death by horses pasturing in the field. A ......

A large bird, supposed to be an eagle, was shot by a farmer in Ontario. The bird measured seven feet one inch from tip to tip, and was shot while carrying off a goose. The beak of the bird shot was found to be more like that of a falcon, a still rarer bird in the neighborhood