

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

THE UNSUCCESSFUL ANGLER

Many of my happiest hours have been passed in fishing, but few of them in catching fish. Like the pirate flag of Huck Finn the Red-Handed, my hook has been unsouled by blood as a general rule. Nobody has so often "come home clean," as we say in Scotland. Last year I returned almost every victim of my skill or luck to the water, though I captured one of them in a manner not lacking in dexterity. He lay in a run of water about a foot wide, bordered by heavy woods, and it was necessary to float the fly down to him from above. But I returned him to life and liberty; also, later, a number of small sea trout in a summer-shrunken pool in Glencoe. They rose wildly in the gloaming, and had no great reason to regret their temerity. It is long since I was in touch with a salmon, which I hooked in the Ave with a small trout fly on a frayed old cast that had been used through the summer for brown trout. After running about in a praiseworthy way he jumped high out of water; the cast broke, and I saw him no more. Once the circumstance would have been disappointing, but my heart did not break with my cast; in fact, even in youth I fished for sport and not for victory. Still, I do like to raise a trout or salmon and again, and would like to have another day on the Kennet with the Mayfly when the large fish are greedy and roll about like the "sea-shouldering whale" of the poet.

As a very small boy I was taken to fish in the Yarrow with worm. The gardener baited the hook. I lifted out the line, and with it a small trout, which fell in again. Supposing that I had some legal right of recovery, but not knowing how to exercise, I walked up stream and consulted the gardener, but learned that there was no remedy. I have been with a grown-up man whose first salmon deserted him, and he, turning round, said with extreme innocence, "What am I to do now?"

Somebody—an Irish novelist, I think—once circulated the story that he had stayed somewhere in rooms which I had occupied, and had asked the landlady if I were a good fisher. She replied, "A beautiful fisher." "Does he catch anything?" "Oh, no, he never catches anything."

I could only take her first remark as a tribute to my personal charms, but her second was true enough. At that time I had only so much as heard that there was such a thing as dry-fly fishing, and was enamored of it, but did not understand the rules of the game. I have an unconquerable dislike to the trouble of carrying a landing net; we did not use them in Tweed and Ail and Ettrick when I was a boy. However, I had bought a landing net, one of the sort that shuts up with a joint, and I pushed the handle through the top button-hole of my coat and let the net hang down. Having cast over a nice trout and hooked him, I tried to release the handle of the net; but it would not come out of the buttonhole, and I had to stoop over the stream and try to ladle the fish into the net, but in this I was baffled. Since then I have fore sworn landing nets, and if I do hook a trout or a sea trout that cannot or will not make his escape I have to capture him with my hands. I have no further use for him; he has played his part, and is very welcome to wriggle away. In the same humane spirit, if I hook a salmon the fun is over then, with the pleasant electric thrill of the first resistance on the line, and, for me, anyone is welcome to play him if anyone is in my company; but I admit that if I am alone I do my best to bring the fish acquainted with dry land, in the absence of gaff or landing net.

On analyzing this particular inconsistency I find that a desire, common to mankind, to be believed in our most improbable assertions is my motive. If people do not actually see the fish they will not accept the story that I hooked and lost him; they obey the law of association of ideas. They are accustomed to see me associated with a fishing rod, but not with fish, so they cannot believe in my connection with a fish whose very existence depends on my unsupported testimony, like a ghost's. They think of one salmon, where I am concerned, as the natives of Galilee may have regarded the miraculous draught of fishes.

With this incredulity I have inspired even total strangers ever since an early age. Coming home from a schoolboy holiday on the Sound of Mull, my little brother and I happened to have sea trout flies sticking in our caps. A native of Renfrewshire, obviously a just and sober-minded Free Kirk man, met us in the railway carriage, and asked us what size trout, if any, we had taken. I told him (they ran from 1lb. to 3 1/2 lb.), and he very solemnly preached me a sermon about the iniquity of bearing false witness. The most unkind question that man, woman, or child can ask is, "What have you caught?" One has almost never caught anything, and the questioners know it and grin. There is a great deal of disinterested malice in the human heart.

