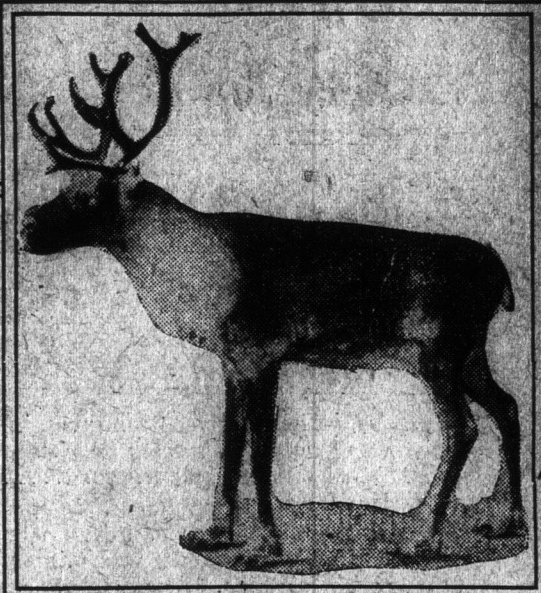


Field Sports at Home and Abroad



Sportsman's Calendar

OCTOBER

Oct. 1.—Pheasant (cocks only) and quail shooting opens for Esquimalt, Cowichan, Saanich and Islands Electoral Districts.

Pheasant shooting (cocks only) opens on Hornby and Denman Islands. Game Now in Season—Deer, pheasant, grouse (except in Saanich), quail, also ducks, geese and snipe.

N.B.—Municipal regulations of both North and South Saanich require written permits from both owners of land on which it is desired to shoot and Reeves of the municipalities. Trout-fishing now excellent; also Salmon-trotting. Tyees at their best at Alberni this month.

IN THE HAUNTS OF THE GOLDEN PLOVER

A touch on the arm from the red-headed urchin at my side, a hasty rush to cover in a patch of dry reed stems growing where a wash-water stream sinks into the sands of an Atlantic sea waste, and the next minute the spaces about us are full of whirling plovers. Out of the distance like a cloud they turned here and there on the lookout for feeding ground. But it was bare yellow sand everywhere, half hidden by driving spray brought in by a rough northwesterly gale, and, white again in an instant, a thousand birds moving as with a single impulse, the plovers turn and sweep at breakneck speed after the main body which has kept along the tide line. But that detour has brought our hiding place within the curve they are making, and now above the sound of the wind comes a murmur of many wings, punctuated by a mellow piping as the birds signal to each other. They are not more than 10ft. or 12ft. above the ground, and coming straight for the reed patch. The boy nudges me in the side with an absence of respect which nothing but such a moment could excuse, and then they are upon us. The reeds are in the way of a front shot; as the plovers approach overhead they are impossible; but behind, where they are passing away seaward, the phalarxes seem to close up, and I fire "into the brown," for no one could pick a shot in such a case. Down they fall in a straggling trail, two, three, five, six, swept far away over the level sand by the impetus of their flight. And then a second barrel with like effect, and before another cartridge can be inserted the major part of the flock is but a distant haze where the leaden Atlantic ends in spray upon the long curve of the shore.

But they may come back; the boys know it, and I know it, and the hunter's keenness within us, we say not a word, but reload and wait, motionless, with straining eyes, to see what they will do. And presently a detached party of some 200 or so go out to sea; then, describing a figure of eight, come back again towards our hiding places. This time they are low down, not more than a foot or two over the sands, and flying with incredible swiftness. They sweep by fifty yards away, whistling continuously, and I take the chance offered with both barrels, the last that offers for the time being. We get up, stretch our stiffened limbs, and forthwith set to work to collect the slain. The total in all is eighteen, a dozen and a half of dainty little birds, their under sides like new silver, their russet-brown backs flecked with spots of gold. What lovelier things could the winter shooter wish to see? We place them tenderly in the wicker basket the lad has brought with him, for soiled or tumbled game is an abomination, and Mac starts off with them to his cottage on that moorland road half a mile away, our only link with civilization in this wild stretch of Argyllshire coast.

