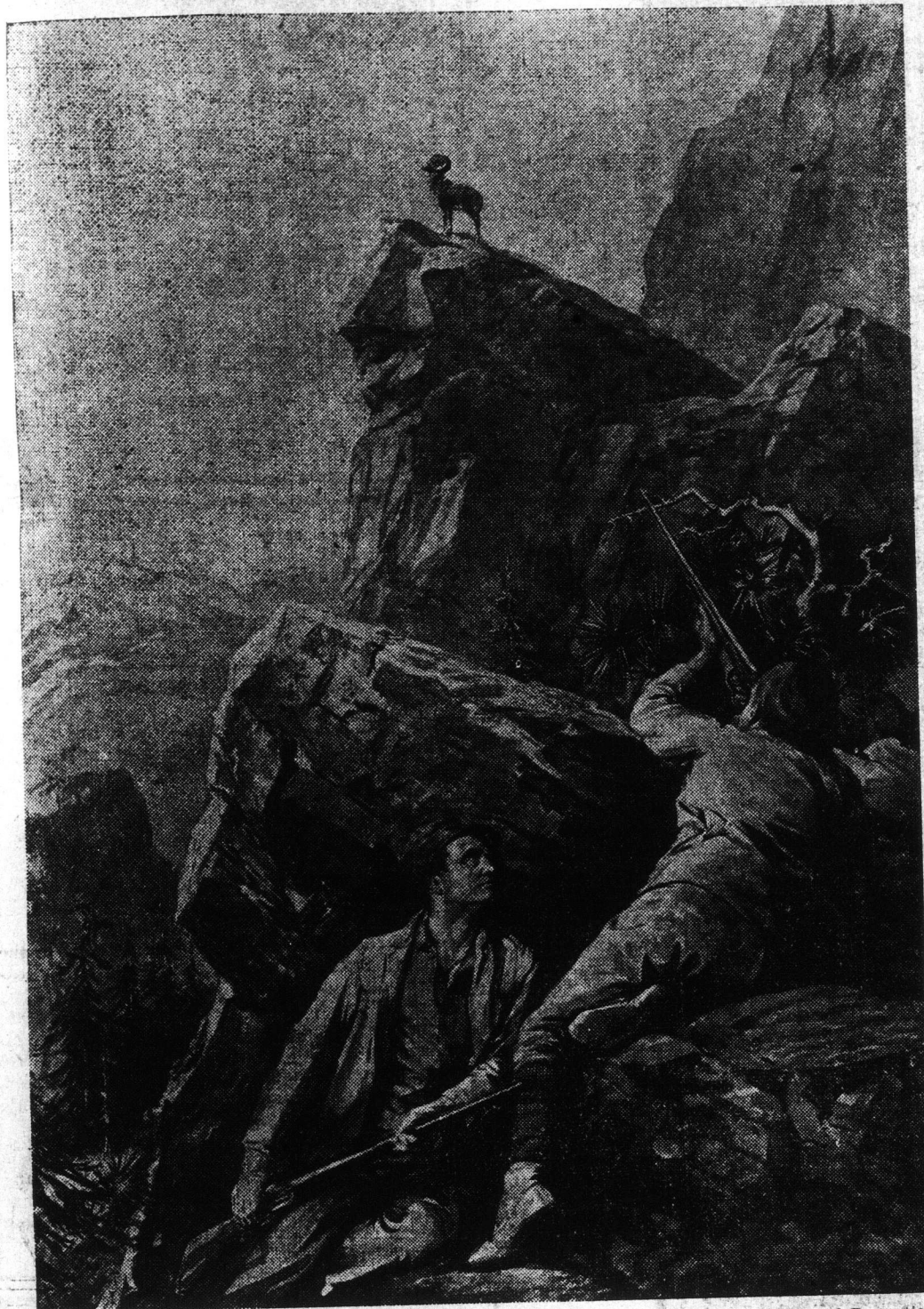


HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE



British Columbia Sport as Seen by Foreign Artists
Big Horn in the Rockies

A TRUE BEAR STORY WITH A VARIATION

(By Richard Pocock.)

Of course all bear stories are true, but the trouble is that there are so many people in the world who are lacking in imagination that they find it hard sometimes, to realize the strict regard for truth invariably shown by the narrator of such tales, and I suppose that is why nine out of ten bear stories published invariably begin with the words, "this is a true bear-story," while the tenth usually ends up with some such sentence as "the foregoing narrative is strictly true in every detail, truth is stronger than fiction."