Were I to explain my inordinate lack of success as an angler I might begin by pleading infirmities of Nature. A very short-sighted person cannot spot the trout among the waving weeds and shadows of a chalk stream. There is no assistance in remarks like, "He is on the left hand of the long weed opposite the tuft of grass," for the bank consists of tufts

of grass, and the bed of the stream is variegated by many long weeds. If I see the trout rise and know where he is, then lack of practice and natural dexterity makes it hard for me to get the fly to him; moreover, I cannot see the fly as other people do, and have to wait for the ripple of the rise. What surprises me is that in the circumstances I so often succeed in getting a rise out of the trout; but then, my personal equation being of the slowest, I fail to touch him, or if I do it is with a vigor that turns him over in the water, and perhaps breaks the gut. Yet, with all these drawbacks trout fishing is more amusing than sea trout fishing in a loch with a breeze, for, though nobody can well avoid getting fish in these agreeable conditions, there is no skill in it, and a surprising amount of luck. Of two men using the same flies with equal skill in a boat on a Highland loch, one will get

Frazer found that the people are still of that opinion. They are very fine trout, and "are caught in nets or shot with dynamite bullets." Poetic Arcadians!—Andrew Lang in Field.

THE ANGLER'S APOLOGY

Mr. F. G. Allaloe discourses thus delightfully and candidly in Baily's, seeking a justification for the "gentle sport," and finding what is undoubtedly the real one, not only in his own case, but in that of all of us who are honest with our consciences. Apology comes easier to some natures than to others. Politicians fight shy of it. Charles I., I think it was, counselled his ministers never to apologize before someone accused them; and more recently we have had a Prime Minister cite French to his purpose and refuse to explain lest he should "complicate" himself. When,

fishing, perhaps the finest form of sport with rod and line. In the second, he who fishes merely in order to provide his breakfast or dinner is wilfully extravagant, for he could buy better fish at a fraction of the cost of his day's outing. The last and most plausible apology for angling that one reads of is that it takes a man close to Nature. But he would be quite as close to Nature if he wandered beside the singing river with no rod in his hand. He would, indeed, have nothing else to distract his wandering attention, be still more free to watch the gleaming insects and listen to the songs of birds, to study the flight of the kingfisher, and mark the shy movements of the water-vole. No, the affinity-with-Nature plea of justification is a makeshift, though a fisherman may be perfectly sincere when he avows that the sights and sounds of a trout stream in June are no small part of his pleasure, and that he does not measure his enjoyment merely by the weight or number of his fish.

It would seem, then, that I have not yet found an angler's apology which commands my respect, and so much I confess. The contemplative man's recreation brings joy to one man and boredom to another. It is its own justification. Why do I fish? I know not, save that in fishing I find keen delight that no other form of work or sport brings me. There are people who are always striving, even unasked, to furnish some excuse for everything they do. These folks have no courage. They attach too much importance to what others will think or say. I am always reminded of the old man in the bar. He had been standing lost in thought before an empty glass, when two young fellows came in and asked successively for liquor. Said the first: "Give me a brandy and soda, Miss. I—I've just had bad news from home."

Whereon the second, not to be outdone, proffered his request: "And whisky neat for me, Miss. I've a bad pain in my heart."

This was too much for the veteran, who, rapping loudly on the counter, said in a voice that all could hear: "And give me another go of gin, Miss—because I like it!"

That is my answer when asked why I fish—because I like it.—F. G. Allaloe.

SHOOTING CAPERCAILLIE IN PERTH-SHIRE

For many years I shot over a district in Perthshire where fir woods abounded, and where capercaillie bred in considerable numbers, yet these birds would rarely be seen except when the woods were driven with the guns posted ahead in likely positions. In walking in line through the woods the quick hearing of the birds soon detected our approach, and they broke out from the high tops of the spruce long before a shot was possible.

I have never seen a big bag of capercaillie obtained in a day's sport, ten or twelve being perhaps the most, but whether one bird was got or thirty, the knowledge that such birds existed, and that a chance shot was possible, added very greatly to the zest of a day's sport, and for this reason these birds should, in my opinion, be fostered and encouraged just as much as blackgame. Capercaillie are polygamous, so it is of first importance that the hens be spared if the species is to be increased. Unfortunately, the hens, as with pheasants and blackgame, offer the easiest chances, and do not seem to be so wary as the cocks.

