

HUNTING AND FISHING, HERE AND ELSEWHERE

THE BIG GAME SEASON IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE late and inclement spring of 1908 had, without doubt, much to do with the deficient horn growth of so many of the trophies obtained this autumn in British Columbia. May was far advanced before the snow finally left the feeding grounds of the deer; even as late as June in Northern British Columbia we saw white goats in numbers feeding within 50 ft. of tide water, an unheard-of proceeding. Exceptions there were, of course, to the long list of mediocrities obtained by European sportsmen, notably a magnificent 60 in. moose killed by Count Karl Hoyos in the Cassiar mountains, and another of 64 in. shot by Mr. Oberlander in the same locality; but both these fine heads were dwarfed by a marvelous 70 in. moose from the Yukon, shot by Mr. Thompson. This grand trophy was exhibited in Victoria for some days, where it excited universal admiration, owing to the unique cluster of brow points on either horn, each point not less than 5 in. in diameter, and an even dozen of them all told. The palmation of this head left nothing to be desired, and it is doubtful if a finer specimen of a North American moose has ever been obtained in recent years.

Moose have been very numerous in the Cassiar mountains this season, but in the majority of instances the heads have been disappointing, caused, without doubt, by the late spring and the indifferent growth of pasturage. Messrs. Bailey, Stern, and Powell, whose main camp was established in the vicinity of Teslin Lake, in Cassiar, saw as many as eight bull moose in a day, and not one of them a shootable beast. Their bag included four sheep, half a dozen caribou, and one moose. These sportsmen used admirable discretion in the selection of their heads, very different from the actions of certain so-called sportsmen of a nationality that shall be nameless, who exacted the full toll of heads allowed them by their licences, regardless of size, beam, spread, or any other condition whatsoever.

Mr. Bailey had one wide caribou head of perfect symmetry with forty-seven points. Mr. J. G. Millais, whose health gave way completely, owing to the inclemency of the weather during the stalking season, obtained one fine caribou and two moose before he was compelled to beat a retreat for civilization. His caribou was a fifty-four pointer, and, though not a big head in the ordinary sense of the word, will be a notable addition to his remarkable collection of fine heads from the Newfoundland barrens. Count Ernest Hoyos hunted up the head waters of the MacMillan river, entering the country from White Horse, half-way up the Skagway-Dawson trail. His bag included three fine moose, five caribou, three sheep, and two grizzly bears, one of the latter a monster.

Only the expense of a trip into Cassiar prevents that isolated region from being inundated with sportsmen, and the game seriously reduced in numbers in a very short space of time; but as conditions exist at present Cassiar seems likely to be one of the few remaining sanctuaries for North American big game for many years to come. Moose are increasing annually, caribou are plentiful, and sheep very numerous. The sheep of Cassiar is of the type known to science as *Ovis stonoi*, forming the central connecting link between *Ovis dalli*, the white sheep of Cook's Inlet, Alaska, and the true Rocky Mountain bighorn of Southern British Columbia and the Kootenays. Even though the four distinct types are now generally recognized as belonging to one and the same species, it would be difficult to find two specimens of more divergent characteristics than a 14 in. sheep obtained this season by Mr. Fleischman in Cassiar and one of 17 1/2 in. obtained by Mr. Bryan Williams in the mountains of South-Eastern Kootenay. Mr. Fleischman's handsome trophy has a wide, open spread of 44 in., totally unlike the massive, close-in curl of Mr. Williams's fine head, less than 30 in., at its widest points. Mr. Williams's specimen is the third in size ever obtained in North America, and in the band that contained this fine ram was another even larger, that was feeding out of sight when the shot was fired. There were a dozen rams all told in the band, and a 15 1/2 in. head that fell to Mr. Williams's second shot would have recompensed most men for the hardships of a trip in the Kootenays.

The best bag of bears this season was undoubtedly that of Messrs. Burton, Wrigley, and Pooley, who obtained thirteen black and two grizzlies up one of the northern inlets. Their hunt took place soon after the snow disappeared, when the skins were in perfect condition, and certainly the pelts obtained on this trip were generally admitted to be the best brought down during recent years. During five weeks' hunting no fewer than fifty different bears were seen in a country less than a hundred miles south of Prince Rupert.

