

HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

THE OPENING DAY: A REMINISCENCE

(By Richard L. Pocock.)

It was September the first a year or two ago. The following day was Labor Day, so that I had two whole free days to spend in renewing my acquaintance with the blue grouse of Vancouver Island, after several years' absence from the country. In those former years I had found a happy hunting ground in the hills around the head of Sooke Harbor, a ground which in those days being not quite so accessible from town as some other places, had not been overrun by too many or suffered from too unmerciful a hammering, so that hope was high in my breast that this district was still as well stocked as I had always found it in past years.

As the season approached I listened to many a discussion as to the most likely places to yield good bags, and laughed up my sleeve and hugged my secret knowledge to myself as I noted no one seemed to mention the hills round Sooke Harbor. When asked where I intended to go, I craftily assumed an appearance of indifference, and smiled as I thought of the fine sport I expected to enjoy when once I got among them.

Pride ever goes before a fall. The mysterious man with the secret knowledge of some pet place far better than any of the others seldom returns with a much better bag than the next man, and so it fell out in this case.

In the old days I used to make my headquarters on the harbor, and seldom found it necessary to make any very extended trips inland in order to make a respectable bag. In the greediness of my desire for a fine showing of blues, I meant to cover a large territory this time, and of course gather a large bag as I went. The starting point was the tank near Goldstream, and the objective the Royal Ensign hotel on the Sooke road, near the head of the harbor. It looks easy on the map—a matter of six miles or so as the crow flies.

I started; the weather was hot, the grouse had been there, but they kept earlier hours than the E. & N. train and had retired apparently to the trees for their midday siesta. I climbed up hills and down gorges and ravines, over fallen timber and through salal, my cartridge bag was heavy and grew no lighter as the sun mounted higher; my game bag was light and grew no heavier as the hours went by. An hour or so after the start I met a couple of hunters with a deer, and I smiled a superior smile as I pitied them for the hard labor of packing it out, and thought what much better sport I was going to have when I really did get started with those blues. Soon after the dog pointed. "Ah-ha!" thought I, "here goes for the first grouse of the season!" I crept warily forward to the dog; there was a whirr of wings, and I narrowly escaped being guilty of an infraction of the game laws, as a bevy of mountain quail broke from the low bush and scattered over the surrounding country. October the first was the opening day for quail, and this was September.

The sun was now well overhead, and there was nothing in the game bag except the scanty lunch which my Spartan instincts had declared to the good wife was amply sufficient for a hunter-man. About three bites for me and one gulp for the dog, and that was gone; and off we started again with renewed confidence in what was to come when I reached the old familiar hunting grounds at the latter end of the journey. I thought I must be getting well on by this time and imagined I recognized some of the landmarks; but there is a marvelous sameness about the hills and ravines of this country, and I was further off from the end of the journey than I supposed, when, suddenly, at about one hundred yards range, I espied two full grown deer, and a fawn feeding unconcernedly on a patch of mossy rock.

Now it is one thing to make up one's mind before starting that deer-shooting is too much like work and quite another to restrain one's impulse to shoot when you come across a beauty in the woods. The distance was too great, however, for bird shot, and I had nothing bigger. Between me and the deer, which had ceased feeding only for a second or two to stare at me, was a thick patch of salal over knee-deep, but, as they seemed so tame, I thought just for fun I would see how close I could get to them.

"Making a sneak" was out of the question in the salal, especially as I had already been seen, so I altered my direction and started off at right angles from the deer, making plenty of noise and no attempt at concealment. The deer took little interest apparently in my movements, and, after I had put the side of the rocky patch between me and them, I made a quick detour and came upon them at a range of about twenty yards. There was no fear of wounding without killing at such a short distance, even with No. 6 shot, and one shot in the neck dropped a fine fat buck.

It was now well on in the afternoon, and by the time the deer was galloped and fixed up for packing on my back, I was beginning to hanker more than a little for the good cheer of mine host of the Royal Ensign. Still I had something to show now for my day's grind, and I had no idea how far I really was from the road. I don't know exactly what that buck weighed, but I know that it grew no lighter as I picked my way over fallen timber or struggled through the salal like a fly in tangle-foot.

