



GAME LEGISLATED OUT OF EXISTENCE

Past Regulations Have Impoverished Ontario—Washington and Pennsylvania Experiments—How Our Forests, Fields and Streams Might Be Restocked

The latest Ontario Act, intended for the preservation of game (63 Victoria, chapter 49, 1900), is no doubt the most remarkable performance of the kind ever placed on a statute book in any country regarded as civilized. It says: "No person shall at any time enter into any growing or standing grain not his own with sporting implements about his person, nor permit his dog or dogs to enter into such growing or standing grain without permission."

FAKE LEGISLATION.

The name of the intellectual sporting man who succeeded in passing such a provision through a Legislative Assembly, composed of four-fifths farmers, should not be lost to posterity. All grain has been cut long before any shooting begins. Should there even be a little Fall wheat sprouting neither quail nor partridge ever touch sprouting grain. They are to be found in stubble fields only, or, if disturbed, in the nearest clump of trees or orchard, in search of beetles and insects of all kinds.

The inference to be drawn from such a provision is that a sportsman with dog and gun can exploit another man's farm so long as he does not enter what at the time does not exist, namely, standing grain. That Act, both as to trespass and notice not to trespass, has been a "dead letter," and that no doubt is what the expert who framed it had in view.

The public, having no use for such laws, now look for something practical from the present Legislative Assembly.

AN AGRICULTURAL QUESTION.

In the United States the game question is now being looked at almost wholly from an agricultural point of view. There, as in Ontario, the curse or plague of insects explains it. There, as here also, irresponsible sports and market shooters have destroyed everything within their reach in the shape of game birds. Large appropriations of money for the purpose has enabled the United States Department of Agriculture to make scientific enquiry as to the value of game birds.

Their Bureau of Biological Survey Bulletin No. 21, recently issued at Washington, is replete with information of as great value to the Province of Ontario as to any State in the Union. The average Ontario farmer or fruit-grower after reading it might well say: "*Whereas I was blind, now I see.*" Hereafter the farmer in his own interest must protect every bird, and insist upon laws being passed enabling him to do so.

QUAIL THE FARMERS' FRIEND.

He says in reference to quail (and partridge are equally valuable as weed and insect exterminators): "Both field and microscopic laboratory investigations of the food habits of the quail have been conducted by the Biological Survey. The

material was collected from 21 States, Ontario, and Mexico. Stomachs were obtained each month of the year.

"The insect food of the quail in comparison with that of other birds is interesting. It includes fewer caterpillars, ants, and other Hymenoptira, but more bugs, and, singularly enough, in a terrestrial feeder, nearly twice as large a proportion of beetles as of grasshoppers.

DOES NOT HURT STANDING CROPS.

"The meadow lark, per contra, another terrestrial feeder, takes 20 per cent. of grasshoppers and only 18 per cent. of beetles. In August the quail eats 44 per cent. of insect food. The grain taken is derived neither from newly-sown fields nor from standing crops, but is gleaned from stubble fields after harvest. The insect food is of extreme importance since it contains many pests that are generally avoided by other insectivorous birds, noteworthy the potato beetle, twelve spotted cucumber beetle, striped cucumber beetle, various cut worms, army worm, the clover weevil, imbricated snout beetle, May beetle, click beetle, the red-legged grasshopper and clinch bug, and it should be observed that in the search for these pests and for weed seeds, the quail, unlike many birds, extends its foraging to the centre of the largest fields, thus protecting the growing crops.

Some birds pull up sprouting grain and plunder the standing crop when in the milk. The quail, however, is a notable exception. Not a single sprouting kernel was found in the crops and stomachs of the quail examined. Field observations during the years 1899 and 1900 at the Marshall farm gave similar evidence, while crows injured sprouting corn so seriously during May that several extensive replantings were necessary. Quail, unusually abundant in the vicinity at the same time, were never seen to disturb the germinating grain. During November, 1899, sprouting wheat was saved from crows and blackbirds only by diligent use of the shotgun; but both then and in other seasons the quail were rarely observed in the Winter wheat fields and never seen to molest the crop.

IN THE STUBBLE.

