

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

NOTES AND COMMENTS

(Richard L. Pocock.)
The Deputy Game Warden

The Government has not made any appointment to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. D. Gillespie from the post of game warden for this district, but in the meanwhile the duties are being carried on by Mr. G. A. Beckett Terrell, deputy game warden from Vancouver, a capable and experienced officer who is already showing zeal and energy in his efforts to deter evildoers from the doing of evil to our game. Although his appointment to this district only took place a day or two ago he has already covered a lot of ground and reports grouse plentiful wherever he has been. In the course of a trip from here to Sooke Harbor he saw two broods of Hungarian partridges in excellent condition, a piece of news which will be very gratifying to all of us who are interested in the shooting on the Island.

The Opening of the Shooting Season

Although an Order-in-Council opening the shooting season has not yet been issued, it is understood that it will practically be the same as last year, and that the opening day for all game shooting will be October the first. It is, however, the intention to keep all pheasant shooting closed except in the Duncan's electoral district.

Summer Shooting of Wild Pigeons

The few remarks in last week's Field Sports' page relating to summer shooting of wild pigeons brought interesting comments and opinions from a number of readers which are hereby acknowledged with thanks. The facts about the reward of a thousand dollars seem to be that this reward applies to the nest of the Passenger pigeon which is believed to be extinct, full information can be obtained on this point from Prof. J. Loch-head, Macdonald College, Quebec. Unfortunately, however, the chance of any of our local naturalists and sportsmen earning this reward appears to be very remote, as the pigeons we have here in considerable numbers all through the summer and early autumn are not the Passenger pigeons, conclusive evidence of the extinction of which or the opposite is desired—hence the reward. These are the banded or band-tailed pigeon. That very little is known of them by the local naturalists must apparently be admitted, but that they do breed here is undoubted, though where they make their nests, if indeed they make any nest at all, seems still uncertain. It has been suggested by some that, being compelled to travel from one place to another during the period of incubation in order to obtain sufficient food of the sort which they require, they actually carry their eggs with them from place to place, laying them on some such place as the top of a stump exposed to the heat of the sun.

This may appear extravagant to the ordinary man who has not read very deeply into the pages of the Book of Nature, but there are many wonderful things revealed in that book no less of the ordinary than this, and the student of Nature is continually learning of new marvels in her ways of providing for her children. As an example, here is something which I learnt for the first time only a few days ago, and which seems to me to be just as wonderful as would be the carrying of eggs by a bird from place to place. I quote from Pycraft's History of Birds:

"The sand-grouse are dwellers in arid deserts, and consequently have to make long journeys night and morning to procure water. During the time the young are helpless their drinking water is supplied by the cock, and this in an absolutely unique fashion. After having slaked his thirst at the customary drinking pool, generally many miles distant from the feeding ground and young, he proceeds to wallow in the water, after the fashion of a bird dusting its plumage, remaining until the feathers of the underparts are thoroughly saturated. As soon as this end is attained he makes all speed back again, when he calls loudly to the young, who run to meet him. As soon as he alights they thrust their heads among the breast feathers and under tail coverts, and drawing them through their beaks, suck out the water they contain, moving to fresh places as the supply becomes exhausted."

SOME FREE FISHING, AND AN ALLEGORY

Only too readily, alas! flock memories of waters, far off or near, whose harvest was disappointment, and very little else. Softened by time, these mental pictures have a tendency to lose their cruel outlines, and only rigid keepers of diaries realize how utterly barren are some of the days of our pilgrimage. Still, I am inclined to think I have found something special in this line. For some considerable time I have had, and still have, certain rights over a stream, fair to look upon and full of trout, that when hooked send one along the bank with the sensation of a tug that the doubled rod and screaming reel cannot avert. And yet I have never landed, nor do I now expect to land, a single fish. Before they come to the net I—awake! Not to crack the wind of several poor phrases, my river is a phantom, an illusion, and I visit it in dreams only.