I walk slowly on for the chance of another shot. The tide is coming in, the soft, purring sound it makes as it laps up the levels being distinctly audible under the wind. Gradually it lifts the shore birds from the ooze, and there are numbers of them on the move—ducks under the grey sky above, curlews and sandpipers flitting swiftly over the water, but all taking good care to keep out of reach of the 8 bore. Strategy is the only thing in such circumstances. About a mile round the bay there is a small reed-rough lagoon just inside a ridge of sandhills, and as there are sometimes wildfowl there the boy has been told to come back to me by way of the lagoon on the chance of sending forward any birds to me. It is not much of a chance, but the shore shooter does not despise long odds, and I hurry forward till opposite a deep cleft in the dunes through which birds often pass to the sea when disturbed inland. Climbing the nearer hill, a very cautious peep is taken through a tuft of sea grass on top, and there, in addition to a few moorhens, in the middle of the grey water are three Brent geese, resting, no doubt, after a good feed overnight amongst the crofters' oat stubbles. That they have not been disturbed by my shots is due partly to the fact that the wind is from the opposite directly, and partly because the monotonous thud of the surf on the shore sounds not unlike remote gun firing. At any rate, they are perfectly placid, and I lie down at full length on a sandy slope, recognizing that everything depends on the boy; the geese are as inaccessible to me unaided as though they were a mile out at sea. As I watch them silently a curlew comes sweeping by, and, perceiving me when only some twenty yards away, opens his long beak and shrieks out that warning which every shore bird knows so well. Many and many a hard-sought shot the curlew has spoiled; is he going to spoil the one of mine? I glance hastily at the Brent through the grass tangle. Up go their heads in an instant at that warning, and I can see they are scanning every hummock and neck against the winter reeds for a possible foe. The cry does not come again; nothing moves slowly their necks unbend, and they return to their former state of placidity. The little moorhens, which had scuttled into covert with much croaking and tail flicking, come forth again and proceed with their search for food.

Where is that boy? It is terribly cold lying here in the teeth of the wind, and the fine, loose sand grinds across the swell of the dunes, getting into the eyes and making one long to cough or sneeze, which is out of the question in present circumstances. I wait and wait, and am beginning to think it is not worth while

being frozen to death for the sake of a doubtful and distant chance, when at the end of half an hour the geese suddenly become uneasy. Their heads are up, and now they are turning round and round slowly, as though on a pivot. I look carefully over the distant rough ground for the cause of their disquiet, but can see nothing. The geese, however, are obviously alarmed, soon falling into line and paddling in my direction. The paddie becomes a rapid swim, and in another second they are beating the water with their wings and are in the air. Little consequence then is it what has become of the boy, or what has put them up. The all-absorbing question is, will they come within shot? Higher and higher they mount, till I see joyfully by their foreshortened forms they ought to pass not very far from where I lie as flat on the sand slope as it is possible for mortal to be. Nearer and nearer, higher and higher, making for the open sea beyond. Surely they are going too far to the right! No; they have taken a slight turn towards the hollow in the dunes below me, one at least looking like a possible shot, for they are flying now in open order. A glint of stormy sunshine comes out at the moment, and gleams on their ruddy orange beaks and the rich under of their upper plumage. My hands steal down to the gun at my side, I give them another three seconds, and then suddenly sit up. It is a long fifty yards to the nearest, and geese are tough birds, but I trust to the 8 bore, aim a yard ahead of his head, and fire. The effect is instantaneous. The long neck drops, the breast turns completely over, and falls without an effort, back foremost, behind a distant sandhill. As he falls a faint Gaelic yell comes from the tarn's remotest margin, and, looking over my shoulder and perceiving the urchin dancing joyously on a peaty hummock, I recognize that to his adroitness and cunning I probably owe the best shot of the morning.

Half an hour later little Mac and I are sharing well-earned sandwiches under shelter of a sea bank, talking over the goose, with the spindrift in long, silvery ropes trailing across the last of the level sands, the piping redshanks whirling through the sky like autumn leaves, and the big Atlantic stretching from out feet to the low, sunlit gleam on the furthest horizon. We go on after that modest luncheon, and have various other adventures with curlews, wary herons, and tantalizing teal, adding two couple of snipe to a mixed bag from the marsh behind Mac's cottage. But it was the shot at the goose which was the event of the day, which we talked of most, and which I believe Mac must have dreamt of that night.—E. L. A.

A TALE OF TEMAGAMI

"Well, what's the programme for today?" inquired the Norseman, as he lazily arose from the breakfast table, let out his belt a couple of notches to relieve undue pressure, and filled his villainous-looking pipe with Hudson Bay mixture preparatory to defiling the atmosphere and driving to the tall timber all game within smelling distance of the penetrating weed, writes C. B. Craig in Rod and Gun.

"What's the matter with a cruise up the lake?" offered the Novice. "I have heard wonderful tales of the beauties of the Northwest Arm scenery and if it can hold a candle to what we have here right around the camp you'll have to show me. Let's take a run up Obabika way."

