

# Field Sports at Home and Abroad

BAIT—BITES—AND A BLANK

(By Richard L. Pocock)

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Confession is good for the soul. There was a time, many years ago now, when I wanted trout, and I wanted them badly—and I fished with bait. I was chechaco, and had made the usual mistakes of the young Englishman coming out to Canada to make his fortune in the way of outfit; for instance, I had spent a few of my last remaining sovereigns, after buying my ticket from Liverpool to Vancouver, in purchasing what the gunsmith in Edgewater Road had assured me was the very best of all weapons to take into the dangerous wilds of the great unexplored West, a 50.110 Winchester, at the same time carefully leaving at home all my rods and fishing tackle.

Stopping off at Nelson, I speedily discovered that a somewhat lighter piece of artillery than the half-inch shoulder cannon would have been more suitable for picking off the head of the blue grouse and fool-hens, which was all the use I found for a rifle within easy distance of the Kootenay capital, and later I came to realize that I had made a big mistake in not bringing out the old rods I knew and loved.

It was in the spring of the year. Fortune had prevented me from making one more of the usual mistakes of the new chum Englishman, and bringing out a considerable amount of money with which to purchase nothing more tangible than experience and a more advanced knowledge of human nature; therefore I found myself within a very short time of landing in the country being initiated into the mysteries of prospecting for mineral by an old-timer, who, for a grubstake, had condescended to act the part of initiator.

To break me in easily, this old man, with the foxiness of his kind, had decided that a short trip down the Kootenay river and camps by the riverside would be likely to lead to the discovery of mines rivaling the Silver King in richness, which would enable us both to return to the Old Country as capitalists of distinction.

Truth to tell, I was not quite so sanguine on this point or so intoxicated with his hot-air treatment as he appeared to fondly imagine, but the open-air life was what I had always hankered for, and for a week or two I was gloriously content.

There was just one crumple in the rose leaf. What man who ever was a fisherman, or ever hoped to be, could look on that glorious Kootenay and not be itching to wet a line? The old man was careful to explain to me that it would not do to go to the prospecting business too hard at first, and so, when I began to make enquiries as to the fishing possibilities of the river, and had peeped over the edge of a rocky bank into the depths of a transparent pool, and seen the beauties swimming close below me, he had no objections to make to my suggestion that I should take a day off to walk into town and get some fishing tackle, with which to try for some of those trout which I wanted, and wanted very badly.

When, however, I began to ask about the best kind of flies to get, I speedily brought upon myself the full force of his contempt. Flies were not what was wanted at all; they were alright for the "dudes" who fished for sport, they could fool with flies if they wanted to, but what we wanted was fish, and fish we should not get with flies, but fish we undoubtedly would get, and all we wanted, with bait. So I was enjoined to get a line and some bait hooks, and he would guarantee that, with a pole cut from the bush and some grubs from a rotten log, I would be able to get all the trout I wanted. It was against my principles, but he knew the country and the country's fish, and I was anxious to learn what he could teach me in other matters, and did not want to offend him; also for financial reasons I did not want to buy a new fly-rod, and fly-fishing with a "pole" seemed to my mind the thing impossible; therefore I was obedient and yielded.

The Nelson stores in those days carried less full and up-to-date lines than they doubtless do in these days, and in the first store in which I tried I could only buy half-a-dozen hooks of the size I wanted tied on gut. At another store I obtained another half-dozen, and, thinking these sufficient, started back on my eight-mile tie-counting walk to camp. I felt a little guilty next morning as I started out for the pool where I had seen the big ones lazily swimming in the clear water armed with a heavy pole and a tight line innocent of any more gut than that tied to the hook, and with a liberal supply of fine fat white grubs, which the old man had dug out of an old log while I was away in town after the tackle. I was a bait fisherman; it was a fall from grace, but it was a fall which speedily brought a chastening of spirit. I impaled my first grub and dropped him carefully and hopefully into the water. The currents of the eddy seized him and whirled him about a second or two, when a silver streak shot through the water, and he disappeared. I struck, and the line tightened. The gut was strong, the pole was ditto, and my instructions were to "yank" him up onto the bank, and not to play around with him and lose him. I complied on the "yank" by substituting a steady pull, and the fish went his way and the hook came mine; my first Kootenay trout had been hooked and lost. The old-timer snorted out criticism of a lurid and picturesque nature while I took the hook in my hand and turned to pick out a fresh juicy grub. The explanation was at once obvious and at variance with the aforesaid criticism; the hook being badly

tempered, had pulled out straight from barb to chank.