At the same time, it is a perfectly distinct

and individual piece of water. If it happens actually to exist anywhere, I should recognize it without a moment's hesitation. Were I an artist, I could reproduce at least half a dozen spots that remind me of others I could indicate on the map, and certain spots that resemble nothing with which I am at present acquainted. Nor does it at the last turn into an ocean or an inkpot or something equally foolish, as is the distress fashion of most dreams.

It is, I fancy, attached to some hotel; at any rate, other anglers are somewhere about the premises, and one hurries and worries to be beforehand with them. There is one particular stretch invariably haunted by this trouble. It is straight and canal-like, and knowing perfectly well that it will not fish except in a breeze, I hasten and suffer many things by the way. The bank at this point is level with the water and boggy, whilst, exactly opposite, a road winds uphill, protected by stout rails painted white, near by is the field with the public path running through, and there I cast feverishly, in dread of some one coming along and either getting hooked or else putting down my fish.

Can it be, that we have fished these rivers in some previous existence? If so, I deserve better sport than my present incarnation is affording.

The learned in such matters tell us that a dream runs its course in something like no time at all. It is (we will say) a September dawn, and one, returning from the bathroom, batters hilariously at your door. From within comes an indignant protest, actually mingling with the din, so closely does it follow. And yet in the interval you have risen, hooked, played, and probably lost, the salmon of a lifetime that came up on the gurgling spate now roaring towards the sink. On my water, contrariwise, things are sometimes so slow that, conscious of a feeling of boredom, I wander off into another dream altogether, or involve myself in the old familiar tangle of absurdities from sheer lack of interest in the present proceedings.

Occasionally, however, one is able to rescue a fragment. He was a curious-looking old chap—lean, grizzled, autocratic. His garments, laced and pinked in the oddest of fashions, became him well, and a pair of hawkish eyes glittered from beneath a great hat and plume.

"Gadooks!" he cried, staring at me in amazement and some contempt. "What in Heaven's name have we here?"

"Never yet saw I the like," he pursued.

"Perhaps you will particularize," said I, blandly.

"Particularize! Why, man, dost think to take aught heavier than a minnow with that toy of thine?"

He pointed to my 6-oz. split-cane in such scorn that I wondered it did not warp before our very eyes. Involuntarily I glanced at the rod lying across his own shoulders, and I gasped. It was at least 18 feet long, splined of several woods in one piece and very pliant, as it shivered delicately in the grip of a hand that age, and perhaps the bottle, had rendered a trifle unsteady.

"Toy or not," I said, reddening, "it will kill any trout we are likely to come across today."

With a laugh, he took my weapon and tested it gingerly. Then he fell to examining it more closely.

"This wheel now," says he, tapping the latest thing in aluminum winches. "Aye, I have heard of them; but they are sorry things. Were I not man enough, without the aid of clockwork—"

"I fear you do not quite follow," I said as politely as possible. "I do not know what your methods may be but, speaking for myself, so fine and delicate is my tackle, so tiny the hold of the hook, that an instant's failure in meeting the strain would be fatal."

"He pondered over this and his brows knitted. 'Given a short stiff stick'—he mused. 'I grant you, some contrivance is indeed a necessity, but why not the rod and a ready wrist to meet the strain and give you joy in the handling thereof?'"

"If you will kindly observe," I said, "the extreme lightness of my fly and that part of the cast appertaining to it, you will, I think, agree that it is not fitted to such a—to such as your rod in fact." I ended somewhat hastily, being minded to break a witticism but finding small appreciation of humour in his glance.

He considered the fly and for once something like admiration dawned upon his face. "Faith!" he said, "Tis marvelous small and marvelous pretty—and marvelous foolish! Think you that this conceit of the natural fly (for it is indeed very like a small insect I have seen upon the water at this season, think you that such will allure a feeding trout? Why man, the flies he seeks, being half-drowned, bear scant likeness to this piece of foppery."

"That is where we differ," said I, blandly. "The proper, and indeed the only civilized way to angle is with the nearest possible imitation of the natural insect, treated with a cunning preparation of oil so that it will not sink, and representing the newly hatched fly before its wings have so much as touched the water!"