A healthy succession of young fir woods is sure to draw capercaillie, and, although the forester may object to a certain amount of damage to the fir trees, in which the birds principally feed in winter, the damage is not serious enough to weigh against the advantage of possessing such a fine species of game on the estate. Personally, I have never come across any serious damage, though the woods known to me were in many cases strips and detached clumps, where such damage might have been more easily noticed.

There was one celebrated wood that comes strongly back to my memory, where capers were always to be found, and where a fair bag was a certainty, owing to rides and the general configuration. This wood was of Scotch and spruce firs, some seventy or eighty years old, with plantations of younger trees at either end. It extended for some three miles dividing the cultivated land from a grouse moor. Broad rides crossed the strip (which was, perhaps, 200 yards wide) every half mile or so.

The party of four or five guns, prepared for a rough wild shoot and a mixed bag, would walk up to this high wood, taking the small cultivated fields, the patches of turnips, and the rough hairy grass fields in a wide line, tacking from side to side as seemed advisable, to take in the most likely ground.

And what a fine variety we generally obtained on those bright, crisp, sunny days in November! A pheasant or two out of the patch of broom covering the gravelly knoll above the small ravine, with the highland stream of brown water rushing below; or a duck, a teal, and plenty of snipe in the long narrow patches of rushy marsh land lying here and there amongst the poor, thin, high-lying fields. Hares broke out of these marshes to right and left, and rabbits were, perhaps, too numerous (from a farmer's point of view) in the patches of whins grazed and rounded by the sheep. A brace of grouse or so would offer a shot as they skimmed up the hill, back to their native moorland, or a covey of part-



A GOOD DAY IN MUSKOKA, ONT. —Red and Gun. Members of the Blue Hawke Club carrying the results of a day's hunt to camp

plenty of large trout, the other will scarcely get a rise.

The dweller in town in summer can scarcely expect sport in the three or four days when he has a chance at a river. The wind is sure to be down stream; there is sure to be no rise of flies. The miller turns the water off; the neighbors above are cutting weeds. To get trout a man must live on the waterside and mark and seize the rare moments when the trout are "in a coming-on humor." The real pleasure, as a writer of about 1500 says, is in the waterside itself, the running stream, the flowers, the birds, the air, the quiet, the ancient cottages, and the great oaken beams of the foot bridges that were not new, perhaps, in Elizabeth's time. We step out of our own times into the old merry England, Shakespeare's England, the England of the Blessed Restoration. Remarks like these on the angler's pleasure in nature, even if his creel be empty, I read a few days ago in Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." They seemed familiar, and in fact Burton cribbed them without acknowledgment from the book usually attributed to Dame Juliana Berners; and I rather think that Walton appropriated them in the same easy way.

There are still some pretty encounters on the waterside. I once, wearing waders, met two innocent little girls who could not cross a stream. I carried them over, and gave to one my solitary trout; to the other a small coin. When I came back later there were the little maids waiting with great nosegays of wild flowers for me. On the whole the unsuccessful angler is happiest when he is looking on, watching the skill or deriving a perverse consolation from the failures of some more accomplished friend.

May I suggest to some more successful angler the propriety of trying his art in the Katsana river (the ancient name is the Aranos in Arcadia). Pausanias says that the trout of this river, or rather burn, sing, and in 1895 Mr.

however, a sportsman does endeavor to excuse himself, he cannot be said to do so without provocation, for that half of the community which finds no pleasure in sport is always bringing one charge or another against him, whether waste of time, cruelty, or what not. The angler has to put up with all these criticisms, and, in addition, he is usually called an idiot. Punch depicts him fishing outside a lunatic asylum, and withstanding the blandishments of an imbecile who invites him to step inside. Why? Are patience and perseverance the badges of mental disease? Is he, in short, a fool for fishing, or mere for failing to catch fish?

His apology, if he must of course be worth while offering one, should, of course, be suited to meet the specific charge brought against him, but it is often ingenious, since it is only to be expected that a man who devotes so much thought to the luring of fish should be equal to a little casuistry.

