

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

BUCK AGER

A jumble of jumps and pants and shakes is the general form buck ager takes. But the liveliest sample ever I saw occurred to a feller named Hank McGraw.

We're on Black Mountain and Hank's plumb new, Out of his office a week or two; Wayup gun with a dress-suit look And huntin' learned from a story book.

Target shootin' he'd do right well, pore the bulleye and ring the bell; But a galopin' buck is a different thing. A plumb hard bell for a vet to ring.

I left him stalkin' a heavy track, Then I circled and doubled back, Started a buster out of the brush Down his way with a lightnin' rush.

And of all the dancin' ever I saw The best was the jig of Hank McGraw, Frantically watchin' the critter run And pumpin' cartridges out of his gun.

Pumpin' 'em out—jest went, stark mad— Chuckin out every blast he had. The buck went clatterin' over a hill With Hank cavortin' and pumpin' still.

"Why Hank," says I, "you blunderin' oot, Why in thunder didn't you shoot?" Wasn't I shootin'?' he asked me wild— And I reckon he thought he was, poor child. —Outdoor Life.

CROCODILE SHOOTING ON THE INCOMATI RIVER

Having to make a trip up the Incomati river, we determined to make an onslaught on the crocodiles that infest that great waterway. We left Durban on Aug. 11 by steamship Feldmarschall, arriving at Delagoa Bay on Aug. 13. There we called on the Governor-General, who knew of our mission, and courteously afforded every assistance, giving us passages by government launch to Maraqueene.

After four days exasperating delay, we obtained our guns from the customs officer, and left by the launch at 2:30 on Aug. 18, arriving at Maraqueene at 6:30, and getting our first taste of Incomati mosquitoes, who attacked us vigorously immediately the sun went down. The commandant gave us an excellent dinner and mosquito-proof bedroom, and then informed us that we could have another government launch to leave at 5 o'clock the following morning. We left at 5:30 and found it very cold on the river, with heavy mists. Nothing could be seen for some hours. Abdullah, our Mohammedan cook, prepared an excellent breakfast about 8 o'clock, and the sun by that time having dispersed the mists, we were beginning to see various kinds of birds, including a flock of pelicans, which swam within 30 yards of the launch, cormorants, giant kingfishers, white herons, fish eagles, numbers of masked ducks, and an occasional brace or two of spur-winged plovers flying across the river. The current was running too swiftly for the launch to stop and pick up anything we shot, so we refrained from killing anything that we could not recover.

We arrived at Manhiça, where there is an interesting old fort and comfortable quarters for the officers. We were cordially received by the commandant, who made us very comfortable, gave us an excellent dinner, and some special wine from his father's own vineyard in Portugal. We left in the steam launch at 6 o'clock in the morning. The same heavy mists and piercing cold. After breakfast on the launch the sun came out, and then it was difficult to keep cool. All superfluous clothing was discarded, and we loaded our rifles and guns in anticipation of sport. The first blood was drawn from a crocodile about eight feet long on his way down into the river. A shot from the 450 promptly finished his career, and with the discharge of the first shot numbers of the largest crocodiles slid off the banks in every direction into the river. It was quite impossible to get a shot at any of them owing to the sharp turns in the river and the difficulty of getting a sight. The whole river was alive with birds of every description; incredible numbers of masked ducks flew at a moderate height over the launch, and their whistling could be heard often for minutes before they appeared. Large spur-winged geese sailed over us in flocks of 12 and 15 at a time. The current still running swiftly, we decided to turn our attention entirely to crocodiles, and save the birds until we could land at our destination. After luncheon, about 12:30, when the sun was blazing down, the river widened somewhat, and occasional sandbanks were visible at the sides of the river, and then the fun began. Crocodiles of an astonishing size were lying high up on the banks on the left side, and it was difficult to get a shot at anything under 100 to 150 yards, but we had a beauty of nearly 20 feet in length, which I shot at 150 yards which gave the most satisfaction to all on board. Shot after shot told its tale, and we think we are quite within the mark when we say that at least eight huge crocodiles, from 15 feet to