The shades of evening began to fall and I was still struggling in the bush; an odd grouse or two would get up and fly straight away from me occasionally, affording what would have been the easiest of shots to an unencumbered man, but you can't shoot grouse with a

deer on your back weighing half a ton (more or less). As it rapidly became dusk, I left the bottom in which I was traveling and mounted a rocky hill to reconnoitre. There it was, Sooke Harbor, a lovely stretch of water shimmering in the evening sun, about four times as far away as I had calculated, and altogether out of my reach before nightfall, unless I increased the pace very considerably.

It became necessary to jettison a portion of the cargo. Reluctantly the hindquarters of the deer were severed from the rest of the carcass, which was hung up in a tree to be fetched next day. There is little twilight in this part of the world, and that brush was thick and that lunch (long since devoured) was scanty; progress was slow and the inevitable had to be faced: a night in the woods and no blankets or creature comforts. Luckily, I had plenty of matches and dry firewood was fairly easily gathered without the aid of an axe. The dog and I curled up together under a big cedar to pass the night.

Several hours before daylight I was awake and shivering; the fire was out and a light drizzle was falling. The boughs of the cedar kept the wet out until it was light enough to travel, but nothing that I know of will keep the wet out in the brush, certainly nothing that I had with me on that trip, dressed light as I was for the blazing hot weather in which I started out.

I had camped by the side of a creek, and my breakfast was a drink of its water before I started out once more to follow its course. I did not recognize it and was not at all sure where it would bring me out, but judged it the wiser plan to follow it until I reached the road, which I eventually did pretty well played out in an hour or two. Somehow I did not feel very much like going back for the rest of that deer; my thoughts turned more to home and mother, and a change of dry clothes. I turned my weary feet in the direction of Humpback bridge, and from there to Goldstream station, the rain continuing steadily all the time. At Goldstream I found several other hunters waiting for the morning train back to town, discouraged by the weather. In company with these I stood on the platform of the smoking car (there was no room inside) and endured a shower of mingled hail, rain and clinkers until Victoria was once more reached.

No more deer-hunting for me—not much! P.S.—I was out again next Sunday.

MARAUDING CATS

The Government Biological Survey states that the "sleek highwayman," known as the house cat destroys more wild birds and young poultry than all native natural enemies combined. A cat has been known to kill a whole brood of chickens in a day—a feat unequalled by any predaceous animal with the possible exception of the hawk. It is not uncommon for cats to destroy whole coveys of quail or grouse or nests full of young songsters. In the New England States alone, it is estimated, fifteen hundred thousand birds are killed annually by cats.

Unfortunately, the birds thus destroyed are almost never sparrows. Cats often try to catch sparrows, but rarely with success, owing to the exceptional alertness of those feathered nuisances. The cats that kill the wild birds and poultry are not usually the well-fed household pets, however, but the abandoned and neglected outcasts that have to forage for a living.

In one year the Cruelty Society in New York City killed monthly an average of six thousand sick, injured or homeless cats—a total for the year of over seventy thousand. A large proportion of these were pets abandoned by people who had gone to the country for the summer. It often happens that summer visitors to the mountains or seashore take their

cats with them and, on returning home, leave them behind to swell the number of stray cats and to make serious inroads on the birds of the region. It is safe, says the Biological Survey, to assume that in the rest of the state outside of New York City as many cats follow a wild life as in the metropolis, and if it be assumed that each cat kills one bird a week there is a grand total of over thirty-five hundred thousand birds destroyed annually.

These facts are set forth in the forthcoming Year-Book of the Department of Agriculture, which adds that in parts of our country where the climate is mild and bird life abundant, as in the chaparral region of California, cats often revert to a semi-wild state and never revisit their old homes except for plunder. Sportsmen and bird lovers should be ever on the watch for marauding cats and destroy them whenever possible.

One of the principal reasons for keeping cats is their alleged value as killers of rats and mice. As a matter of fact, it is a very rare cat that will venture to attack the common brown rat; and it is not uncommon to find houses in which cats are kept fairly overrun with mice.—Saturday Evening Post.

A BAG OF PRAIRIE CHICKEN

The close of the season had been a fine open one, and the Indian summer a thing to remember. Very little snow had fallen, even though we were in December, yet we knew that the current mildness would have to be paid for at Christmas or soon after. Prairie chicken shooting closes on December 15, and we were rapidly nearing that melancholy date, so it was agreed to have a last shoot before climatic necessity and the law put an end to sport for another nine months. Birds were still plentiful all around, and the broods of the spring had matured into fine strong creatures, which afforded grand sport and good eating.

