

Field Sports at Home and Abroad

WOODS AND WATER EXPLOITS

(By Ernest McGaffey)
Science vs. Know How

"Ever tell you how I cleaned up one of those scientific fishermen?" said Jud Bates, as he dried our lines out over the grass by hanging them from the branches of the soft maples in the front yard of the Twin Lakes hotel.

"No," was the answer; "how did you turn the tables on him? Did you 'outluck' him or put a charge of dynamite in the creek?"

"I just brought my boyhood knowledge into play," says Jud; "I turned the trick like I used to at the old gravel-hole."

How was it, now that you've got started, Jud?" says I.

"Well," said Jud, "it was this way. I was just breaking into the fishing game. Somehow, I had got bitten with the idea of having my picture taken holding up one end of a big string of fish, with an expression on my face as if I was about half-ashamed of being such a fish hog, and half proud of getting such a whale of a catch. I bought me a lot of tackle, and I had a regular fish 'bug' go along with me to help pick it out. Now there's nothing cheap about a real fisherman's outfit, and it swallowed up my savings like a cup of coffee to get the proper outfit."

"I had one split bamboo rod for deep-water fishing and a shorter one for bait-casting, and two reels that stood me in seventeen dollars for the reels alone. Then I had a tackle-box, a minnow-bucket, bass and trout flies, phantom minnows, spoon-hooks, a landing net, sinkers, bass hooks, bucktail, spinners, rubber-waders, chain stringers, fishing toggery, fancy corks, and fine lines and small-hooks for fishing for pan fish, a gaff for big fish, and say, when I got through I made the 'bug' sore by asking him if he got his 'bit' out of what I blew in."

"Well, I 'framed up' with the 'bug' afterwards, and he takes me out, and honest, the first time I land a three-pound small-mouth bass, and I says to him, 'Ferdie—his name was Ferdinand—Ferdie,' says I, 'it's worth the price, just this one guy alone.' And it was."

"Well, the time I started to tell about was this way. I had come out alone right out here, and I had my jaws set for bass and wall-eyed pike. Ferdie had been out the day before, and he said they were shoaling it over the bars and hungry as harvesters at dinner-time. He caught eleven elegant bass and two pike, and I got a day off just to get 'em on the rise. The 'boss' was a muskallunge fisherman himself, and as things were kind of slack I braced him for a day and told him honest what I wanted to do. He says, 'Bring me a couple of pike, if you can spare 'em,' he says. And so I agreed to do it and away I went."

"When I got here there was a fellow here from Oconomowoc, and according to his say-so he was a scientific fisherman from somewhere before the flood. One or two of the men around the hotel said he was able to make good, although at that he was very generous with his talk. He had his wife with him, but she wasn't a fisherman."

"So along about nine o'clock, he and I gets to talking, and the first thing he does is to 'kid' me about my tackle and lines and hooks. He was the greater ever about advice, and to hear him I wouldn't be able to catch a bullhead with my outfit if I fished for a month. He had everything different from my works, and on the level, he must have paid a thousand dollars for his plant."

"I had a little talk with Ducky Jones, the fellow that used to work here around the stables, and he told me the fish bit best early in the morning, just before the mist rose up off the bars. He said that when the mist rose, the fish could see the boats, and then they to-bogganed for deep water, and that made the fishing slow. But he said that when the mist was over the water, they bit to beat Banagher. Said you could catch 'em with both hands and both feet."

"I slipped Ducky a little piece of money for his 'tip' and says I, 'I'll get out before this Oconomowoc geezer gets up and have a dozen bass by the time he's getting his boat ready. I got my boat all ready, and Ducky said he'd have a minnow bucket filled and in the boat for me. So I turned in and when the old alarm clock rattled for me, I was Jonathan on the spot, and out in a hurry."

"And right on the stairs I met this Oconomowoc 'fresh' and he was saying 'Hurry up, Clara.' We got into our boats together, and he seemed to have his bait all right the same as I did, and his wife, she was looking sleepy and kind of disgusted at being hauled out before she got her beauty sleep. I pulled out and got a position about what I judged was right from the way Ducky had said was right, and as I only had one to row for, I beat this guy to it. I was trying to get to the centre of a big bar out there, and I aimed to keep straight with the hotel, and about a half mile out."

"I sounded the bottom with my big pole, and found about four feet of water and I knew I was over the bar, so I anchored and began operations. About fifty feet away from me in the foggy mist this Oconomowoc anchors, and by the time he was fast and ready I had landed one bass. I fastened onto him the minute I cast in, and it took me about five minutes to get him in. I throw out again, and another bass had the minnow in a second. It took at least five minutes to get him around and get the landing-net under him, and about this time the Oconomowocs landed their first bass."