20 feet, were accounted for in two hours after luncheon. The river began to get shallow, and we were hindered in our progress by the launch taking the ground. We had excellent sport with the 12-bore and No. 4 shot at small crocodiles between 3 ft. and 4 ft. long that were resting under the bank or slipping into the water. Occasionally it was possible to get a right and left at these small brutes. It is astonishing how quickly they were bowled. Iguanas also of a remarkable size were occasionally visible, but only one or two were bagged. We shot one about 5 feet long resting on a tree overhanging the river, and down he came like a sack of mealies. One we saw, but we passed too quickly to shoot, was fully 6 feet long, and could only be distinguished from a crocodile by his more shapely head and less vicious appearance.

We arrived at our destination after 14 hours steaming to the site of the camp, which had been selected on the banks of the river at Chinavan; but we had to charter one of the native sailing boats to take us ashore from the launch, the river being too shallow at that spot to land us. A mosquito-proof tent was soon pitched and a fire going. We were unable to sit down to dinner owing to the clouds of mosquitoes, and had to walk about with food in one hand and a towel in the other beating the wretches off until we had eaten. The tent we had is an excellent invention of some African traveler, who certainly has designed a most comfortable sleeping place that defies the entrance of mosquitoes. The only disadvantage is that at night, when the light in one's tent is lit, millions of mosquitoes hum round outside the mosquito net, and they are somewhat disturbing, as one feels that a good number of them are inside the tent ready to feed.

The next morning we made an early start on two mules that had been kindly provided for us by the commandant of the district, but, riding round, we found the grass far too high to do any shooting. Within a few yards of our camp in the thick grass we discovered the grave of three Portuguese soldiers, who had been killed in an action on that spot when engaged in the Gungunyana war. There is a pathetic looking cross and a small railing, but the whole place is so overgrown that it would never be found unless one stumbled over it by accident, as we did. We afterwards heard that the bodies had been removed at a later date, and taken to Lisbon for reinterment. The natives in the neighborhood are apparently very willing workers, and a most happy and contented-looking race. Both men and women are magnificently built, and an extraordinary number of old men are to be found in the kraals. These old men are very interesting. We learnt a good deal of the history of the country, and the experiences of the natives during the past few years. One venerable old gentleman wore a crocodile's tooth round his neck that was fully 4 in. long, and he informed us that he forced it out of the head of an old crocodile that had apparently died of old age on the banks of the river near his kraal. From his description it was 30 ft. long, with a body as big as a bullock, and we thought the old gentleman was not exaggerating when the size of the tooth was considered.

An early start next morning with the sun well up took us a heavy tramp through thick grass to a lake about four miles distant from the river bank, very much overgrown at the edges and extremely difficult to approach. The lake is apparently five or six miles long, and probably very deep in the centre. Our Kafir shikaris told us that several hippopotami lived there permanently, but none made their appearance. After a little reconnoitering we waded knee deep, and occasionally up to our waists, through the reeds and water weed in the hope of putting up duck and geese. Water rails, dabchicks, kingfishers, large and small cormorants, and white herons, rose in large numbers from every point of the lake on our approach, and 15 or 20 pelicans swam out from the edge of the lake towards the centre. After a terrific struggle for about 500 yards further on we flushed nearly 50 of these beautiful birds, and managed to get a right and left, an easy shot which the Kafirs had no difficulty in retrieving. Despite the firing, the birds circled round at various points, and then several flocks of geese passed over us too far to fire a telling shot. Huge barbel scuttled away in front of us, and we discovered two night lines that had been made fast by the natives, for which something evidently was attached, for on heading them up we discovered on each line an enormous barbel, the two together weighing something like 40 lb. Our natives eagerly seized these, and marched them off to the pot, slimy, evil-smelling things that they were. The sun was uncomfortably hot, and we were in rather dangerous quarters if there were any crocodiles about. We left the lake tramped back to camp, and, as there remained about two hours before sundown, we exploited a marshy lake within two miles of camp, and although we had seen flights of duck and geese in Scotland and in Madagascar, we have never seen anything like the variety of waterfowl that was on this small lake as the sun was setting. A brace of teal, a tree duck, and a large spur-winged goose rewarded us for a tiring tramp through mud and reeds that soon exhaust the strongest and most determined sportsman, added to which the