I have a nice little pet bear story of my own which actually happened to myself in my tenderfoot days in the Kootenays, but as that story really is perfectly true, have always refused to publish it because I hate to be thought a liar when I really am telling the truth; therefore I content myself with narrating it in confidence to my friends. Occasionally the narration costs me a friend—some fellow of a doubting turn of mind and a total lack of imagination—but no matter, truth will out, which brings me to the subject of the little narrative which has for its scene of action a well-known sportsman's resort—call it Bulltiddin' Lake, B. C.

There was a certain gallant gentleman, came out from the Old Country, thirsting for the gore of all and any the wild animals abounding in the British Columbia forests, and naturally proceeded to Vancouver Island and thence to this far-famed lake known to and beloved of visiting and resident sportsmen. After a short stay he returned to Victoria with a fine bear story, which was published eagerly by the daily press, which, naturally, where bears are concerned, looks more into the merits of a story qua story than into its value as veracious history. This story read well; it was the story of an encounter with a ferocious she-bear savagely defending the safety of her cubs, and there was a good deal of circumstantial evidence in the way of sundry wounds, bruises and bandages, which not merely served to bear out the truth of the mighty hunter's account of his prowess, but helped to make him out a hero in the eyes of the fair, who admired his bravery and sympathized over his honorable scars obtained in the deadly combat. It made in short a mighty fine addition to the collection of strictly true bear stories which have from time to time been given to an unbelieving world.

Last spring I was up at the scene of action of this thrilling tale of dangerous adventure on a fishing trip, and, as a bunch of us were sitting in front of the hotel talking fish and game and vying with one another in the exchange of veracious narrative and forest lore, some one

happened to recall this same story of the bloody battle with the infuriated she bear, and then it was that the murder was out, and the variation of the story came to our ken. With a snort of indignation the narrator of the variation began. "My Yes," he said, "that was a fine story that fellow filled you newspaper men up with alright, alright that time, why the son of a gun never saw a bear in his life, let alone a scrap with one." "Yes, he had the marks to show alright, and was used up some, you bet, but not by any bear, you bet, your life. It was simple enough how it happened and the hurt he got was coming to him for his own want of common horse sense, but it was another man altogether who did the hero act, and don't you forget it. Tell you all about it?"

Why sure, if you want to hear the real true story it was this way. You see the bear-hunter was really after trout, and there was a good place down here in B's pool where a tree had fallen over the water and had formed a sort of jam with snags held up against it by the force of the current, and his nibs wanted it out of the way and thought he was man enough to cut it out, so out he goes on the log with B's crosscut and starts sawing away, standing on the further end of the log with the cut he was putting in between him and the bank. He wasn't any great shakes with a saw, but he stayed with it and was getting pretty well through it, when B. happened along and warned him that the log was liable to give with the depth of cut he had in it, and the pressure against the end which was in the water. He wasn't taking advice, though, and he stayed on the wrong side of that cut just a little too long with the result that over he went when she broke into the drink, hitting his head a good crack on the way and otherwise bustling himself up. Now that crack on the head would have finished him alright if it hadn't been for our friend B. being along at the time. Swimming in the Cowichan is no mug's game when the water's high and that's no dream, but in he went after him and brought him ashore covered with blood and pretty well used up. After that he poled him up to the lake in his boat and rowed him up to the doctor's up above here who fixed him up temporarily until he was well enough to be sent back home to Victoria. That was the way he got the marks of the she-bear, and he certainly did make a beautiful story of it, to be sure; but I tell you, sir, there is need of a deal more pluck and there is a darned sight more danger in rescuing a stunned man from that water there at that time of year than in hunting all the she-bears that were ever in the country and don't you forget it.