Talking the matter over after a hard day's breaking on a 10-acre field of virgin soil, Blake and I fixed on December 13 for the final attack on the birds, and the former hazarded the suggestion that the South Cope would give us all the sport we wanted. My omniscient friend was must given to aristocratic-sounding names, for the miserable enclosure to the rear of the stables he called the Paddock, while an emergency timber and mud erection, which the cattle used as a harbor of refuge in rough weather, he designated the Home Farm. That distinctive-looking poplar bluff on the eminence due north he humorously termed the Deerholme Forest, though probably it contained not more than a couple of hundred trees, and sticks at that. It was all very nice, and we both grew into the habit of using the above names, a fact which afforded our friends much amusement.

At last the great day came, gloriously fine and free from wind, a homely breakfast of porridge and toast disappeared in quick time, and having turned the cattle out to roam at their sweet will, away we sallied. Each of us bore two guns, one of mine being the old Zulu, which, though slow, was generally sure. Our farm covered one section—that is, a square mile, like the City of London. The land adjacent had not been homesteaded, so we were able to run over a goodly tract of prairie as fancy took us. Half a mile south of the shanty stood a couple of wheat stacks, still unthreshed, and they were our first objectives, where we hoped to kill our initial chicken, provided the gods were kind. Cautiously we tramped by a circuitous route over stubble and scrub, till, on arriving within sight of the stacks, we noted the long, sinewy necks of half a dozen birds busily engaged in clearing as many grains as possible from the ridges. Ever and anon they would stand to attention and gaze around to discover an intruder. From their backward glances we knew that more of

their brothers and sisters were present out of sight; but how to get in a sporting shot—that was the question? Fortunately a large clump of bushes lay 200 yards from the stacks. This we reached, and so lay down free from observation, while discussing our line of action. A deep furrow ran almost up to the stacks, with a solitary saskatoon shrub about half way. So on our hands and knees we crawled, and found it rough work, for by the time we had reached the saskatoon our shirts and trousers were scarred and scratched in front almost to ribbons. Here Blake left me in order to get to the rear of the birds. When ready he was to alarm the chicken and fire first, striving to turn them towards me.

Slowly he crept away and disappeared in a patch of wicked-looking scrub, and I got ready, after what seemed an unconscionably long wait. Our hoped-for prey were in ignorance of what was awaiting them, and were still busy pecking downwards for dear life. Then the desired signal rang out—two shots from Blake's "twin-screw," as he called an ancient double-barrelled tool of his. I saw a couple fall, and hoped that I should have similar luck. Away went the whole crowd—there must have been a couple of dozen of them. In a twinkling they were on me, and I fired wildly, bagging one bird out of three shots. Then they wheeled and dashed athwart my post. I had reloaded, and three of them toppled down almost at my feet. So far, so good; but I had heard nothing further from my fellow-sportsman, which was not like him, good shot as he was. Hastily picking up my birds, I tramped over to the spot where I had last seen Blake. It was a half-acre of bush, and I had some trouble to make my way into it. I had not gone more than twenty yards, when crash! and I was hurled downwards, what time guns and birds left me in all directions. I had stumbled into a fairly deep hole, but luckily I lit on something soft, on which I was congratulating myself, when a hoarse voice beneath my feet shouted, "Now, then, you ass! Can't you see you're on top of me, your bosom friend? Get a move on you, and help me up. My legs are caught in some of these roots." For the life of me I could not help bursting out laughing; there was something funny in the whole affair, though possibly Blake failed to see any humor in the situation. With the aid of some projecting roots we scrambled out, both none the worse. Blake had been half-stunned by the fall, hence his silence after the opening shots. The hole was about six feet deep, and we recalled it as one of our trial wells—none of your dollar-a-foot creations, but a real, humorous amateur effort, whose sides were as irregular as our united efforts had been able to produce. It served us right for not filling it in, and we never forgot the lesson. As soon as we had recovered our somewhat dazed senses, Blake proposed that we should cover up our half-dozen chicken and try the South Cope. So we cached the lot, and left the scrub.