Our good ship "The Papoose" lay idly swinging at her moorings in front of the camp. On shore lay the canoes, bottom up with their dew-wet roundness glistening in the half light of a cloudy morning. Far out on the misty lake the irrepresible loon was arguing with his mate in tones of domestic discord while nearer shore a colony of gulls circled over the water on delicately poised wings in the ceaseless search for something to appease the cravings of an ever present hunger. A leaden sky overhead mingled with the grey expanse of water, and here and there the darker blotch of neighboring islands loomed through the mist as if to indicate where the usually well defined horizon line ought to be. A coldish, moisture-laden breeze was blowing out of the south and in the channel an occasional whitecap tossed his hoary head as if in impatient protest against the topsy turvy calendar which provided October weather in mid-August. Altogether it was an unpromising day for a cruise, but anything was preferable to a dismal day in camp, and as the Novice's holiday was almost at an end, we resolved to act on his suggestion and prove to him by an ocular demonstration that our own little quiet nook had the Northwest Arm skinned forty ways for scenery, fish, comforts of home and everything else in the decalogue of the enthusiastic nature lover.

"Get busy, you fellows, and get in that stern anchor," ordered the Norseman, who, in addition to being the camp boss, was also Grand High Admiral and Engineer-in-Chief of the "fleet." "I'll give the engine a couple of turns to make sure her spark plug is on the job and that her batteries are not on strike for shorter hours and more pay," he added, evidently remembering an exasperating experience of a few days previous when all the cranking, tinkering and swearing that could be crowded into the space of two or three hours refused to make her budge an inch.

Knowing full well the penalty for mutiny on the high seas and disobedience of orders from the Boss, we sprang to our tasks and in a few minutes the dripping anchor was hauled

from its cool, soft bed of mud and snugly stowed in the forward locker. One of the canoes was made fast to the sterncleat while Ed, our guide and man of all work, with proper forethought for the comforts of the inner man, stowed in another locker a goodly supply of grub with the indispensable smoke-begrimed teapot and frying pan. The Novice and the Deckhand, under which latter sobriquet the writer was supposed to do all the menial work while on the high seas, busied themselves loading up with a cargo of air cushions, sweaters, slickers and other encumbrances, necessary and otherwise. Casting off our bow line, a few turns of our propeller brought us out into the channel and, rounding the head of the island, we shaped our course due north. Little did we suspect as we left our cozy camp that cloudy morning what a trying experience was in store for us ere we returned to our quiet little harbor.

As if determined to make amends for the unpromising deather, our sturdy little boat was on her very best behavior and chugged merrily along at a good ten-mile gait.

Past Burnt Island, through the Narrows and into the open stretch near Island Bay we bowled along with the freshening breeze dead astern. The jolly little white caps chased after us in an animated game of tag, but somehow we were never "IT," as our powerful little craft was always just a little ahead of the foremost. Passing Cattle Island we caught a glimpse of Bear Island on the starboard with its scattered collection of nondescript buildings comprising the Hudson's Bay Co.'s Post.

Swinging into the Northwest Arm we passed numerous familiar spots, for we had by this time reached our old fishing grounds of several years ago, and in a few minutes we sighted Island 1901, where we proposed to stop for lunch and inspect our old camping spot. Having safely negotiated a landing in a quiet little bay, we found the remains of our old camp, apparently just as we left it four years ago, for it seems in this far northern wilderness time moves slowly and the everlasting rocks and woods and water never change. What fond memories were recalled by the blackened embers and flame tinted rocks of our old camp fire. Here is where we pitched our tents, overgrown now with a few straggling huckleberry bushes, but otherwise just as we left it. There is the rock where Harry slid into the lake on the last day, just as we were leaving for home in, all the discomfort of creased trousers, stiff collars and bulging suit cases. Over under the trees stand, in wobbly decrepitude, the remains of our old camp table with our laboriously carved initials on the "register." An empty corned beef can peeps from under a log and alongside it lay a weather stained but still serviceable Dowagiac Minnow, which the writer missed from his tackle box on arrival home from that holiday, and which he always suspected had been swiped by one of the less successful fishermen of our party in an effort to change his luck by securing bait with a record for big fish. I hope he will accept my humble apology for these years of suspicion under which he has been held.

Lounging on a softly cushioned rock, deep under its covering of reindeer moss and lichen we plunged into reminiscence of the old days of 1901, while Ed busied himself preparing lunch.