"Ducky Jones had said that the mist sometimes rose over the lake and cleared up in half an hour, and about that time the great white light broke in on my grey matter about where I was at. So I took off the tip of my rod, tied the line tight to the end of the second joint, bid a hasty farewell to scientific methods and started to yank 'em in like I used to snake in sunfish out of the old gravel-hole on my grandfather's farm. Gee! but that was a swift game. As soon as the minnow hit the water there was a bass or a wall-eye waiting for it. And the minute I got a bite it was come-alive, and I jerked 'em in by main strength and slid 'em on my chain stringer and baited up again."

"Say, but I was doing a land-office business. And just about then I heard Clara say to Mr. Oconomowoc, 'He's catching five fish to your one.' And then Oconomowoc says, 'He might as well dynamite 'em.'"

"Well, he's getting 'em just the same," says Clara.

"Look out there with the net," says Oconomowoc, as he steers a bass alongside. "Easy now!" and then I heard Clara say, "Oh, he got away!"

"And then Mr. Oconomowoc begins to roast her for her awkwardness and she gets huffy and says she won't handle the net any more, and he says 'That fellow'll hear every word we say,' and she says, 'I don't care if he does, you started it.'"

"And all this time it's just biff, splash and snake 'em out with yours truly. The little ones I throw back, and the big ones go on the string, and during this time—you know how clearly voices sound over the water—I can hear this Mrs. Oconomowoc shooting it into hubby."

"Why, I'll wager he's got a hundred fish by this time," says she, as the tail of a three pound bass comes over the side of my boat."

"Yes," says he, "and he'd be drummed out of a fishing camp if he caught fish that way up in the woods."

"You don't seem to be out of the woods yourself," retorts Clara, "with this stingy little four bass and one pike," she says.

"Well, they're all caught in a sportsman-like manner," returns Mr. Oconomowoc.

"That must be a great relief to them," says Clara.

"Clara," says Mr. Oconomowoc, "I'm sorry I brought you out this morning. What's the matter with you anyway?"

"Horace," says the lady, "you ought never to have been a fisherman; you're too passionate."

"There you go," says he, "and d—n me, if there don't go that bass I'd a got if you had been there with the landing net."

"Mr. Wellington," says the lady, "I'll not be sworn at; row me to the hotel this instant."

"And so they rowed in, and the mist lifted in a few minutes, and I followed after them. I had fixed my tackle all right before I up with my anchor, and I knew that no one at the hotel would know of my crimes if Horace didn't blow the gaff. But I reckon his wife staved that off, for I was IT for that trip. But when the guests were asking me questions and congratulating me at the table, Horace was as sullen as a bear with a sore head. Clara, however, gave me a real friendly, beautiful smile."

"He was a real 'mutt' that Horace; but Clara—she was an out-and-out thoroughbred!"

SHOOTING SMALL GAME IN MASHONALAND

Having three weeks at my disposal, and the month being July, I thought I should like to revisit the Abercorn district, where T. B. and I had snatched a week's good sport in a previous year. This was before the boom (which T. B. quite anticipated) had set in. Now, there is a hospital, police camp, stores, etc., in the midst of numerous mining properties. At that time the mines were few and far between, and herds of buck might roam where now the hills re-echo to the rhythmic thud of many stamps, and the game could feed undisturbed by the busy sounds of human occupation. One 21-bore shotgun and a .303 Lee-Metford rifle comprised my equipment. For the former I took a plentiful supply of No. 4 with a few S. S. G. and sixes. I have found 4 a most useful size for anything larger than a pigeon. For the rifle I use ordinary cordite ammunition with nickel-capped bullet, having a milled ring about a quarter of an inch from the nose. This, in my opinion, has stopping power sufficient for any buck; but I had on this occasion only the £1 licence required for killing the birds and small buck included in class A of the game ordinance.

I set out from Goromonzi on a bright, cold winter morning, and made for the Chinika river. The thick red beds in the river afford a likely spot for reitbuck, but, as it happened, it was getting late in the morning when I reached it, and beyond a brace of "partridges" (i.e., francolin), out of a small covey feeding among the small trees on the river bank, nothing rewarded my labor for that day. I pushed on that afternoon in order to place as many miles as possible between myself and the outposts of civilization. On the second day I reached Ururu's kraal in the early morning. The country here consists of scrub interspersed with big vleis, and seldom fails to provide excellent sport, but it would keep for another day. That night we crossed the Mvindi River, and encamped by the cage, which had been put up at the drift on the old wagon road, but which had at that time fallen into disuse.