Heavy going was the rule, but it was only for a quarter of a mile. The cope was mainly composed of bush, with a few tall poplars, almost bare of branches, interspersed. Beyond lay an extensive tract of stubble, which contained rich gleanings for the birds. I went forthward this time, edging towards a tongue-like extension of soil which was hemmed in by tall bushes. There were lots of chicken feeding here—a lively time was promised us. Having gained a vantage point, I cautiously arose and cooed, then let fly with the Zulu, and down fluttered one plump-looking specimen. A right and left as the covey wheeled was not so fortunate, for only a cloud of feathers testified that some poor bird would need repairs. Now was Blake's time, for the whole crowd fled madly towards him. Blake was ready, came close enough for work, he was soon hotly engaged, falling forms testifying to his accuracy, and he had accounted for half a dozen.

The chickens were by now fairly nonplussed, and circled in mad confusion, so that either of us was ready for them as they approached our corners, with ever-decreasing ranks. By the time they flew over the cope we had bagged twenty of them, and the hot time was over. It was now midday, and, having collected our spoil, which was cached as before, we sat down on a log to sandwiches and, well—not cold tea. There was a nip in the air which urged speed, and we were soon on our feet again, anxious for locomotion.

Off again around our estate, till we came to the ricks of our early exploits—the old well was not forgotten this time. We expected to find that the chickens had returned, for it was a favorite feeding ground. We had still a dozen cartridges each. Arrived at the stacks, we had the joy of seeing them tenanted as before, and we separated in great glee. Blake gave the word, and soon we were hard at it, gradually approaching each other, with some twenty chicken between. One or two among the cloud of whirling wings looked immense birds as they approached us in their frenzy, and I was wondering what it meant when Blake shouted, "Geese, by Jove! My bird."

We had both fired at the same object, though my friend had discharged his piece a wee fraction before me. There was no time to argue the point, for I suddenly felt a great whack on the head, as a weight of warm flesh and feathers half-smothered and sent me to Mother Earth. I rose slowly, to find myself grasping a fat goose, while Blake gently insinuated, "I'll trouble you to hand over my bird." Though rather doubtful as to its ownership, I did as requested, for he assured me that I had fired after him. "That may be," I rejoined. "But it was the Zulu, which is generally good for one." "Zulu be hanged! You aimed at the other goose. Look out! Here's the other." There, sailing leisurely above us, was the second goose, presenting a fair shot to both. Madly we snatched up our pieces, which were lying loaded a few yards off, and we blazed away four barrels in a trice. No bird fell, but a quivering tail, now a hundred yards away, seemed to shake in derision at our puny efforts. Blake felt the position acutely, and said he had never known anything like it before. Slowly we jerked our cartridges out, and stooped to pick them up. Suddenly Blake exclaimed, the while he closely scrutinized the empty cases, "I thought there was something wrong. These are blanks!" We had unwittingly pocked a number of blanks left on the table by a friend, who had been learning how to refill old cartridges with our machine. In disgust each looked at the other, but said never a word on the subject. The day's sport was over, for a great lurid ball over the western tree-tops told us that we must make haste and collect our various bags from their hiding places. Weighted with his solitary goose, which Blake bore in triumph, he led the way to the spot where we had hid the prairie chicken. We soon laid out the whole spoil on the stubble, and summed up the downy trophies.

There were thirty-seven chicken in the several rows, and by itself lay the whitish-grey form of the goose, a testimony to somebody's skill, and weighing quite a dozen pounds. So home, laden with the spoil, which we at once deposited in the cellar—as good as a refrigerator at that time of the year. Needless to say, we lived in clover for weeks, and on Christmas Day the crowning point of attack lay in the nicely browned corpse of the grey goose, whose death, and the manner thereof, we oft returned to, each, when the other was absent, gloating over the narrative of his skill at the stacks. And the episode of the "blanks" never failed to draw peals of laughter from the listeners, when the tale was told round a log fire, with the thermometer at "forty below" outside in the wintry air. "Let's see, how many geese were there?" was the sly allusion which we often had to suffer and bear with calmness in subsequent years.—F. Cartwright in The Field.

MY FLY-BOOK

One book I have, most plainly bound, In pigskin that was one time yellow, But now another hue has found, Like autumn leaves all rich and mellow.

And when I turn its pages through, I find them richly packed with stories, Although they might seem dull to you, Who know not of their countless glories.