High above us on the branch of an ancient pine a noisy red squirrel chattered and fussed and scolded and in squirrel lingo plainly expressed his opinion of our unwarranted intrusion into his private domain. It is doubtful if he recognized in us his neighbors of four years ago, but if he did, he certainly indicated as plainly as squirrel talk can that our room was preferred to our company.

The welcome announcement "Grub" recalled us to matters more material and I brought a ready response, for we were hungry as pirates, with digestions equal to almost anything from ten-penny nails to old boot straps, and such a meal as it was! Take it straight from me, ye slaves to printed menu cards, French waiters and hotel chefs, you don't know what a good meal is until you have lived in the wilderness and tasted the delights of camp cookery as prepared by an experienced woodsman. No need for a Manhattan or Martini to induce a false appetite, no serving in courses from soup to dessert, with entrees, roasts and salads between. Just plain, wholesome cooking, with the crispest of bacon, steaming snowy potatoes, bread and butter, strawberry jam and tea; and it was good, every bit of it even to the last morsel, and we all stayed with it as long as the supply lasted. The benighted individual who has never had an experience such as ours certainly has our sympathy, for he don't know what delights he has missed.

Our meal finished and pipes lighted, we lounged about telling impossible fish stories, while Ed washed up, and packed our stuff aboard. Then quenching our fire we gave one more look around the old place to make sure that nothing was left behind and, with a fond good-by to old 1901, we again embarked on our northern course. By this time the breeze had freshened to almost a gale, but in our satisfied condition it troubled us not a whit, and we were soon into Obabika Bay, a long, narrow strip, well sheltered by the towering pines and almost as still as the proverbial mill pond.

Through the winding length of the bay we chugged merrily along, the exhaust from our motor awakening unusual echoes in the sleepy old forest and doubtless arousing to precipitate

certainly could not understand such an unusual invasion of their quiet fastnesses.

Near the head of the bay we abandoned our launch and took to the canoe, for here the water was too shallow for anything but the lightest draft craft. Paddling slowly along we were overtaken by a canoe manned by a couple of young chaps who inquired if they were in the right direction for Lake Obabika. Their brand new khaki clothing, city white complexions and superfluous camp impedimenta, together with their awkward stroke in paddling, proclaimed them to be tenderfeet of the very best type, but we were in the same class ourselves long years ago, so we gladly supplied the necessary information and proceeded on our way.

At the head of the bay a short portage brought us out on Monkey Lake, a small pond between Obabika Bay and Lake Obabika. Crossing this we encountered the long portage, a rocky, well worn trail through towering white pines, any one of which would cut almost enough lumber to build a modest dwelling, and at last, after a smart tramp, we emerged on an arm of Obabika, famous in this region for its good fishing. We, however, were not after fish, only seeing the country, as it were, so a short visit sufficed.

On our return march we again encountered our tenderfoot friends, this time staggering under the weight of frying pans, fishing rods, Hudson Bay blankets, grub and duffie. Our sympathies went out to them, for we knew they were greenhorns and could only learn by bitter experience what to bring along and what to leave at home.

Reaching our good ship we turned her nose homeward, well satisfied with our day's outing, and eager for a quick run to our home camp and grub. Right here I think it proper to explain that the waters of Temagami are about as difficult and dangerous for power boat navigation as any in our experience. Ugly shoals exist when we would naturally expect deep water, and many of them are entirely invisible. At most unexpected places the bottom of the lake seems to fairly rise out of the depths under your very eyes, and before you have time to alter your course the damage is done. Such was our experience that eventful day, and it was one of those unreasonable mountains out of the depths that gave us our Waterloo and gave it good and proper. We were bowling along at a good gait secure in our Superior (mark the word!) knowledge of the course, when we hit it, and hit it hard. No gentle little love tap was this, nor is there any "give" to Temagami rocks. Our good little boat seemed to leap clear of the water, settling back with a great splash, the jar of the grinding impact tumbling some of us in a heap in the cockpit. But in the hurdling leap she had cleared the obstruction and was keeping right on as though leaping hurdles was an ordinary accomplishment for any well behaved craft. For our part we were too surprised almost to think, and every man jack of us expected the next moment to see the boat fill and sink under our feet, dumping us into the chilly waters, with a long swim to a rocky, uninhabited shore and miles of bush and water between us and the Post, the nearest human habitation. We, however, quickly recovered from the sudden surprise, and finding our craft still afloat and engine still going, though sadly knocking, we headed for shore to take inventory of the damage and speculate on our chances of getting home.