A second hook was tied on, a second grub impaled, a second silver streak repeated the performance of the first, and—the same thing happened.

At the next bite, which came speedily as the other two, I tried to be a little more gentle in my handling of the fish; the old-timer had round more to my way of thinking. His first cry had been "Yank him, yank him!" Now it was "Easy boy, easy does it!" But that trout was a Kootenay rainbow, and a large one, and however easy I might want to go, he was of a different way of thinking, and he remained with his brethren while I once more examined the hook, to find the same result. The old-timer breathed hard, and delivered himself of the most artistic and carefully-thought-out piece of profanity I had ever heard; and having thus relieved himself, requested me to "let him have a try." He carefully selected a hook from the second package while muttering benedictions on the head of the unfortunate who had manufactured the first lot, and, selecting two fat grubs, cast his hook upon the waters, saying that he would have a big one that time. He did; in the clear water we saw the father of that particular trout family hurl past one of his lesser descendants and seize the bait. Mr. Oldtimer struck, yanked, and rolled on his back, while the line whistled through the air behind him like a whip-lash. His stock of language had run out, and he was reduced to the reiteration of one short, but mild, that is comparatively mild, monosyllable.

There was a little variation this time; the hook had not pulled straight out, it had broken off short at the bend. This hook-maker had gone to the other extreme and over-tempered his hooks.

We sought fresh ground in the hope of hooking rather smaller fish, but it was not to be a fish supper for ours that day. Every hook from one store bent out straight, and every hook from the other broke off short; the temper of the hooks was not as it should have been, and the temper of the fisherman was very far also from what it should have been as we wended our way back to camp without a single trout, but with a resolution firm planted in the breast of one at least never again to try such base methods for such worthy foes, when it was possible to try conclusions with them by methods more worthy both of them and of a sportsman.

## NATURE AND THE SPORTSMAN

It has become a commonplace of our conceptions of the sportsman and the ways in which he walks to credit him with an uncommon love of nature and an unusual appreciation of the secrets which nature guards from uncurious eyes. Few respectable writers on any form of sport would venture to leave out of their account some decent pen service to the allurements of field and moor and river and covert side. It is true that the hunting field does not invest the thruster with a poet's power to absorb and appreciate in one masterly "coup d'oeil" the magic tracery of new-bared boughs, the great figures of the boles of trees, or the shafts of light piercing the covert, and the wonderful "values" which the Great Artist can put into His skies. We have not yet got so far as that. But Nature, in Whistler's phrase, is creeping up. She is at least at the girths of the plain-flapped saddle. She has overtaken the angler, the shooting man, and the golfer in their habits as they live. To deem them nature lovers with a passion of worship has become as much a part of orthodoxy as to call sportsmen—as, indeed, they for the most part are—the kindest and most humane of men.

Yet the heretics are bold enough, and a rude iconoclasm has not hesitated to bring its crowbar smashing upon this idol, which common consent has fashioned of the sportsman nature-lover. Iconoclasm has said, pretty rotundly, that all this is so much shoddy, a monstrous sham in the great world of shams. Indeed, scarcely was the conception of the sportsman as a man with an energetic soul fairly established than its propriety was questioned and its position assailed. Your angler—so iconoclasm roars—has no soul above the gaff or landing net. His eyes are glued to the river. His heart is in his waders. Your "gun" cares for nothing but scientific slaughter. He only demands difficult birds, and many of them. He is a superior butcher, with the butcher's vision. Your golfer has all his essence centred on a small white ball. He hits the ball as far after it, and his mind is so concentrated on the possibilities of disaster, which—with the hole—he has "opened up," his ambitions are so wholly occupied with an economy of strokes, that he would never notice a new Heaven and a new earth yawning before him, unless he mistook them for a new and particularly "fendish" pot bunker. Your motorist is little other than a maniac when all the windows of the soul he has opening to the ground, upon the speed gauge. Such are the blows of cold logic with which iconoclasm besets this pleasant image of the sportsman as one who finds half his pleasure and more than half his profit in that silent communion with nature which is the most precious boon that life can offer, and which casts upon death-dealing the glamour of a high romance.