"What hast killed this morning?" asked the old man, suddenly.

I pointed out somewhat coldly that there had been no rise as yet and that a few dark

olives were but just coming down. "Have you done much?" I asked spitefully, for I noticed that he carried neither reel nor bag.

His answer was a shrill whistle, followed by the appearance of a small, but heavily laden boy, most conspicuous being a net that would have landed any ordinary member of the Fly Fishers' Club. The ancient angler shook his head. "I doubt whether it be not too late," he said, "this hatch you babble of comes at the end of the feast and yet—I may but try. Come hither, boy!"

The mighty rod bent to its work with an unholy swishing and the flies (four of them) worked their way slowly up the stick. Suddenly there was a yellow gleam and a great fish was struggling desperately, merely to get from under the hoop that held him so relentless. I knew that he must be well hooked and very soon the net was his portion.

At a gesture, the boy tipped the contents of the basket upon the sward. There they lay—three-pounders, two-pounders and others—in a glistening heap! It was a season's catch.

"Well done!" said I, involuntarily, dreadfully though the slaughter seemed.

This somewhat mollified him.

"You are but young for an angler and may yet learn," he said.

"My eldest boy," I remarked with dignity, "has already landed his first trout, although I made him return it (being taken down stream) lest he should be tempted to think that the killing of fish was the angler's aim."

"And what otherwise?"

"Beguilement," I said promptly. "The killing of a brace or so is a survival of the dark ages and fast falling into disrepute."

This finished me. Whatever lingering doubts he may have retained concerning my sanity dispersed into thin air at this.

"The Saints be praised!" said the old man, joyfully and irrelevantly. "Mine head was beginning to buzz so that I feared the shrewd buffet it took years ago at Worcester fight was stirring again, as hath before happened. Now I know for a certainty that thou art but an utter madman, and I would that thou wert on safer ground, for yonder pool is to-fish deep. Good master madman! Go, prithee, to the middle of this fair field and cast for the distillies thou seest there. Many a stubborn fight have they given me and I would fain join thee but my dinner waits and the physician hath warned me to be particular in such matters."

So saying, the stiff old cavalier shouldered his rod. Long I watched him, striding away into the meadow distance with his satellite laboring respectfully in the rear. But precisely how long I must not say—W. Bernard Tonkin. (Baily's.)

THE "DUBLIN FUSILIER"

To those who do not profess and call themselves anglers the thousand and one other joys over and above the actual capture of the quarry are matters wholly vain and incomprehensible. Their sole criterion of the measure of our happiness is the weight of our bag; a blank day is to them a lost day—a day gone uselessly out of our life so few days on this excellent earth. For though most of us will agree with the late Professor Huxley that it might have been a better world, we must even now concur with him that it might have been inexpressibly worse. On the pleasant fishing trip I ever spent my bag for the week was a blank, but—however, as Weedon Grossmith used to say in "The Duke of Killcrankie."

On one never-to-be-forgotten day of bright sunshine and low water, I was lying prone peering into a salmon pool as a friend's line came sweeping round in the endeavor to see what amount of movement was imparted by sinking and drawing the hand to a fly at the end of twenty yards of line. My friend was experimenting with a clumsy creation of my own tying. As it came into view a shadow seemed to detach itself from the bottom, rise slowly, and sink again with as leisurely a movement. "And then there was hurrying to and fro," while the sun, instead of the lamps, "shone o'er fair women and brave men." Needless to say, my fair friend annexed that fly. "We must invent a suitable name for it," she said, casting a last look at a lilac and silver 14-pounder before it was taken up to the house; "something very killing and fascinating." "That sounds like a Dublin Fusilier," said I, with commendable modesty. And so it was christened on the spot, and its health drunk out of a tiny silver flask bearing the inscription "Any port in a storm, but a vintage wine after dinner." This had been given, however.