A few pigeons (byukutiwa) and some sand grouse (kwerikweri) gave me occupation on the way, and a duiker, already settling for the night in the tall grass fringing the river, fell a victim to a lucky shot in the half light after sundown.

Going eastwards the next morning down the Mvindi, we found the grass burnt off, which is unusual at that time of year, and annoying from the sportsman's point of view.

Under Mount Mumorgwe, the Lion's Head, I found some part of a substantial msarsa (a shelter formed of big branches and bush) still standing. T. B. and I had made this the previous year, and expended some care in its

construction on account of the numerous leopards which inhabit the rocky hills hereabouts. On that occasion T. B., who was engaged in making a map for the Government, sought to lure me to the summit of the head with tales of the interesting colony of baboons which, he had heard, lived in caves far up the mountain. The report, he subsequently found, was true; but one can see baboons and caves in plenty on the lower slopes, so I went shooting guinea fowl instead. On this occasion, too, the guinea fowl did not disappoint me; but, once shot at, they become very shy, and sometimes will leave the spot and not return for several weeks. In this case the difficulty consisted in keeping the flock, a large one, from running up among the rocks after being once flushed. A good dog is a necessity for this work: an imperfectly trained one may keep the birds on the run for miles. In the evening I returned, to find that my carriers had renovated the msarsa, and dug an oven for cooking birds. This method of cooking on the veld is, I suppose, familiar to most people. The oven, dug in the ground, or hollowed out of an ant heap, is filled with glowing embers; the bird is cleaned, but not plucked, and inclosed in a covering of clay, and then placed on the embers. More burning wood is added on top, and the whole can be covered, but not too tightly, with soil. When cooked the skin and feathers peel off easily with the clay, and the meat, retaining as it does, all its juices, will be found delicious.

One of my carriers was a Budgera, from the Mtoko district, and was much pleased with the present of a baboon which I shot. He was, however, requested to retire to some distance while engaged in his culinary operations.

Rock rabbits are plentiful hereabouts, and are gladly eaten by the natives. Among the reeds in the river are many pheasants (orgwe). These last lie close, and fly low and fast, and are, therefore, rather difficult to get. Three days under the Lion's Head seemed to have exhausted the possibilities of the locality for that time, so on the sixth day since leaving Goromonzi we moved on through native kraals towards the Red Dragon Mine. On the afternoon of that day I strolled down through the native lands in the hope of picking up a few birds. Partridges and sand grouse are frequently found feeding amongst the growing millet. Anyone who cares for such small game as the common dove (njwi), and has plenty of No. 8 shot, can be sure of bagging a good many near the native threshing floors, large, flat spaces of rock near their lands. I was not in search of them, but near the Inyagui River I shot a species of steinbuck, called by the natives miti, which differs slightly from the ordinary type. A line of white hairs runs down the spine from neck to tail, and the belly is marked with white, while the legs are short in proportion to the size of the animal. It feeds in swampy ground, such as is frequented by wild pigs. Certain natives of this part regard it as their mtupo, or tribal symbol, and will not eat its flesh.

Before going northwards from the Mvindi I visited a spot in the river at early morning in expectation of finding duck. Crouching among the grass and reeds, one can get off both barrels as a flock flies swiftly along the stream at sunrise, or just before sunset. The birds cling to their favorite stretch of water, and, if that is known, it is not hard to secure a couple or two; but they are extremely wary, and at the least noise fly out of sight. Dead birds must be allowed to drift with the stream until caught against some projecting rock or sandbank, as no one will venture into a deep pool for fear of crocodiles.

On some rivers numbers of geese are to be found. Moving further north, I was glad to lighten the carriers' loads by disposing of some of the game among the few Europeans then living in the Abercorn district.

We crossed the Poti River on the eighth day. The country was rather bare just then, but, after crossing the Mazoe on the following day, we went eastwards through one of the finest districts to shoot in Mashonaland. The low hills in this part are the home of herds of koodoo, the king of South African bucks, and, although the latter, being Royal game, may not be killed, they are a sight not to be missed. Waterbuck and reitbuck frequent the river and its tributaries. Sable antelope roam between the mountains and the river, and smaller bucks are plentiful. There are numbers of sand grouse, and the ordinary partridges (marenje) were, above all, numerous. I spent four days in the country between Mount Shoshi and the Mazoe, being out almost all day, and generally returning to my camp just before nightfall. I contented myself with one steinbuck and one reitbuck, the latter falling to a distinctly lucky running shot with the rifle; but there were always as many partridges as I wanted, and more. Even my unregenerate pointer could not spoil that sport. The air in that country is so fine and bracing that one can walk for seven or eight hours over the rough veld, and it is not until the evening that, supper finished, one realizes, under the soothing influences of a deck chair and pipe, how tired one really is. The loneliness of it, without a white companion, would react badly on the nerves in time; but the whole environment is most soothing to the body tired with a long day on the veld, the clear shining of the stars, the thousand subdued noises of an African night, the cheerful sounds of the boys' voices as they talk over the day's events, retail gossip, or repeat snatches of folk-lore and song.