The quail do no harm to the sprouting grain. They are persistent stubble feeders. Where fields of wheat stubble

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support a rank growth of ragweed there the quail are to be found. It is not unusual to find 100 to 200 grains of wheat, gleaned from the stubble, in a crop. A quail shot at West Appomatox, Va., in December, 1902, had its crop distended almost to bursting with 508 grains of wheat. This habit of gleaning waste grain after harvest is beneficial to the farm, for volunteer grain is not desirable, especially where certain insect pests or parasitic fungi are to be combated. As scattered kernels are usually too far afield to be gathered by domestic poultry, the services of the quail in this respect are especially useful.

EATING INSECTS.

During the breeding season a third of the food of the adult quail consists of insects, while their young, like those of practically all other land birds, consume a much greater proportion of insect food than do their parents. Droppings collected from two broods of downy chicks—one but a few hours out of the shell and the other probably several days old—consisted wholly of the remains of insects. Their fragmentary condition made the species almost unrecognizable, but the following were identified, under the microscope: Green leaf-eating beetles, leaf-eating beetle, small scarabaeid beetles, longicorn beetles, ground beetles, weevils, grasshoppers, caterpillars, ants, stink-bugs, spiders, thousand-legs.

EAT TONS OF WEED SEEDS.

An interesting estimate of the value of the quail was made up in Virginia and North Carolina, from Sept. 1 to April 30, the season when the largest proportion of weed seed is consumed. "We estimated four quail to each square mile of land, or 354,820 in the two States. The crop of each bird holds half an ounce of seeds, and is filled twice a day. Since at each of the two daily meals weed seeds constitute at least half the contents of the crop, or a quarter of an ounce, a half-ounce daily is consumed by each bird. On this basis the total consumption of weed seeds by quail from Sept. 1 to April 30, in Virginia and North Carolina, amounts to 1,341 tons. It is to be remembered also that if it were not for foxes, hawks, and trespassing pot-hunters the birds would be far more abundant and their services correspondingly greater."

TONS OF INSECTS.

Insects form one-third of the quail diet from June 1 to Aug. 31, and a calculation similar to the one employed above shows that 340 tons of insects are destroyed during that period. The great value of the quail must be apparent to all who appreciate the never-ending warfare between the farmer and his hydra-headed enemies, the insects and weeds.

This Washington biological research concludes by saying that "the time is perhaps not far distant when land-owners will protect their game birds from foxes, injurious hawks, and human poachers as diligently as they now do their poultry. That millions of dollars can be saved or realized by the proper management of the quail crop. The sooner the farmer realizes the value of the quail, and the fact that the market-hunter is a bird-exterminator, profiting at the land-owner's expense, the better will be his chance for an income from his farm."

IT ALL APPLIES TO ONTARIO.

It has been proved that the climatic conditions of the greater part of old Ontario are suitable for the quail and the whole of Canada for partridge. When the farmer understands the value of quail and the partridge some picturesque and useful forestry will go hand in hand with the protection of game.

In Ontario our fields and forests have become a desolation. On the one hand we find Great Britain, with a limited rural area and a dense population, exporting game and abounding in game, while on this side of the Atlantic, with an immense rural area and scattered settlements, where game and fish but recently abounded, their restoration and reproduction have now to be considered. That ungrammatical expression that "everything for everybody means nothing for nobody" has been fully proved in this connection.

HUMANE FIELD TRIALS.

In the United States this question has been grasped with a much firmer hand than has yet been attempted in Ontario. The writer of the biological pamphlet already quoted from says: "The true sportsman exerts a powerful influence for the protection of quail and game. Many individuals in various States own or lease large tracts, where they maintain the birds and shoot only the surplus." These enthusiasts assist in the

enforcement of game laws, and restock depleted covers. Many clubs are organized for the purpose of holding field trials, the object of which is to test the ability of competing dogs to find and point birds. The birds are not shot. One of the best known patrons of field trials told the writer that he had not killed a quail in ten years.

THE WORK OF GAME CLUBS.

Clubs in various States control each a preserve of from 5,000 to 20,000 acres, on which no shooting is allowed, or, if permitted, is carefully regulated, and suitable methods are taken for protecting birds and facilitating their propagation. The overflow from such preserves is of untold benefit to the agricultural interest. Hawks and vermin of all kinds are destroyed, waste lands made remunerative, and millions of dollars expended yearly.

THE PENNSYLVANIA EXPERIMENT.