Let us, then, examine, with the impartiality which momentary detachment brings, the

bearings of this matter. For the purposes of investigation there are three characters which lend themselves especially to cross-examination. These are the angler, the shooting man, and the golfer. These are the men who have the fullest opportunity for mingling with their ruder energies the fine flower of artistic appreciation. Out of them all the fisherman is the chief. He it is who is, by repute, most addicted to a sentimental nature-worship. He it is who claims for his sport these more gentle influences. He who most often stars the literary essays in which he recounts the destruction he has wrought with passages devoted rather to water-ousels than to trout, rather to the habits of the otter than to the hate of fly, more particularly to the varied life which teems around him, to the fragrance of the moor and the lushness of the water-meadows than to the serious purposes of the inexact science of angling. No wet fly man ever returned from a day on a moorland, burn without remembering to drag in the curlew's lonely cry. No man ever waited for the southern three-pounder to come up again without, in theory, being very observant of the meadow-pipit whistling piped at his side. The fisherman really believes, or has been induced to believe, that he is not only the dry fly purist, the educated angler who is more concerned to rise the educated trout than to see him on the table—in part, perhaps, because the educated trout is not invariably the best of eating—who boasts this superior soul. His ruder colleague of the north and the west makes a similar claim. He, it is true, fishes frankly for the pot. But, if we may believe him, he fishes also because the world is so very beautiful.

Now, these are laudable convictions. Are they also honest? Not, I think, wholly so. It stirred by the breath of spring upon the uplands, or by the opening of the flow of summer into the water meadows of the vale. The angler whose business takes him to the uplands in spring and to the water meadows in later May and June is aware of the feast that is spread before him. He does care for the sights and sounds and scents by which he is surrounded. But his appreciation is always subordinate to his determined purpose. It is accidental. He is nature-lover, and his love of nature is the consequence of his love of sport. It is very difficult to separate judiciously the limits of his emotions. But we may say that nearly all day his eyes and mind are far too much occupied with the minutiae of his sport or art to be consciously concerned with the elements of nature. It is good, he feels, to be alive in such a world as he gives a hitch to the strap of a heavy basket and sets his face along the mountain track to trudge home, or turns his back upon the darkened river, and takes the path across the meadows. But the satisfaction is not to be dissociated from his sport. It is likely that he would feel only bored if the rod were not in his hand. His knowledge of wild things and wild ways, of trees and flowers, may be very crude and limited. Because the irresistible impulse, the "amabilis insania," urges him to patient study of fish life—and death—it by no means follows that he is driven in the same way to any real study of the ways of nature. And if this be true, as I think it is, of the angler, it is more true of his colleagues. There is, for instance, little opportunity for a gunner's indulgence in aesthetic satisfactions. If he is to shoot well, if he is to shoot safely, and with a proper consideration for others, there is demanded from him a continual concentration on the matter in hand. His nerves and senses must be always under control, his eyes must be keen, and his mind must be so fully occupied with the positions of other guns and beaters, with the marking of birds, and with the swift decisions necessary to success, that no room is left for errant fancies. No man can walk up partridges as one of a line of guns and beaters, and yet treat the excursion as a botanical survey. Even during the leisure that comes either whilst waiting for the cries of "mark" that are the preface of shooting, or between the taking up of a stand in covert well in advance of the beaters' approach, there is no place for relaxation of the mind and interest. It is, of course, true of the shooter that his pleasure is insensibly enhanced by his surroundings. But with him, even more than with the angler, these things are subordinate to the immediate purpose of his being. As for the golfer, the torments of his soul if he be off his game, and the anxieties that still shadow him if he be on it, shut out from his vision what does not actually obtrude itself between himself and the ball. He may be conscious of the may in bloom on an inland course, or of the heather that grows on a seaside green. He may notice the early appearance of some flower of the field even as he walks up to his ball. But he notices these things out of the tail of a fixed and largely unseeing eye. Nature and the full air add enormously to his pleasure. But he enjoys them because he wishes to play golf. He does not play golf because he wishes to enjoy them. If that were so he would become a week-end trampler.