On the thirteenth day we left this teeming country to return to Goromonzi. After some hours walking through the hills south of Busa's kraal, we found ourselves once more on the Mazoe, which we crossed. That day we halted at a kraal not far from the Red Dragon Mine. Here we made biltong, and sent much meat to various friends. Eastwards from this point the country falls towards the junction of the Mazoe and Inyagui rivers. Koodoo are, or were, to be frequently seen. My bag was limited to one or two duiker and some very fine large pigeons (oreti), which are, I believe, not common. Visiting a solitary European, I was informed that in the mountains a large elephant was living. He had, I was told, achieved a reputation among the natives by reason of his savage and uncertain temper, and was respectfully termed mambo, or chief. His ravages among the bamboo canes were patent, but I had no time to call on him in his mountainous retreat.

Going southwards from Mount Fambve (the Lone Star Hill) one climbs up into the range of mountains which here practically forms the boundary of the Abercorn district, and so, by kafir paths through beautiful scenery we came to the kraal lying at the foot of Morgwemasimba (Abercorn Peak). Hence, on a misty morning, in the bitter cold, I made my way once again towards the Mvindi. Plunging into the long grass, I was soon soaked by the heavy dew, and, probably on account of the numbing cold, I missed a reitbuck, which with his doe, I surprised in a clump of rank grass. The crossed shot was no better than the first, so I waited until he crossed a spruit and stood about 300 yards away. This time I did not miss, but on crossing the stream not a trace of him could we find. Coming at last to the conclusion that he had got up and run while we were out of sight in the dip, although we could see no spoor, the native, who was with me, and myself gave up the search. Hardly had we gone 10 yards when the dog caught the scent at last, and we found the buck, shot through the heart, on a spot concealed in the long grass round which we had been searching for the past 20 minutes. On the twentieth day I had a good morning on the banks of the Mvindi, below Ururu, the buck comprising some pheasants (Pternistes nudicollis), a wild pig, and a reitbuck. The head of the last named was the only part of him visible above the long grass. The bullet struck squarely on the nose, passing into the brain and killing him instantly. To these was added a turkey buzzard on our way back to the kraal, not for my own use, it is hardly necessary to say, but for Ururu's people, who ate it with relish.

On the last morning a steinbuck, killed with No. 4 shot, and a few partridges completed the tale. After missing a duiker and a reitbuck in unaccountable fashion, I felt it was as well to give it up. The total bag would be counted small, judged by European standards. In three weeks I had brought down eight or nine small bucks, from eight to ten brace each of pheasants, partridge and sand grouse, several ducks, a hare, a koorhaan, and a number of pigeons. But such a relaxation from work does not have as its sole aim the slaughter of game. The picturesque scenery, the hundreds of brightly plumaged birds, the trees and flowers, the sunsets, and all the vague charm emanating from the very air and earth of Africa, are essential factors in the enjoyment of a holiday in Mashonaland.—E. B. Baker, in Field.

THE CRUELTY OF LIVE BIRD TRAP SHOOTING

Editor Field Sports:

Dear sir,—In conversation with a representative of one of the large manufacturers of ammunition he gave me a piece of information which should be of interest to all true sportsmen. It was this: "We are not allowed to attend any live bird shoots, and if a live bird shoot follows a shoot where clay pigeon are the targets, our orders are not that we refrain from shooting, but that we get away from the field completely as soon as the shoot at the clay targets is over."

I am sure every sportsman who will thoughtfully consider the conditions of a live bird shoot will highly commend the companies for this action. Conditions at a live shoot tend toward brutality. I have seen wounded birds lie weltering on the ground unnecessarily. I have seen small boys playing and teasing these wounded creatures, but the worst was that which I witnessed at the last live shoot I was at—unintentional on my part—one of the trappers came in from the traps kicking a wounded bird before him like a football. I still feel my blood got hot under the collar at the thought of this brute.

Clay targets never develop this cruelty. Neither does the excitement of the hunt have a place for it. The wounded bird is put out of suffering if for no other reason than that it might interfere with the movements of the hunter.