Regarding the wapiti of Vancouver Island there is no great success to be recorded. Sir John Rogers, with four packers to carry his outfit, raided the northern end of Vancouver Island with but poor success, the solitary head obtained by him being that of a second-rate ten-pointer. Sir John's experiences among the tangled underbrush and dense thickets of the island, combined with weather of the worst description, would deter anyone but the most ardent from a chase of the Vancouver wapiti.

Sir John was succeeded by Messrs. Sage and Doering, who packed into the interior from Quatsino Sound on the west coast. They traveled with their packs across to the east coast and returned to civilization down the Nimpkish River. They reported having seen many wapiti, including one remarkably fine stag that out-manoeuvred them among the trees, forcing them to rest content with just

an average ten-pointer. The deer they saw were generally ridiculously tame, and quite unaware of the destructiveness of an ordinary rifle. The stag they obtained was shot as he lay, surrounded by a dozen big hinds, who paid not the slightest attention to the death of their lord and master, but contentedly continued to browse in the vicinity, while the hunters made short work with their skinning knives. Hunting wapiti on Vancouver Island is, however, heart-breaking work, timber crawling pure and simple, and lacking in every detail the essentials of an honest stalk. It is also impossible to ascertain whether the track one is pursuing is that of a warrantable stag or the footprint of some miserable brocket. Probably the largest grizzly bear of the season was killed by Mr. O'Reilly up the Kemano Valley, a monster 9 ft. 6 in. in length, but with only a second-class hide.

Blacktail deer, the common deer of the British Columbian seaboard, Vancouver Island, and the mountains of the mainland as far north as the Skeena and Naas rivers, have been unusually plentiful this season. I have personally examined nearly 300 of these deer since the opening of the season, the majority

are still examples of this quaint little bear roaming through the thickets and forests of Gribbell Island.—J. H. Wrigley, in the Field.

PUNT GUNNING IN ENGLAND

Punt gunning is no work for the armchair sportsman; between game shooting and wildfowling on the water there is a vast hiatus. While the former exacts nothing beyond steady walking in the way of endurance, and allows movement enough to keep one's blood warm in any weather, the latter demands from its followers not only hard, rough work, and the very considerable strain of lying cramped up in the punt, but at the same time withholds for long spells the warmth-giving exercise which would render not unpleasant the bitter cold that brings the wildfowler the cream of his sport. Nothing will more quickly find out a man's weak points than punt gunning—and, if weak points there be, he is a wise man who, however reluctantly, abandons once and for all this very sport of sports in favor of shooting which necessitates neither the strain nor the exposure. One might say, too, that there is a further great distinction between the two forms of shooting in that, while the game shooter when he goes out knows that his birds will be there and that he will come, or the birds will be brought, within shot, the wildfowler has first to find the whereabouts of his birds and then to fight all the chances which conspire against his efforts to gain a range at which a shot may be made.

The fascination which punt gunning exercises over its votaries must often be a matter for wonder on the part of those who know what the wildfowler has to endure and also the uncertainty which attends his undertakings. It mainly arises from the battle of wits and caution ever going on between the fowler on the one side and the fowl on the other. And how often the fowler finds himself on the losing side! He may set up to Brent or Widgeon a dozen times in the day and never once succeed in bringing himself near enough for a shot. Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey wrote in one of his well-known books:

"To stalk in a punt a number of fowl, whether geese or duck, on broad, shelterless waters will often require the manoeuvring of a general, the patience, silence, and cunning of an experienced deer-stalker, and the hardihood and pluck of a lifeboat crew, together with the cool, watchful eye of its coxswain. The chances are always, save on the rarest occasions, in favor of the birds and against the shooter. . . . We have known men accustomed to tiger-shooting, to elephant-slaying, to stalking of every sort and kind, to salmon-fishing, and to all the sports and most of the excitements of the world, admit that during the few minutes previous to drawing in shot of a vast assembly of wild-fowl, with a big swivel-gun cocked and ready before them as they lay prone in the punt, their hearts seemed to beat louder than ever they did before. At such a moment an intense anxiety takes possession of the merest novice lest the birds should fly off before he can obtain a shot. . . . Perhaps he gets within shot, aims true, and then picks up his score, or two or three beautifully plumaged birds; but it must be observed that this is no easy matter except under the most favorable conditions of wind and tide. . . . A sportsman once touched with the fever of wild-fowl shooting afove, or who has once felt the charm of success in this fascinating and scientific sport, will never give it up so long as his strength will stand the exposure it is necessary to undergo."