Then we may say that there is a great deal of exaggeration in the claims to nature worship made on the sportsman's behalf. Yet it would be just as gross an exaggeration to deny altogether his simple delight in simple beauties. Sir Edward Grey has written in his book on "Fly Fishing": "Though some of our feeling about the conscious enjoyment of birds and other forms of life may be mere fancy, it is altogether true that there is an ecstasy about the first warm days of spring which cannot be resisted, and we cannot tell how much comes from within and how much from without us." That is an honest and a true saying. The sportsman is not usually an absolute aesthete. He is too good a craftsman for that. He has his own business, which exacts close attention. But he cannot be an utter Philistine. Nature will not allow that.—Guy C. Pollock in "The Field."

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## BIG GAME HUNTING IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL AFRICA

In the smoke-room of an African liner one occasionally hears told with the utmost modesty, and often only when a good dinner has loosened the young hunter's tongue, scraps of tales that throw some light on the dangers and fascinations of the big game hunter's life in the tropical world.

One big fellow, when pressed, owned reluctantly that he was rather lame in one knee on account of the inaccuracy of his shot at a charging buffalo. His second shot was not sufficient to finish the great brute, and he had a more than anxious time hanging on with his full weight to one of the buffalo's horns to save himself from being gored to death. Only a native hunting knife and a long arm enabled him to free himself by a full stroke—stabbing his enemy through the heart. Had he been a light weight—had his knife not been handy—had his shots not been so well aimed—had the buffalo's full charge caught him in the first place, he would not have been with us to relate his adventures.

Another time he told us that his having been an old rugby three-quarters had just pulled him through on one occasion. An enraged elephant charged him, and the shot had not proved fatal. The elephant spread out its two great ears to their utmost width. Its rattling scream was terrifying; its trunk was raised with blood pouring from it, and it was only by swerving, dodging, twisting, and doubling that the hunter kept out of reach until, watching over his shoulder, he got in a fatal shot at close quarters. He said that he never worried much about dodging elephants so long as he had any trees to assist him.

It requires no small presence of mind to keep cool and work out your theory whilst running full speed zigzag across a bog; but the real big game man is coolest when danger is greatest.

Our hunting companion owned that he hated hearing the lion's sinister breathing around the fires at night; the distinctive leonine noise when he smells blood, just when one feels very tired and sleepy, is disquieting, to say the very least, especially when one has seen the daring of the animal. He will spring on to his victim, carry him off through the bush, and finish the greater part of a human carcass. The lion's habit of coming back the next night to finish a head or leg of any dainty portion left over, is often his death knell, as one can then await him up a tree.

A man-eating lion is certainly the most cunning animal in the world, daring any danger, appearing just where least expected, and capable of totalling terribly long lists of victims before being killed.

A wounded lion, unlike a leopard, attacks openly and is often spoken of as a "man," to the disparagement of the "slinking" wounded leopard, which springs upon its victim from unsuspected retreats and takes the hunter unawares.

Hunters usually only shoot lions when they are forced to do so in self-protection. They are busy after elephants, for their valuable tusks, £50 being quite a small price to get for a pair containing over 100 lbs. of ivory.—Empire Gazette.