THE GREAT DRY FLY MYTH

It is popularly supposed that dry fly fishing is excessively difficult—difficult, I mean, beyond every other form of the art. I do not

know who is responsible for this imposture. I imagine it must be the genius or geni who first applied the words "chuck and chance it" and "fine and far off" to the wet and dry methods respectively. I cannot think that any two epithets have ever more successfully exalted one set of men at the expense of another. You would suppose that any fool can go and throw a blue upright into the Barle at Dulverton and pull it out again with a trout on it. You would imagine that no chalk-stream fish may be lured at a less distance than seventy yards. There is no especial merit in fishing with a long line. No good fisherman, wet or dry, gives a trout an inch more than is absolutely necessary. Perhaps, of the two, the wet fly man uses the longer line, and he certainly, if he means to catch fish, throws as "fine," by which I understand "light," as the wet condition of his lure will let him. But "fine and far off" remains the special property of the dry fly school, and the wet fly men continue to go about under the imputation of "chucking it and chancing it." This shows how important it is, to be first in any field, even of mutual recrimination. The arrogant dry fly school has fastened "chuck and chance it" on the other fellows for ever, and nobody pays any attention to their answering "creeping and crawling" beyond stamping it vulgar and jealous abuse.

This cheap sneer at the wet fly man has proved so successful that he himself has come to believe that it is true. He forgets that his knowledge of the trout's habits is infinitely larger than that of his self-constituted superior. He forgets that if the two of them, grant me two fishermen of a sort of hypothetical mathematically abstract character, each knowing nothing of his rival's method, are placed on the bank of an unknown fast stream, that knowledge will enable him to give the dry fly man first fishing over every pool and run, and that, after the dry fly man has laboriously and vainly flogged every inch of water, he (the wet fly man) can come along and take a brace or more in a dozen casts, placed deftly in the twelve spots where, from the condition of the water, the state of the weather, the season of the year, and a hundred other things about which the dry fly man knows nothing at all, he suspects the good fish are lying. He forgets similarly that, placed on the bank of an unknown chalk stream, he and the dry fly man are in this respect reduced to an equality, that a rise breaking the surface of the water speaks to both of them with the same sound, and that a fish lying in mid-stream is equally visible to both of them. He does not realize that a knowledge of the fish's habits is (I speak comparatively) practically no part of a dry fly angler's equipment. The mere fact that on a chalk stream he can jettison the best part of the lore which he has taken him many years to acquire, without doing his chances of sport any harm whatever, should cause him to think better of himself. But he does not know this. Again, he does not realize that the dry fly man owes half his vaunted accuracy of casting to the rod maker and the line spinner, and that in this particular also they are pretty much on a level (it is understood again that I speak of the skillful of both schools). He does not realize that to be the dry fly man's equal, if not superior, he has only to buy a certain kind of apparatus, to learn not to work his fly, to avoid drag, to pull in his slack, and to distinguish between a number of unfamiliar artificial patterns—all matters, surely, within his competence.

No, he accepts the estimate which the world, taught by the dry fly man, has formed of his attainments, and, until he has tried a chalk stream for himself, imagines that he might as well fish in his mother's pail as in the Test. He is all wrong, and here is an incident to encourage him.

In the early part of this century a man, whom I will call MacArthur, came upon me out of the East, demanding a chalk stream and instruction in the dry fly business. As he made it clearly understood that he was to pay for the chalk stream, I undertook to introduce him to a water which I had fished during the three previous seasons, and because I was poor, had given up. My anxiety to return to that water, plus the deep affection I had for MacArthur, blinded me to the second part of his demand. In the course of a few posts MacArthur was the better by a rod for the season, and I by twelve guests' tickets. During those early days, while we waited for May to come around, MacArthur's confidence in, and reverence for my knowledge and skill were highly gratifying. He had never used a dry fly, and though he has not his equal as a wet fly fisherman, he was filled with that fear of the chalk stream and that humbleness of spirit of which I have spoken. He looked upon those who do their business in clear waters as belonging to an order of beings higher altogether than his own. He abased himself before me as an initiate-designate of some esoteric cult might abase himself before its Grand Lama. He received my lightest word on dry fly angling as if it were a revelation, and permitted me to spend many pounds of his money on the purchase of a valuable rod, reel, line, and other things without a word of complaint. He said that if he were permitted by Heaven's help and mine to slay one trout out of that river before he returned into the Orient, he would die blessing my name.

Nothing that I could say would persuade him that chalk-stream fishing is pure skittles compared with that he was accustomed to find in a tiny bush-shrouded brook near Midhurst (a place in which he could catch trout all day long while I should have spent my time cutting

down trees). Nor could I get him to understand that, easy though it might be, I am extremely unhandy at it. He said that I only talked like that to encourage myself. For I was really trying to encourage myself. For I had discovered that I possessed a reputation to which nobody could possibly live up, and as the day approached when I should have to "show him how to do it" at the expense of those fish under whose contempt I had writhed three summers long, I wondered sometimes if I had not better perhaps break my right arm in two places, and so preserve to MacArthur the last ideal that he was ever likely to cherish.