So with slight modifications was evolved a fly which on a recent very successful expedition accounted for exactly as many fish as the whole of the rest of our flies put together. Doubtless we used it more, doubtless it went in first, even as its namesakes did into Ladysmith, but even so the result was remarkable. Now, the Dublin Fusiliers were made out of the East India Company's Madras and Bombay European regiments, wherefore the tag of Indian crow must not be omitted, with the topping for the tail. Their uniform is scarlet, with gold lace; so the body of the fly must be tied very tight of scarlet silk, with ribboned gold tinsel. The hackle in their busby is of Patrick's blue and a dark rich green. The blue should predominate at the shoulder,

fining off into the green, but the hackle must on no account be run down the body. In honor of their Madras origin a strip of Madras jungle cock lies along each side of the wing. This leaves Bombay still unrepresented, so our thoughts naturally turn to Bombay duck. It is rather difficult to tie this excellent bird into the wing, so I substitute two strips of gled, or buff turkey. This with a few heron's fibres in the wing and a peacock herl head for a busby, completes the dressing.

I gave one to that great angler who plays Jonathan to my David. Examining it critically, he remarked, "I hope nobody will make rude remarks about the Dublin Fusilier and the hook." "No fear," I replied; "it is their enemies that take their hook, my boy!"

—A. E. M.

BREEDING CANADA WILD GEESE IN CAPTIVITY

In the years gone by when game was abundant all over the land it hardly seemed probable that it would even be necessary to refrain from slaughtering it from morning until night or to require a bag limit in order to stop its extermination. Even farther from the minds of the majority of our sportsmen was the necessity of keeping up the supply of game birds by breeding them in captivity.

In my own experience of nearly thirty years of continuous experimenting in the breeding of wild water fowl, and especially the Canada or common wild geese, I am frank to confess that at the outset it was the mere love of wild life that prompted the undertaking. This article is necessarily the personal experience of the writer, and as such it must perforce coincide with the experiences of others, but I hope to touch upon some points which heretofore have not been mentioned by writers.

It was some time in the seventies that my brother called my attention to an advertisement of a party in Fort Dodge, Ia., in one of the sporting magazines who offered Canada wild geese for sale. Geese were then nesting plentifully in parts of that State, and those offered for sale were goslings captured from the adjacent slough. I mention the pair which we purchased because of the frequent statement made that wild geese mate for life. Undoubtedly this is ordinarily true, but there are exceptions. This pair never, and we finally bought another male and two females. The Iowa gander promptly selected one of the new females for a wife, and they raised young for years, while he drove his former mate out of sight at all times. She never mated again and was evidently a barren goose, and the gander undoubtedly was aware of it.

In 1892 I obtained a large wild gander shot from a passing flock. Several years afterward he mated with a goose which laid and began sitting. He then went across the ravine and escorted another goose to a promising site, where she made a nest and also laid eggs.

About this time I obtained a goose from my neighbor, Mr. George E. Walker, and turned her out in the lots. Imagine my surprise when the old Mormon took his third wife, and they raised young ones the same season. This mate he kept for years, and she was evidently his favorite.

The present season I purchased a fine eight-year-old pair of mated Canadas from a party on the Atlantic coast which were until two weeks ago contentedly planning to raise their young. They sat by the hour on a hummock and arranged the nest then all at once they disagreed in the family. The old fellow had driven his wife from his bed and board and will not allow her near him. She sits disconsolate by herself or wanders away to the vicinity of the pen in which are the unmated ganders, which run squawking to the fence to meet her. Except in the three instances above cited I never knew the mated pairs to be unfaithful among the full bloods, although at the present time I have one old Canada gander who has two wives—both tame geese—which have separate nests, and the old fellow puts in all his time guarding first one then the other.

In the nesting season it is imperative that the geese have water deep enough for them to swim, otherwise the eggs will not be fertile. In small enclosures it is also necessary to have a light but close fence between each breeding pair since the ganders are exceedingly pugnacious, fighting all others near them and sometimes dragging the females off their nests and driving them away. It is rarely that they begin laying until three years old, although I have known of one or two in recent years which nested when two years old and raised young. The first year wild geese lay four or five eggs, generally five, and as they get older they will sometimes gradually increase the number laid to six or eight eggs.