The punt, if double-handed—that is, if built to carry a puntsman as well as the gunner—measures some 22 ft. in length and some 3 ft. 6 in. amidships, and supports a gun up to 170 lb. or so in weight. Smaller double-handed punts carrying a lighter gun are often used, however. The single-handed punt, in which all the work is done by the gunner, and a gun up to 110 lb. or so is carried, averages 18 ft. in length and 3 ft. amidships. On the more sheltered waters fowlers very frequently use a punt of a length of but little, if anything, over 17 ft. and a width amidships of no more than 2 ft. 10 in. A punt of this class will carry a gun up to 70 lb. weight. It makes a very fast craft, often an immense advantage in these days of competition, when so many pairs of eyes are watching for the fowl.

When setting up to fowl in deep water a double-handed punt is propelled by the puntsman by means of an oar sculled in a rowing-spur aft, and in shallows by the setting pole, a short pole used to push against the bottom. In a single-handed punt paddles take the place of the oar. The gunner lies flat in the punt and propels himself by means of a short paddle held in either hand, his arms stretched through openings in the coaming and over the side decks. The paddles, feathered for the forward movement, are kept quiet under the water. In shallows they are pushed against the bottom. They are fastened by cords to the gunwale. When the gunner calculates that he is within extreme range of the fowl, he drops the left-hand paddle and uses the free hand to the gun, while with the remaining paddle he endeavors to steal yet nearer.

The punt gun, according to the size of the punt and the waters on which it is used, may be anything between a 50 lb. gun, 5 ft. in the barrel and firing 4 oz. or 5 oz. of shot, and one from 9 ft. to 10 ft. in length, weighing upwards of 200 lb. and firing 2 1/2 lb. of shot with safety. The guns most often used on our coasts are the 1 1/2 in. bore and the 1 1/4 inch bore, firing charges of about 1 1/2 lb. and 1 lb. respectively. The punt gun lies in a crutch, the shank of which turns in a socket in the gun-beam, this allowing free horizontal movement. Its recoil is taken up by the punt through what is

known as the breeching rope, a rope passing through a hole in the stem of the punt and its looped ends fitting over the trunnions of the gun. The required elevation is governed by a gun rest, which can be silently pushed forwards or drawn backwards, according to the angle required. A punt gun properly balanced in its crutch can be instantly tilted and guided by one hand when a shot has to be taken at fowl off the water.

Let us take a glance at the punt-gunner when a hard-won success is in store for him. For the past hour or two he has been waiting on a company of widgeon; but hitherto, for one or more of the various reasons which, when he considers himself safe from interference, weigh with the experienced wildfowler in deciding upon the right moment to set up to fowl, he has not seen fit to act. Now, at last, everything appears in his favor. From a point full half a mile away he begins his stealthy approach towards the birds. His limbs are stiff from the long wait, his hands feel frozen as he grasps the paddles which guide him forward. Excitement is already strong upon him, for he knows that the chances against a satisfactory shot are quite ten to one. Now he is not a hundred and fifty yards away. Every moment he expects his hopes to be dashed to the ground. His heart beating quickly, he has at last worked the punt within a hundred yards—to a novice the birds might seem not much more than 50 yards away, so difficult is it without experience to judge distance on the water when one's eyes are but just peering along the surface from a low-lying punt. A shot of a kind is certain now, for, considering the wildness of the fowl, the gunner feels that he will be justified in firing at the 100-yards range should no nearer approach be possible. One hand is already at the gun. Paddling with the other hand, the gunner is still reducing the distance. Every yard gained means a difference in the probable results of the shot. Now he is but 90 yards away, now 80, now 70, now no more than 60, and yet not a widgeon has become aware of his presence. Sixty yards! The ideal range. He has "got there" with a vengeance this time. For a moment he pauses, trigger string in hand. Instinct, or something very much like it, born of experience in failure and success, tells him the chances of his shot will be better off the water than on it. Gently he taps with his toe on the floor of the punt. As though animated by one mind, the widgeon spring from the water—and almost at the same instant the big gun booms forth and the spreading charge cuts a lane through the thickest of the birds. The gunner is sitting in his punt now, stretching his cramped limbs and rubbing his frozen hands together. For a brief time he keeps his eye on the speeding fowl, but not a bird drops away from their ranks. A 60-yards shot is a clean shot. One weak cripple is secured by the 12-bore. Then the gunner gathers and counts his birds, over a score of them, it may be, and is more than ever rooted in the conviction that there is no such strenuous and exciting sport as wildfowling.—The Times.