At length the first day of May dawned, and my right arm was still, as much as it ever had been, at my service. I made, as the newspapers relate of the condemned, a hearty breakfast of sausages and bacon, and smoked a cigarette while MacArthur greased his line for the third time since he had risen. Presently we were by the water's edge, and for half an hour I showed MacArthur how to cast his fly over imaginary fish, and how to keep his rod's point up and pull in the slack, all of which he managed to do—easily. You are to remember always that MacArthur was a most accomplished fisherman. Suddenly he found a fish—which I had failed to observe. It lay near the bank on which we stood, evidently just posted for breakfast, about fifteen yards above us. The water was clear of rushes and weeds, nor was there any eddy or glide. The bank was free of high grass and trees and all other nuisances. The wind blew gently up stream. I had a perfectly clear right-hand horizontal cast. It was what is called "a sitter." As we looked the fish sucked down a fly. "Have at him," said MacArthur, as he crouched to the earth (what he had not read about dry fly fishing was not worth writing). "I want to see just how you do it."

It was inconceivable that I should ever find a more easily placed trout. I knelt down, as the books recommend, let out line, cast and the wind—the kindly wind of the west—dropped a pale olive 3in. above the nose of the fish, which took it instantly. I hooked him, rattled him down stream, and had him in the net before the howl which MacArthur uttered as I struck had ceased to reverberate among the surrounding chalk hills. I do not hesitate to say that the thing could not have been better done. I said "There!"

MacArthur was breathing heavily through his nose, and his eyes were shining with delight and excitement and triumph. He had seen the luring and slaughter of a chalk stream trout—a trout of 134 pounds, a trout twice as big as the biggest he had ever looked on. He said that it was magnificent, and launched into praises of my skill. I preserved a modest demeanour, and told him that now he must get one. He despaired of ever attaining to my accuracy and deadliness. Seeing a fish about 300 yards up stream (he had an eye like a telescope) he besought me to come and catch that one too, as he had hardly had time to observe my methods. He said it was a privilege to watch me. I did not say what I would do until we reached the rising fish, when I told MacArthur that he must have a go at it. I pointed out that he had not taken a rod on this river to watch me catching fish, but to learn to do it himself. I insisted on his trying for this trout.

The place in which it lay was situated twenty yards across the stream under the overhanging branch of a willow, and on the far side of a thin line of rushes and weeds. The rushes and the branch were so disposed that the only possible chance of getting a fly to the fish was to shoot it out of gun through a gap some to inches wide. I said, "This is not a particularly easy cast. But, remember, if you hook him you must bustle him. Though you break you mustn't give him his head. This is your only chance. You recollect what I told you about raising your rod high in the air and walking backwards into the meadow? This is an occasion when you must do that."

MacArthur asked me if it was possible to cook a fly properly at that distance. This seemed to be the only doubt that troubled him. I told him (because he had on a dry, well-oiled, and well-made fly, which would cock itself quite independently of the person who throw it) that it was quite possible. "For you, perhaps," said MacArthur, and as he began to get out line I could feel the blushes chasing each other up and down my body. The next moment MacArthur's fly passed through the gap which I have described, and lit, cocked to a miracle, on the only square inch of water where it could have served any useful purpose whatever. The trout hurled itself on to the hook. MacArthur struck, raised his rod high in the air and began to walk backwards steadily into the meadow, just as I had told him to do. The trout, paralysed by astonishment, followed obediently, wriggled itself bodily over the weeds and through the rushes, swung in the deep, safe water for a second, and made off up stream like lightning. But he was well hooked, and there was never any cause for alarm. MacArthur reeled him in, let him run, reeled him in again, and, after the usual fuss and bungling with the net, I got him to land—24 pounds. MacArthur was dumb with delight. When I had recovered the power of speech I said: "You now see how easy dry fly fishing really is. Any man who can cast as you do may fish a chalk stream with every prospect of success." I advised him to go up the river and practice on his own account. "All you have to do," I said, "is to avoid drag and pull in your slack, and forget that you ever thought there was anything difficult about this game."