That terrific impact on the hard side of Temagami shoal had certainly given a solar plexus blow—rudder bent up against the bottom of the boat, propeller blades twisted in all directions, reversing gear entirely out of commission, and heavy iron skag turn out bodily and dropped into the bottom of the lake. To say nothing of a bent propeller shaft, were the first visible injuries we could detect. As for injuries to the hull we could only conjecture and hope for the best, and pray that we might at least hold together and keep afloat until we were safely in camp some thirty miles away.

There was no difficulty in reaching a verdict in the council of war which was immediately convened. It was "git up and git" for civilization as quickly as our crippled condition would permit, particularly as the wind outside was constantly getting stronger, having already reached "half a gale" proportions and every moment's delay lessened our chances for a safe cruise homeward. Temporary repairs were imperative, so while the Norseman and the Novice busied themselves in straightening the rudder, Ed and I padded back to the shoal in an apparently hopeless search for the iron skag which we knew was reposing peacefully somewhere on the bottom. Fortune favored our quest, for, assisted by the clearness of the water, we found the paint-scarred rocks where we had struck, and following the trail the piece was located in about four feet of water, from which it was hauled after sundry jabs with the boat hook. Returning to the Papoose, which in the meantime had been made as shipshape as possible, our homeward journey was resumed. And what a change in our spirits was wrought in that little fraction of a second when we hit those rocks! Ed was glum as an oyster, no doubt feeling keenly some responsibility for the accident, as he was at the wheel when it occurred. No one reproached him, however, for all, save myself, realized that he was not to blame. The Norseman, ever solicitous of his beloved engine, hovered over her as a mother over a sick child, fearing every throb would be her last. The Novice and myself, rather careflous en-

cumbrances, kept discreetly silent, realizing that under the strain of our circumstances the least said the better. And so we proceeded on our limping way, hoping against hope that we would make a safe harbor.

Reaching the main portion of the lake, we found a task cut out for our craft that we would not have attempted even in the best of condition, but into the teeth of the gale we plunged, realizing that there was no other choice left for us. Rolling and pitching, hitting only the high spots in some places, in others plunging bow deep through the hissing waves, we labored on our crippled way for hours, and finally with heightened spirits were able to reach the Post with still some fifteen miles between us and home.

"Take my advice, boys, and stay here for the night," admonished Harry Woods, the genial and accommodating Factor; "I know something of the weather hereabouts, and unless I miss my guess, we are in for a wild night of it. Before another hour it will be as dark as a stack of black cats with all that mist blowing."

Harry was right, as was shortly afterwards proven to us, but we, ignorant in our superior knowledge of Temagami, and having renewed confidence in the seaworthiness of our crippled craft, decided to chance it and run for home. Little time was consumed in loading some necessary supplies from the Post, and casting off, we again pushed out into the storm and gathering darkness on the last leg of our journey. The prospect was anything but reassuring, as the course between us and home was tortuous and beset with shoals, and even in broad daylight required a trained eye and steady hand to navigate safely. But we had been over the course so often that we felt confident of our ability to pick our way through the myriad of islands that lined the fifteen-mile run.

The first few miles were comparatively easy going, as there was still enough daylight left to enable us to distinguish the headlands by which we shaped our course, and we were commencing to feel that Harry's warning was unwarranted when, with a suddenness almost of blowing out the lamp, a pall of black, impenetrable mist settled down upon us, completely obscuring everything visible. Sky, woods and water, as if by a magician's touch, were absolutely wiped out, and we were left floundering through an abyss of darkness with nothing to guide us except the wind. Our course we knew was directly into the teeth of the gale, and as long as that held true we felt that we could not wander very far from the general direction of camp. Buffeted by the enormous waves, drenched by flying spray, we plunged through that Stygian blackness, trusting to luck to keep us clear of the rocks. Our only hope was in keeping going, to attempt a landing with no knowledge of where we were, was out of the question—to attempt to anchor in midlake and wait for daylight was not to be thought of, for no anchorage we might have found would have held in that howling gale. As long as our engine kept going and we kept clear of the rocks we felt safe enough, but the uncertainty of our location and the fear that any moment our crippled engine might give up the ghost, as the best trained gasoline engines often have the habit of doing, made our position decidedly uncomfortable and kept us under a suspense which, to put it mildly, was rather trying on the nerves. The Novice and Ed were forward at the wheel, straining their optics in the futile endeavor to see through that black wall. The Norseman sat by the engine with hand on throttle feeling her pulse, ready to shut off power the instant we might strike a rock or bang her nose into the short of some intruding island. The Deckhand sat in the stern ready to haul our canoe "lifeboat" alongside so that all might disembark from the sinking ship. Nobody spoke.

(Continued Next Sunday)

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