No bookcase need its charms enhance, It lives within my Norfolk jacket Beside my pipe and pouch, perchance Next sandwiches in paper packet.

Beside the fire on winter nights I sit, with book on knee, a-dreaming, And live again those dear delights, When every pledge is worth redeeming.

I see the laughing stream that flows Through dappled meadows, reeds, and rushes, The big three-pounder that I rose Below the clump of alder bushes.

Those olive duns recall a day Upon the moor, when fly was hatching; That Wickham's Fancy seems to say: "One fish was not for bungler's catching!"

That volume bound in "Persian sheep," Your costly "crushed Morocco" treasure, Those rare editions—may you keep Them all, and I my simple pleasure.

—Loose-Strife.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NOVELISTS

(Continued from Page Four.)

thorne's novels is "The Scarlet Letter," and Hester Prynne may be said to belong to the deathless heroines of modern fiction. In the prologue to this story we are introduced to the old custom house at Salem, where in a box of dusty documents, Hawthorne tells us he discovered the faded relic and the time-worn papers which suggested to him the theme of the narrative and the title.

Hester Prynne is a beautiful woman who has suffered the extreme penalty for a sin, for which she was not alone responsible. The partner of her guilt, Dimmesdale, a saintly young minister, is totally unsuspected by anyone of wrong doing, and is revered by his congregation and the people generally. The child is as beautiful as the mother, and the latter's constant companion. Hester's husband is Roger Chillingworth, an aged scholar, his young wife has preceded him to America from Amsterdam, and when he follows her two years later it is to find her upon the pillory, her infant in her arms and upon her breast, the Scarlet Letter which she has been condemned to wear for life. She refuses to divulge the name of her lover, but in turn swears to keep her husband's identity secret. The woman and child take up their abode in a little cottage outside the town, where after a time, Hester tries to atone for her sin through ministering to the sufferings of others. Meanwhile Chillingworth, having found out Dimmesdale, though the latter is wholly unaware of the fact, through his profession of physician, becomes intimate with the young minister, and by his prying and insinuations

makes life a torture to the guilt-troubled man. The climax of the story comes when Dimmesdale resolves to make his sin known, and share Hester's punishment. He ascends the old pillory early in the morning, and there he calls to him Hester and the child. When the time arrives he tells his story and Chillingworth, among the assembled listeners, has his revenge in full. Dimmesdale tears open his shirt and discloses upon his breast, a terrible wound, inflicted by his own hand, and the livid marks form a letter, the counterpart of that letter which Hester Prynne has worn with so much shame. Then Dimmesdale, overcome with physical suffering and mental anguish, sinks to the floor, and Hester, lifting his head to her breast, he dies with her arms about him.

THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

False hair was worn in Egypt 5,000 years before our era, says Professor Waldstein; and he added that in explorations in Greece, he had come across a perfect set of false teeth, made very much on the same plan as our dentists adopt today, and gold-filled, although dating back to the fourth century B. C. In the same country ladies' perfume boxes, containing scent and rouge, have been found. Razors also have been found, those used by the Greeks and Romans being crescent-shaped.

In the South of France there is a concrete arched bridge, known as the Pont du Gard, which was erected in 50 B. C. It is composed of alternate layers of large and small stones, gravel, etc., and of cementitious materials. Vitruvius describes the materials and methods in use before the Christian era; and other writers accurately describe the ancient method of using

boards laid on edge and filling the space between with cement and all sorts of small and large stones mingled together. The ancient builders must have been more conscientious or better looked after than some modern ones, or their concrete would not have lasted so long; which shows that conscientious work is the main thing after all.

WONDERED WHY

A clergyman tells this story, rather against himself, with some unctious. He was suddenly called upon, away from home, to preach at a lunatic asylum, and he decided to make use of a rather favorite missionary sermon of his.

After the service, as the clergyman was leaving the chapel, one of the inmates stepped up to him and said:—

"That was a grand sermon you gave us, sir."

The clergyman was pleased, and replied:—"I am glad you liked it. What part in it especially interested you?"

"When you told about the mothers throwing their infants into the Ganges."

"Yes," said the clergyman, "that is very sad, but it is true, and we must do our utmost to enlighten those unhappy people, that they may turn from the error of their way."

"Yes, indeed," continued the lunatic, "we must. And all the time you were preaching I wondered why your mother hadn't thrown you into the river when you were small."



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