The period of incubation is from 28 to 30 days, depending somewhat on the weather. When hatched the old goose keeps the goslings in the nest until the morning of the second day, when she leads them out and carefully guides them to where they can pick the fresh grass or weeds. No feed is required for the goslings at any time if there is a pasture or grass lawn over which they can roam. While I feed them grain it is merely to make the geese gentle and to teach them to stay about closer.

All my young geese are pinioned when small. If this is done before the wing feathers begin to grow there is scarcely any bleeding from the operation. There are three periods



Sportsman's Calendar

JUNE

Trout, salmon, grilse.

The best month for Sea-trout fishing.

each year in which the domesticated wild geese are disposed to wander away. Each spring and fall as the flocks pass over in their migrations my birds answer to the call of the wild. Gathering at one side of the enclosure, they stretch their necks to the utmost. Slowly they give out their guttural notes, which gradually are sounded faster and faster until finally, with discordant cries and a beating of the air with their wings, they sweep to the farther side of the pasture. Not deterred by the failure to rise, they walk back and the performance is repeated again and again.

There is another period when they seem impelled to travel and this is in July, provided there are any broods of goslings. Otherwise they do not seem to desire to go. Many times have I watched them walk round and round hunting for a loophole, and tight indeed must be the fence if they do not find one.

At this season their direction of travel is north-easterly, and I never found them going in any other. Why they take this direction at this time has never been clear to me.

Wild geese are exceedingly afraid of dogs and will not do well where disturbed by them. I once had one sitting on seven eggs when a small dog came into the yard and began running in circles, each one larger than the one before. Finally, in one grand rush, the goose was just in line and the dog, which had not seen her until the last moment, jumped clear over her. The dog was so scared he ran home, while the goose flapped screaming from her nest and began running at top speed. She continued running and squalling for almost a day and a half until she fell exhausted and died in a few minutes. This goose was raised in captivity and used to dogs all the 19 years of her life, yet the sudden fright was more than she could stand.

In recent years I have found that one can get a second clutch of eggs if the goose is shut out from the first nest for a few days just when she begins to feather it. It is thus possible to double the number of young raised each year, which is indeed quite an item where space and the number of birds kept does not permit of the slower way of increasing the flock.

Notwithstanding the fact that few geese are brought to bag by the gunners of the present day, they are steadily decreasing in number, although they are a long-lived bird. My Canadas range in age from three years up to an old mated pair that are 24 or 25 years old.

Mr. J. W. Whealton of Chincoteague Island, Va., whom I consider the greatest breeder of Canada geese at the present time, has made a complete success of it, and some of his old mated pairs have been breeding for more than 50 years. It is a matter of record that one old gander in one of the New England States was 80 years old when the owner killed it because it had become "mischievous."

In 1907 the writer spent the entire summer in Alaska, and the geese were breeding by the thousands in the swamps near the mouth of the Copper River. They young were ruthlessly slaughtered by the Siwash, eaten by the vermin, which abounds there, and otherwise destroyed in large numbers before they could fly. Some day in the very near future we will see the great V shaped flocks no more.

Who has not felt a thrill as he read the lines of Bryant in his "Ode to the Water-fowl?" "All day at that far height thy wings have fanned the cold, thin atmosphere," yet how few of the younger generation east of the Mississippi River have seen them of recent years passing over, high in air. But we are fortunate in that these noble game birds will increase in captivity and still retain their health and all their wild characteristics year after year. There is no reason why under the wise provisions of the proposed "breeders' law" they should not be found all over our country, both for ornamental use, for sport and for the market. Such legislation certainly will not decrease our game, but will greatly increase it. Let every one join the ranks of those who are striving to save game birds from the fate of the buffalo and the passenger pigeon.—Warren R. Leach, in the Amateur Sportsman.

"Say, pa?"
"What is it?"
"Can a Rear Admiral go to the front?"—Judge.