The really remarkable feature of this story is that at the end of the day MacArthur admitted that the capture of his first trout was a fluke, whereas it was not; it was the masterly cast that did it. MacArthur, though he had never fished a chalk stream, knew more about casting than nine dry fly anglers out of ten that you will meet in conversation. But though he brought back two other fish, he had acquired a respect—a quite proper respect—for the many which he had failed to take, and in the light of this experience he was inclined to belittle his first supreme performance. He was enchanted with his sport, but by no means puffed up, and he was as ready as ever to sit at my feet and hear me talk, in spite of my having caught nothing more. Subsequently, during that season, he beat my take every time, and I think he must have modified his view of my dexterity. But he never let me see this. Which shows, first, what a magnificent nature is MacArthur's, and, secondly, that a first-rate wet fly angler who approaches a chalk stream with the proper rod and line, and takes an instructor in whom he has implicit confidence, can do as well as anybody, if he will only follow that instructor's hints to the letter. But I have yet to hear of the dry fly man who mastered wet fly fishing in a season, or five seasons. Two things are necessary to both arts, an apparatus and manual skill. But to the wet fly game must be added knowledge. And the greatest of these is knowledge.—W. Quilliam, in The Field.

DISTANCE SENSE OF THE BLIND

It has long been known that some-blind persons can move about in places that are entirely strange to them with a remarkable degree of certainty and without coming into collision with any large object. Half a century ago Spallanzani discovered that bats can steer clear of obstacles in total darkness. In order to make sure that the sense of sight was not employed he blinded some bats and found that they flew about as confidently and safely as before.

This experiment proved that warning of the presence of objects is received through some part of the surface of the body other than the eyes. In the case of blind persons it was thought that at one time this warning was given by sound waves reflected by the objects, but this theory is disproved by a simple experiment. When a blind man's ears are stopped completely the sense of distance remains, although it is greatly diminished. This shows that the sense of distance is not identical with the sense of hearing, and that a distinction must be made between the sense of distance and the directional power of the blind. This power depends chiefly on the sense of distance, but involves also hearing, smell, the temperature sense, and perhaps still other factors.

It is a noteworthy fact that the sense of distance is not possessed by all blind persons, but is found only in a few and to very different degrees in these. The blind possessors of this sense locate it in and near the forehead and say that the sensation is vague and somewhat resembles a light touch. From the experiments of Kunz, Woolfill and others, it appears very probable that the distance sense is a function of the sensory fibres of the first branch of the nervous trigeminal, which ramifies through the face. It is still unknown whether the distance sense is served by special nerves or by fibres which also serve the pressure and other senses. An investigation of the conditions which favor this sense would be very valuable, practically as well as theoretically, for thorough development of the distance sense would make the lives of the blind far safer and more independent than they are at present.

The Barefoot Dancer

Some of the good Sunday-school teachers of the Puritan towns of the United States are working themselves up to a fever heat at the idea of the advent of Miss Duncan in her revival of the classic dances of Greece. The dances themselves are modest in the extreme, but the whole trouble lies in the fact that Miss Duncan is to dance in her bare "tootsies," which inexpressibly shocks the Sunday-school teachers, many of whom have probably viewed the Salome dances without any misgivings at all. In an editorial, Musical America thus comments on the event and its significance:

Isadora Duncan will be with us during the coming season. She should be met on every hand with an understanding of what she is striving to do. She is not competing with the dancers of the Broadway shows. She will be incomprehensible and dull alike to the unspeakable chappie who frequents the theatres and to the reputable theatre-going business man who is oblivious to the glory that was of Greece. She makes no appeal to prurience.

Miss Duncan has studied to reproduce the expressive dance of ancient Greece, as others have striven to rise to its ideals of sculpture or drama. She must undoubtedly have studied out the spirit and meaning of the ancient religious dances, for in a Bacchic dance she imitates the motions which would occur in playing the instruments sacred to Dionysus, and a Pyrrhic dance she takes the severe attitudes of the warrior.

Intrinsically beautiful as are the motions and attitudes of Miss Duncan to any eye sensitive to beauty, she will be seen understanding only by those who have some slight conception, at least, of the ancient Hellenic world of beauty from which she draws her inspiration and her models. It is a pity that Miss Duncan should have to fight her way in America against the ignorance and stupidity of Puritocracy.

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