clouds of mosquitoes entirely prevented us from hiding in the reeds when the flight of ducks and geese began. It was quite impossible to bend down below the tops of the reeds on account of these pests. So interested were they in a white man's blood that we had no difficulty in killing half a dozen at each smack, and repeating it again and again. We counted about 80 geese in two flights. If we had been able to hide there would have been no difficulty in making an enormous bag. That delightful little bird, the Madagascar goose, was there, as usual, in parties of six or seven, and circled over us several times—a very easy prey if one desired to shoot them—and, although they are excellent little birds for the pot, we had already a sufficiently well-stocked larder, and so made no attempt to shoot. A line of heavy trees on one side of the lake afforded roosting ground for any numbers of all kinds of aquatic birds, the greater number being tree ducks.

During the tramp back to the camp in comparative darkness we put up a brace of francolin. We could just discern that their legs were red and that they were the so-called bush pheasant. A subsequent search in the morning in the neighborhood failed to discover them, and we are inclined to think that they were a brace of birds which had got out of their latitude, for inquiries from the natives failed to elicit any knowledge of francolin in their district. We reached camp in time for a very excellent dinner prepared by our Mohammedan cook.

Next morning we broke camp and descended the river to meet with much finer sport in the way of crocodiles. On the next trip we are determined to take a telephoto camera to ensure a photograph of some of these gigantic monsters which inhabit the Incomati. One enormous brute on the bank of the river, which we shot at and fervently hope we killed, appeared to us considerably over 20 feet long, and certainly had a body 3 feet, 6 inches high, and we verified this measurement by landing at the spot and endeavoring from the beaten-down grass on which he was lying to estimate his length. A careful shot at 120 yards brought him floundering off the bank, breaking down in his progress some tons of soil, and, with his fearful jaws open and evidently in his death agonies, he disappeared under the swift-flowing current.

We slept at Manhiça, where we were most heartily welcomed by our friend, the commandant, who again showered the greatest hospitality upon us. One cannot speak too highly of the extraordinary hospitality of the Portuguese commandants and their staffs. An early start in the morning and a run of six hours brought us down to Maraqueene, where the larger launch was waiting to complete the voyage to Delagoa Bay. A few hippos disported themselves in the river as we passed but as these monstrous creatures are a somewhat inglorious quarry and easily fall victims to a 450, although we had a permit to shoot, we decided not to molest them.—C. G. S., in Field.

THUNDER

It seems to be a fairly general opinion that it is useless fishing for trout when, as my old friend Tom Sparry says: "What time he tries to soften a blank evening on his water; "there is thunder about," or, as the "Green Bank" puts it,

If you have thunder then is fishing o'er; Put up your rod nor take a cast once more.

Yet a small minority will tell you that it thunder lightning are doing their level best right overhead, trout simply go mad, and you can rise and catch them just hand over fist. For myself, I confess that I never had the temerity—not to call it by a harder name—to fish under such dangerous conditions. Let me, however, record my experiences on two separate thundery days last year. June 7 found me with others on a well-stocked length of a chalk stream. The morning opened fine, with a very slight northeast wind, but at half-past ten thunder could be heard in the distance towards the south, and it gradually approached, till at midday it was quite close, and a heavy shower of rain ensued. After lunch the weather was very sunny and sultry, with thunder rumbling a good way off, and about 6 o'clock it began to travel nearer and nearer, till at 7:40 forked lightning almost overhead drove me to safer quarters in the inn, which was fortunately only 200 yards away. Then followed before sunset a darkness as of midnight, and a regular deluge of rain, accompanied by the heaviest succession of thunderstorms I ever remember, and, though the rain ceased at 11, the lightning was still most vivid when I went to bed half an hour later. There was a good hatch of fly that day, chiefly alders, with many Mayflies and grey drakes, and at times fish rose well at the natural flies; but the result of our united efforts was a leash of fish, got by a perfect master of dry fly arts, before the thunder began at 10:30. We others offered choice assortments of various flies in vain.