## READING FROM THE OLD MASTER

### Angling as an Art

Piscator. O. Sir, doubt not but that Angling is an art; it is not an art to deceive a Trout with an artificial Fly? A Trout! that is more sharp-sighted than any Hawk you have named, and more watchful and timorous than your high-mettled Merlin is bold? and yet, I doubt not to catch a brace or two to-morrow, for a friend's breakfast: doubt not therefore, Sir, but that angling is an art, and an art worth your learning. The question is rather, whether you are capable of learning it? for angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so: I mean, with inclinations to it, though both may be heightened by discourse and practice; but he that hopes to be a good angler, must not only bring an inquiring, searching, observing wit, but he must bring a large measure of hope and patience, and a love and propensity to the art itself; but having once got and practised it, then doubt not but angling will prove to be so pleasant, that it will prove to be, like virtue, a reward to itself.

Venator. Sir, I am now become so full of expectation, and in order that you propose. Piscator. Then first, for the antiquity of Angling, of which I shall not say much, but callon's flood; others, that Belus, who was the first inventor of godly and virtuous recreations, was the first inventor of Angling; and some others say, for former times have had their disquisitions about the antiquity of it that Seth, one of the sons of Adam, taught it to his sons, and that by them it was de-



## Sportsman's Calendar

APRIL

Sports for the Month—All game fish now in season:

Trout of all kinds, spring salmon, steel-heads, grise, bass, char, etc.

Geese may be shot, but not sold.

April is one of the best months for bear and brant.

N.B.—Visiting non-resident anglers must take out a license to fish in British Columbia waters.

rived to posterity: others say that he left it engraved on those pillars which he erected and trusted to preserve the knowledge of the mathematicks, musick, and the rest of that precious knowledge, and those useful arts, which by God's appointment or allowance, and his noble industry, were thereby preserved from perishing in Noah's flood.

These, Sir, have been the opinions of several men, that have possibly endeavored to make angling more ancient than is needful, or may well be warranted; but for my part, I shall content myself in telling you that angling is much more ancient than the incarnation of our Saviour; for in the Prophet Amos mention is made of fish-hooks; and in the book of Job, which was long before the days of Amos, for that book is said to have been written by Moses, mention is made also of fish-hooks, which must imply anglers in those times.

But, my worthy friend, as I would rather prove myself a gentleman, by being learned and humble, valiant and inoffensive, virtuous and communicable, than by an fond ostentation of riches, or, wanting those virtues myself, boast that these were in my ancestors; and yet I grant, that where a noble and ancient descent and such merit meet in any man, it is a double dignification of that person; so if this antiquity of angling which for my part I have not forced shall, like an ancient family, be either an honour or an ornament to this virtuous art which I profess to love and practise, I shall be the gladder that I made an accidental mention of the antiquity of it, of which I shall say no more, but proceed to that just commendation which I think it deserves.

And first, I shall tell you what some have observed, and I have found it to be a real truth, that the very sitting by the river's side is not only the quietest and fittest place for contemplation, but will invite an angler to it; and this seems to be maintained by the learned Peter du Moulin, who, in his discourse of the fulfilling of Prophecies, observes, that when God intended to reveal any future events or high notions to his prophets, he then carried them either to the deserts, or the sea-shore, that having so separated them from amidst the press of people and business, and the cares of the world, he might settle their mind in a quiet repose, and there make them fit for revelation.

## AN ANGLER'S TROUBLE

O the tangles, more than Gordian, of gut on a windy day! O bitter east wind that bloweth down stream! O the young ducks that swimming between us and the trout, contend with him for the blue duns in their season! O the hay grass behind us that entangles the hook! O the rocky wall that breaks it, the boughs that catch it; the drought that leaves the salmon-stream dry, the floods that fill it with turbid, impossible waters! Alas for the knot that breaks, and for the iron that bends; for the lost landing-net, and the gillie with the gaff that scrapes the fish! Izaak believed that fish could hear; if they can, their vocabulary must be full of strange oaths, for all anglers are not patient men. A malison on the trout that "bulge" and "tail," on the salmon that "jiggers," or sulks, or lightly gambols over and under the line. These things and many more, we anglers endure meekly, being patient men, and a light word fleers at us for our very virtue.—Andrew Lang.