It will be interesting and instructive to read a remarkable instance of American enterprise in this connection and in one of the oldest States. In the State of Pennsylvania, in 1871, game and fish had all but disappeared in the forests, fields and streams. The Blooming Grove Park Association, a joint stock company, with a capital of \$225,000, was formed by special Act under the laws of the State as follows:

"The object of the corporation shall be the preservation, importation, breeding and propagation of all game animals, birds, and fishes adapted to the climate, and the affording of facilities for hunting, shooting and fishing on the grounds thereof by the members thereof, or by persons licensed by said corporation, supplying the spawn of fish or young fish, game animals or birds to other associations or persons, and selling such surplus game animals or birds or fish as may be killed, caught or taken on its property; cultivating forests, and providing its stockholders with an agreeable resort, with a respectable hotel, cottage houses, stables, exercising grounds for horses, and anything necessary or proper for their accommodation."

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP GAME LAWS.

The charter gives the association the right to make its own game laws. Section 16 of the charter provides that any unauthorized person hunting or shooting in the preserve shall

be fined not less than \$10, or more than \$50 for the first offence, and not less than \$20 or more than \$100 for an additional offence. It costs a poacher \$300 to kill a deer, moose or caribou, \$5 to shoot a rabbit, \$10 for each game bird weighing two pounds upward, and \$5 for birds weighing less; \$2 for every fish he has, and \$5 for every pound of fish in addition. Hounding is prohibited, also driving the deer. A member killing or wounding a doe pays into the treasury \$100. Deer shooting begins Sept. 1st and ends Nov. 1st.

OUR "BUTCHER'S BILL."

Compare this with our holocaust of bad meat (and accidents), shot and hounded in the month of November. We are gradually approaching what happens yearly in some parts of the United States. Last year (1905), in Michigan and Wisconsin, 36 deer hunters were killed, and 35 more wounded. In the Adirondacks, 11 men were killed and an unknown number wounded and made cripples for life.

A SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE.

The Blooming Grove Association owns 18,000 acres of land in Pike County, and several thousand additional under lease; owns eight lakes absolutely, and part of a ninth. Some of those lakes abound in land-locked salmon, brook trout and lake trout; also twenty-eight miles of trout streams, some of which are the best known in the State. They have their own hatching-house and numerous breeding, retaining and nursing ponds. They have a magnificent club-house, built on the summit of a high hill, overlooking Lake Giles. About it are cottages belonging to members, bowling alleys, livery stable and numerous other buildings. A splendidly kept lawn sweeps down to the lake, now beautifully wooded. It is six hours by Erie Railroad from New York. A splendid road has been constructed from Glen Erie station to the club-house, five miles, and many beautifully kept drives lead through different parts of the park.

RESTOCKING THE FISHERIES.

There has been one remarkable result from the formation of this club. The State of Pennsylvania not long afterwards established its State fish hatcheries. From 1891 to 1896 they deposited in the public waters of the State 502,025,517 fish fry

of all kinds, and up to date 2,000,000,000 of fish fry have been deposited in their inland lakes, rivers, streams and public waters, under proper regulations.

ROOM FOR CLUBS HERE.

Anyone travelling over the Grand Trunk Railway system or to Winnipeg by the C. P. R. or C. N. R. must have observed that there is in Ontario, Old and New, ample room and territory for many clubs like the "Blooming Grove," and nobody hurt and everybody benefited. In many of the side-tracked counties on the 300 miles of Lake Erie frontage, the home of the partridge and the quail (and some ideal trout streams now empty), there are thousands of acres of waste and cheap lands suitable for game preserves, and within a few hours of Toronto and Hamilton.

At the present time Ontario has not even a speckled trout hatchery—the simplest, cheapest and most easily managed of all hatcheries. We restock our small lakes and rivers by impoverishing other waters, notably Long Point Bay—something like increasing one's capital by taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another.

ROBBED BY OUR GAME LAWS.

Our past game and fishing policy has left us without game to shoot, eat or purchase, or to be of benefit to the agriculturist.

When it comes to fish and fishing, the fishermen with nets deplete the waters and ship almost the entire catch (24,000,000 yearly) to the States, and close seasons are suspended for their convenience. Man or woman with rod and line, or trolling spoon, driven to out-of-the-way places and distant points, are forced by law to be content with a catch not much larger than can be put in the pocket. Nor are they permitted to sell what they may happen to catch.

EDWARD HARRIS.

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