The next occasion was June 12, when I fished a stretch of a Midland stream, and myself, I had some miles to go before my destination, so could not begin fishing till 10:30. The morning was dull, with a scarcely felt

southwest wind, which afterwards changed to northeast. Finding that the mill was working, I began about 600 yards below it, at the bottom of my stretch, but had only fished a little way up when the mill stopped, and the water in the brook fell to a trickle; so, knowing from experience that it would be long before any came down that part again, I walked up to the top of the mill dam, now almost empty, and put on a red palmer, as there was just a suspicion of stain in the water. Here, as I rose and missed a fish lying on a shallow rain began, so I rested the fish while I put on a mackintosh cape. The next throw left my cast tied up in frightful complications, and it took me some time to disentangle it during the steady downpour that followed, which ceased as I got things straight again. Just above a circular pool yielded a good fish from the far side, where a slowish stream pursued its way. It was now that I heard the first far-off thunder. About 50 yards beyond this I killed a fish from a shallow below a bridge. From here the water was too overgrown for me to get a fly on to it, so I changed to minnow, but only ran one fish. Higher up the brook was not quite so wooded, and, seeing a fish rise in a stream, I resumed with red palmer, rose and missed the fish, but got another from the same stream. Above this several fish rose on a shallow varying from 3 in. to 6 in. in depth at a pool foot, and by dint of much creeping and crawling I hooked a lovely fish, only to lose him after a rare fight owing to the hold giving way, and the other fish, frightened by his struggles, bolted into the deep.

It was now 2 p. m. and the thunder was getting closer, so I missed a lot of water, and lunched on a footbridge, much tormented by woodflies. After lunch a shallow below a long pool produced a fish, and only just in time (for I had lost my waterproof) I got shelter at a cottage, as steady rain, which lasted for an hour, began. All this time the thunder was heavy, but was never nearer than two miles. When the thunder had moved off and rain abated, I successfully hunted my lost waterproof and began fishing again in a much-bushed part, where I hooked on a minnow and lost a good fish, and then changed to fly, with which I got three fish from stickles and a brace from a long flat above. As I fished up this the sky became blacker and blacker, and when the storm broke, fortunately unaccompanied by thunder, all I could do was to stand still in the brook, as it was impossible to drive the cast through the sheets of rain. When the rain stopped I fished up to the boundary without doing any more. The water was now more stained though not thick and I hurried down to the part missed before lunch and fished part of that, but got no more takable fish. My left wader had leaked for some time, and the shoulders and sleeves of my coat were wet through in spite of the cape, so as I felt utterly miserable I stopped fishing at 8:15.

In addition to the fish mentioned, I caught and returned two brace of undersized trout, getting all my fish on fly. Fish rose well all day, though many came short, and some good fish, being only slightly hooked, got away on the point of being netted. There were a few belated Mayflies and a grey drake or two out, together with many Spanish needles, some duns, and other flies. I altogether fail to see why on the first of these days I should not have killed a single fish (which certainly confirmed the general opinion), whereas the second day favored the other side of the question by giving me the best dish of trout I caught in the worst season I have known since 1902. The conclusion I draw is that neither view of the case is the right one, and for the future I shall "in proverb take no stock."—Broughton Point.

THIS TROUT KNEW FRIDAY

A local fisherman and a "city feller" came back to the hotel towards dusk one Thursday with a fair haul. We gathered around to see the catch, and heard this conversation:

Local fisherman: "Well, I'm satisfied, we did well."

City fellow: "Sure, but it is too bad that big trout with the hook and line in his right eye broke my line and got away after all."