Thus, if he is accused of cruelty, he pleads that his victims are cold-blooded and unable to feel pain. Incidentally, he knows perfectly well that they do feel pain, both the fish and the worm with which he catches it, but the argument serves. The charge of cruelty is sometimes most illogically brought, as well as that of foolishness, but the two are incompatible, since the fool who catches no fish cannot well be accused of cruelty to them. Not even the most rabid humanitarian could conscientiously blame those peaceful sportsmen who line the banks of the Thames on Sunday afternoons and gently watch their painted floats that never quiver for hours together. The sea-fisherman has a further excuse to offer, which cannot be shared by him who catches roach and bream, that he can at least eat the fish he catches. With a few exceptions, such as the wrasses and dogfish, they are wholesome and appetizing food. Yet I have never thought this plea of economy a very strong one. In the first place, it has no application to tarpon



"The First of the Season"

Sportsman's Calendar

NOVEMBER

- Trout-fishing ends November 15.
- Cock Pheasant may be shot in Cowichan Electoral District only.
- Grouse (except willow grouse in Cowichan), Quail, Ducks, Deer, Geese and Snipe-shooting open.

ridges would whirr up out of the red bracken, and break high over the extended line to reach their habitat in the cultivated fields lying far below.

The guns were never idle and never bored on these rough upland shoots, more especially with the prospects of capercaillie ahead. The walking was firm and springy, the air on a bright sunny day seemed the finest in the world, a feeling of exhilaration was felt as one rose higher and higher, or from time to time gazed back at the panorama of richly wooded and cultivated country lying in a haze of purple and blues, with perhaps a pair of some steep snow-capped hills in the distance; and do not such days and such surroundings in the home of the capercaillie compare favorably with the days in 40-acre flat fields of prize turnips, or the stand on a muggy day opposite the drawing-room windows near a clump of hybrid rhododendrons or pampas grass for the first rise of the day?

High spruce firs, feathered to the bottom, rise up on either side of the ride, which may be about twenty yards wide. A strip of blue sky shows overhead in this grand lofty avenue. We advance upwards over the rough black cart tracks, and pick our way amongst the wet rushes and pools of water. A grey boulder protrudes here and there from the peaty soil and the rough grass. We pass a blow down and see into the heart of the wood, with the tangled mass of fallen trunks and branches, with innumerable bare boles of fir trees dimming out in the distance like pillars in a vast crypt. As we near our stand the moorland, covered with brown ling, rises up before us, stretching for miles and miles to north, east and west, in billowy hummocks to a high rounded ridge with steep blue hills in the distance.

A troop of roe deer break out from the wood and go bounding over the moor, followed by the steady, purpose-like flight of a brace of blackcock, the white on their bodies showing clear in the bright sun. A cry of "mark" is heard, which raises expectancy to the highest pitch. The gun is grasped tight, the eyes strain upwards to the streak of sky above the fir tops. A quiet but distinct swish is heard, but a good view has been taken; the muzzle follows quickly on the line, with a backward wrench ahead the trigger is pulled, and with a feeling of joyful consciousness one listens for the heavy crash of the first capercaillie cock that follows amongst the rotten branches in the thick of the wood behind.

Drive follows drive, but the shots are not always so sporting as the one above described. Birds are very apt to break out on the flanks and offer somewhat tame shots. On one occasion I got two cocks as I was hurrying forward to a stand ahead. Passing an open space, caused by a blow down, a capercaillie swooped down from a high tree, and before he could top the trees to the right he offered an easy shot. At the same instant another one rose, and was brought down with a broken wing.

This instance is not mentioned as a typical sporting shot or one that is recalled with pride for the purpose of stilling the painful consciousness of many bad shots, but merely to state what sometimes occurs, and also to describe the strange appearance of a wounded bird which impressed me. As I approached the winged cock, which was of unusual size, he faced round and made a hissing sound, whilst his wings were partly spread and lowered. His fathers on the back of the head and neck were raised. The great hooked beak was partly opened, and the eyes flashed and twinkled with an appearance of the utmost ferocity.

An attempt was made, to my knowledge, to rear capercaillie by hand, but met with no success. One lot hatched in an incubator died in a few days. Another lot hatched under a hen lived for a fortnight, and died of gaps. The birds were fed in a similar manner to pheasants. Fresh fir branches were always present, which the young birds pecked at.—W. M. S. in Field.

Workers

the worker can be always awakened by

three generations at the old lace maker's pupils in the Amp-

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THE MOON

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nd confidently aso- is no other than the Jews stoned is on the Sabbath xv., 32-36.

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n Indians have a different quarters ew moon appears, spot and march bing up into the had time to grow

at once set to until she gradual- r; and when she scamper back to