It is with pleasure I notice that the gun clubs are cutting out the live feature of their shoots and that every effort is being made to eliminate it from the realm of sport.

The cocking main, the dog fighting, bull baiting, etc., and live bird shooting are all in the same class and are all alike, passing out of the realm of our pleasures.

All credit is due to these manufacturers who take such a leading part in placing their personal ban upon these cruel amusements.

GEO. B. BROWN.

Nanaimo, B. C., Aug. 22, 1911.

P. S.—

Tell me ye winged winds

That round my pathway roar,

When will the time be set

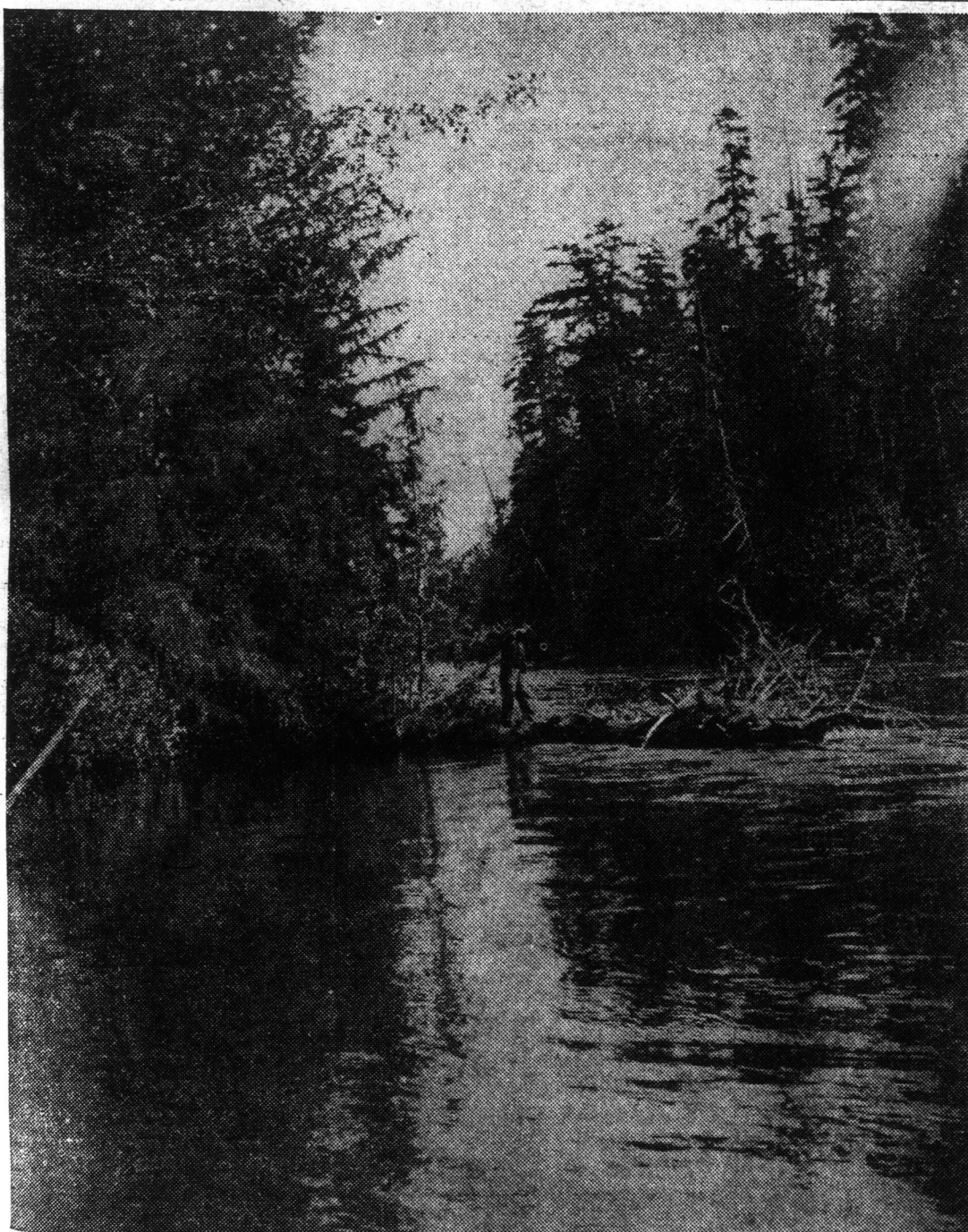
So I may roam the woods once more.

I know a likely spot, a valley toward the west

Where grouse and quail and pheasant too,

Will soon be at their best.

—G. B. B.



Powell River Before the Coming of the Pulp Mill

—R. L. Pocock, photo.