

WINTER SHOOTING IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

BY C. W. BOYD.

NOTWITHSTANDING boasted advancement in civilization, the love of camp-life, with its unrestrained freedom and absence of care, is strong in many a bosom, though the demands of duty and calls of interest may lead one to suppress it. In my opinion, at any rate, there is nothing so thoroughly enjoyable as to throw off the trammels of conventionality and do as one pleases, without fear of restriction or comment.

When, therefore, towards the latter part of February, after a winter spent in town, without a chance to pull a trigger, my friend C—— proposed a "camp-hunt" up the country, I was not slow to join him. I was living at the time in the north-western part of South Carolina, a famous country for quail, though persistent hunting and the clearing of heavy tracts of timber have made other game scarce. Having settled our destination—a spot locally known as "Indian Camp," on Fair Forest River—and engaged the services of a teamster, with his two-horse wagon, we set to work to make up our outfit.

This, although it may seem a simple matter to the uninitiated, requires some experience, in order to know just what is necessary. I must own that, although not without some knowledge in the matter, I never went on a trip of the kind without forgetting something that I afterwards needed. In the first place, we took a tent, a cot apiece, blankets, a couple of campstools, water-bucket, cups, and cooking utensils. The staples of our commissariat (a very important department) were bacon, flour, lard, coffee, sugar, a few dozen lemons, and last, but not least, a little brown jug, which C—— insisted on taking, saying it would come in handy for carrying water when emptied of its original contents. These things, with sundries too numerous to mention, and our guns and cartridges, completed our outfit. We took two dogs, a pointer and a setter, each thoroughly trained.

As we had determined to go in style, the next point was to find a cook. We were soon overwhelmed with applications, and the only trouble was to make a good selection. We finally decided to take Barney, a somewhat dark mulatto of gigantic proportions,

a genuine Southern negro, with thick lips, broad, good-humored face, and somewhat of a character in his way. His accomplishments were considerable. From heeling a gamecock to turning the jack in "old sledge" his skill was unrivaled among his colored brethren. Not an event of importance took place in local sporting circles of which Barney did not know, and of which he was not *magna pars*, as Virgil puts it. Add to this that he was a first-rate cook, and in social intercourse constantly inclined to risibility, with a never-failing flow of conversation, and no one, I think, can disapprove of our choice.

We arrived at Indian Camp late in the afternoon, and immediately set about making ourselves comfortable for the night, sending away our conveyance with instructions to return for us in a week. We pitched our tent at the foot of a steep, wooded bluff, a few feet from a spring, whose cold waters sprang from a cleft in the rock. We soon had a fire of dry branches crackling and blazing in front, with a goodly oak, felled for the purpose, to serve as a back-log. After a hearty supper and a glass of usquebaugh, we enjoyed a pipe and talked over our plans for the morrow, and then retired, to dream of slaughtered quail and turkey until daylight.

With the first dawn we were up, soused our hands and faces in a somewhat greasy tin-pan (it had been mixed up with the side of bacon coming up in the wagon), and were soon discussing breakfast. A heavy mist hung over us, shutting out from sight the tall cottonwoods on the banks of the river, and the outlines of the hills beyond. This, however, rapidly rolled away as the sun rose, leaving the landscape clear and the weather just cool enough to be bracing. We decided to employ our first day with quail, crossing the river, or, as it is more generally called, creek, being about twenty yards wide, and hunting the hillsides, where, as the weather had been very rainy lately, we knew we would find most of the coveys. As the bottoms were in a very miry condition, I put on a pair of rubber boots, but most sincerely did I afterwards repent it, as, when I was tramping over the stony hill-

sides, after the sun became warm, they were almost unendurable.

We "crossed the river on a hickory log," as the song says, and forcing a way through a dense jungle of vines and canes at least twenty feet in height, were just emerging on the other side, when, whir! whir! whir! came the sharp and well-remembered whistle of retreating wings. We dashed out into the edge of a field of young wheat, just in time to see the last brown wing settling in the distance, and our dogs, which had preceded us, rising from a dead point. The covey had been lying so close to the edge of the cane-brake that we walked right into them, not knowing that our dogs had pointed. There is no use crying over spilt milk, as the country people say, and so we started in pursuit.