DUCK SHOOTING IN SIND

The method of driving ducks over the shooters, as practised in the Sind Jheels, certainly gives some exciting sport. The number of species seen, and their different modes of flight, prevents shooting from becoming monotonous. Not the least interesting part of the day is when, the shooting over, one goes through the collection of eight or ten kinds of ducks and teal, picking out for careful examination the rarer ones. As will have been observed, the common wild duck, or mallard, is numerous in Sind, while in many other parts of India is comparatively rare. Perfect knowledge of the huge jheels near which they spend their lives has made the Shadipally coolies extremely expert in getting the birds over the guns. Neither B. nor I went to Shadipally with a view of making a big bag. We began our shooting late and left off early, and altogether took things very easily. We left perfectly satisfied with our sport, and got as many birds as we could dispose of. We felt it would have been selfish to shoot more. One unfortunate feature about the shooting is the number of lost birds. At least 20 per cent of the ducks shot are never gathered. Some are no doubt hidden by the coolies for their own use, but quite apart from that, the high thick reeds prevent many cripples and a fair proportion of dead birds from ever being recovered. The last day I lost two mallards, which fell apparently stone dead in rushes a foot or eighteen inches high. I believe one's bag would be increased and the number of lost birds reduced by using a 12-bore, chambered for the long shell.

Only twelve sportsmen, of whom five were Englishmen, visited Cassiar this year, and their sport was much curtailed by the bad weather which prevailed throughout the month of September. Messrs. F. Stern, D. Powell, and F. Bailey got moose sheep (*Ovis stonoi*) and caribou (one caribou head secured by Mr. Stern being a very massive one. Mr. Max Fleischmann obtained a record head (44 in.) of *Ovis stonoi*, and Mr. Butler had three perfect sheep heads, whilst Lieut. Dalgleish also had good sport with these animals at the head of Dease Lake. Mr. J. G. Millais, who came out on Sept. 29, secured two fine moose, two caribou—one an exceptionally fine head of fifty-three points—a large black bear, and a 7 ft. grizzly bear, the latter obtained on the Stickine river. Three feet of snow was experienced by hunters on the high ground on Sept. 25, which made hunting, except for moose, impossible.



THE ADOPTED FATHER
Abdul Hamid.—"Well, if Anyone Had Told Me a Year Ago That I Should Come to This!"

having been shipped from up-coast points to the Vancouver market. The provident game laws prohibit the sale of does; hence a good opportunity was afforded to examine in the flesh the heads of a vast proportion of bucks. The blacktail certainly exhibits a curiously divergent type of horn growth. Stags of roset, and 1st., clean, were found with ten points on their horns no longer or larger than the fingers of an outstretched hand, while smaller deer had developed heads of far finer proportions than the fat, heavy beasts above referred to. Either the blacktail is deteriorating from in-breeding, or the lack of horn-producing food has been far greater this season than we had previously imagined. The greatest number of points on any of these 300 bucks did not exceed twelve.

With regard to the white goat (*Haplourus montana*), sportsmen need be under no apprehension as to the diminution of these animals, for from one end of British Columbia to the other there is scarcely a single range of mountains suitable to their tastes where they are not plentiful and increasing in numbers.

But of all the big game animals of British Columbia there are none that have aroused so much interest as the quaint little white bears of Gribbell Island, exciting a world of controversy far beyond the confines of the Pacific Slope, and out of all proportion to their insignificant hides. Opinion seems to be about equally divided between those who persist in asserting that *Ursus kermodei*, as the specimens are figured in the Provincial Museum at Victoria, British Columbia, is nothing more or less than the albino of the common black bear, and those who would recognize it as a new and interesting species. During the present summer supporters of the latter theory have been encouraged by the arrival of three additional specimens from the recesses of Gribbell Island, a fact that has caused some doubt to be thrown on such an extraordinary preponderance of albinos on this particular island. Though their three weeks' hunt proved fruitless, it is gratifying to know that there