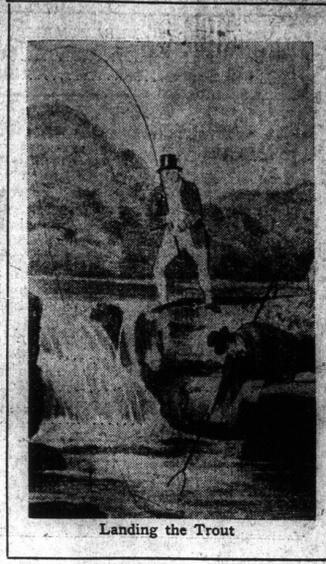
Local fisherman: "Say, I know that trout well and just where he hides on Friday. He knows the great fish-eating day, all right. We'll catch him tomorrow—that's Friday—and we will have him for dinner."

Audience: "Yarn!" "Fake!" "Come off!" "They'll get stung!" and words of similar import.

Next day the pair again went away to fish, but in a different direction, up the lake. They came back late in the afternoon, and the city fellow produced a big trout, a hook embedded in his right eye, and about a yard of line attached. "By thunder!" quoth he, "you were right, all right. I caught him just where you said he would be. Here's the dollar I lost betting we would never see him again."—Alfred Lapierre in Outdoor Life.

TRAP SHOOTING AS AN AID TO GAME SHOOTING

A subject of much comment among sportsmen is the fact that there is not a greater interest in trap shooting in this country. When



Landing the Trout

Sportsman's Calendar

JULY

Trout, Salmon, Grilse, Bass, Char.

One of the two best months for sea-trout fishing in the estuaries and inlets.

one considers that a good shooting gun can be purchased at from \$25 to \$50, and that for an expenditure of a couple of dollars in shells and targets one can have a rare and exciting bit of sport on an afternoon, we ourselves cannot help marveling at the comparatively few who engage in this exhilarating fun. It is true the gun clubs of the country are holding their shoots, and it is also true that those who engage in the sport are even more enthusiastic over it than ever (it's a form of sport that grows on one); yet what we wish to emphasize is the fact that where there are now dozens of adherents there should be hundreds.

There is no more healthful exercise on earth than trap shooting. It gives quickness to the eye and the muscle, adds elasticity to the carriage and grace to the movements, and assists the game hunter in his work in the field. Those who are about to participate in a big game hunt could do nothing better than take a course at trap shooting, even although they would use a shotgun at one and a rifle at the other form of sport. The shotgun shooting will help one in the rifle work, especially if he be even an advanced tyro at the shooting game. It is the quickness with which a man can get a bead on his game that is desired in game hunting, and through the lack of which essential more hunters lose their game than through any other thing.—Outdoor Life.

THE TRAIL

Where the roads of men are ended, where stands the last crude shack, Where the mountains raise their barriers and the tenderfoot turns back; Where there's nought ahead but Nature, and there's no such word as fail, Where the well-worn ways are ended—tis here that begins the trail.

For a thousand miles it may wind its way, through forest, muskeg, mire, Now crawling along the mountain sides, now deep in the woods that sire The silence that's spread like a blanket o'er the valley that's stretched below, The peaks and crests of the Rockies with perpetual mantles of snow.

And now it's strong and its way is plain, where the deer and the moose have made Their path to some pool of water that lies like a gem in the shade. Of the forest that murmurs above it, the song of centuries old; The lament of the winds in the tree tops that's always, yet never been told.

At times it grows feeble and slender and its life seems to fade and die out On the banks of some turbulent torrent that's boiling and roaring about The rocks that lie black and forbidding in their watery shrouds of spray; But beyond where the ground is softer, the trail again takes its way.

And often it creeps over passes, where it's lost in the deeps of the snow; But again the searcher will find it and he seek in the valley below, Where springs the rich green of live timber and ferns and the soft mossy earth the fresh chance of impression, and again the trail takes its birth.

And the man of the trail is the man of the wild, a creature unrecking and bold. The trappers of fur, the hunters of game, or, perchance, the searchers of gold Are the men who have starved and suffered, in the wilderness hewing a way, And the trail they trod but yesterday is an empire's path today. —Stanley Washburn, in Outdoor Life.

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