We had not gone half across the field when we saw my setter, that in the meantime had half circled it, drop on the border of a patch of brown straw, on the other side. We hurried across, but, on approaching, were surprised to see the dog creep several yards forward, indicating, of course, that the birds were moving, and consequently that we had found a new covey, for after being once flushed and scattered the birds always lie close. We moved forward cautiously, and, in my own case at least, somewhat nervously, for it was my first shot of the season. Suddenly—it always comes suddenly—the shock of rushing wings, and bang, bang, bang!—bang! the three first reports almost simultaneous. On searching the ground we succeeded in finding only one bird, much to our chagrin, as we supposed we had made three shots without result. This, however, was not the case, as while hunting in the direction the flushed birds had taken, through a thicket of scrub-pine, we came out into a new clearing, where some boys were burning brush, and there found two more birds where they had dropped stone dead, several hundred yards from where they had been shot. While hunting here we had the same experience many times; in fact, I have never elsewhere seen quail that were so hard to kill. We tramped all day, finding birds in abundance, and towards evening had a fine bag, although the country was very unfavorable for shooting, being extremely hilly, with numerous thickets of scrub-pine, in which the birds would seek shelter after being flushed. These were so dense that it was hard to get a glimpse of the bird as he whistled away.

On my arrival in camp I found my feet badly blistered by the rubber boots, and determined to eschew them in future for any except wading purposes. However after bathing my feet in cold water and whiskey I began to feel comfortable, and did ample justice to a supper of smothered quail, etc.

While we were cleaning our guns, an old negro named Ralph, with two half-grown boys, made his appearance, and we derived considerable amusement from their quaint notions and ready credulity. Even the old man had probably never been a dozen miles from his native cabin in his life. For a "dram" and some pieces of silver money they brought us eggs and very tolerable butter, promising a fresh supply on the morrow. In camp one is never troubled with sleeplessness, and we were soon snoozing away comfortably under our canvas roof, dogs and all, except when it became necessary to replenish the log-fire, which we had built in front of the tent-opening to keep off the dampness.

Next day, about four in the afternoon, being tired of tramping, I determined "to take a stand" in the heavy timber near the banks of the river, for any sort of game that might chance to appear. I took a seat at the butt of a huge fallen poplar, with a maple swamp on one hand, its swelling crimson buds already showing signs of spring, and a canebrake on the other. It was almost too early in the afternoon for anything in the game line to be stirring. But the forest was grand, solitary and primeval. To the mind, however, accustomed to commune with nature, there was nothing of loneliness, for innumerable voices of the wood cried out, and the spirit of life was busy in the wilderness, and its unrestrained freedom seemed to lift and stimulate the soul like old wine. Here was a splendid field for an ornithologist. Rare birds of many species flitted about from tree to tree, or rested in the cool shade. Conspicuous above all for brilliancy of plumage, and also the noise they make in the world, were the many species of woodpeckers, from the white-and-black Indian hen; as large as a spring chicken, to the minute sapsucker no larger than a man's thumb. These kept up an incessant hammering and boring that resounded throughout the forest like the noise of a gigantic workshop. Here and there, on the highest branches of decayed trees, lazy turkey-buzzards sat, stretching at intervals their huge wings with a slumberous effort

towards the afternoon sun, while high in the air a pair of "rabbit" hawks, disturbed from their perch, circled with shrill cries.

Presently I heard the sharp bark of a squirrel, and a little fellow, with his tail over his back, jumped over the ground for a neighboring tree. I let him alone, for I knew, if undisturbed, he would be presently followed by others; the old cautious fellows letting the young and more rash bloods go first from the holes, from which, if the coast seem clear, they follow. In a few minutes the woods appeared full of them, chattering away, and jumping from tree to tree, eating the young buds with such gusto that it seemed almost a sin to disturb them. A sportsman or a hungry man, however, is not apt to indulge in sentiment, and the hills were soon reverberating with the reports of my breech-loader. C— soon came to the spot to find out what all the racket was about, and we managed to bag about twelve before the others, frightened by the noise, regained their dens. Then we gave the birds another turn, which lasted until we could not see to shoot, and returned to camp.

Near the tent stood a small haw-tree, on whose branches we strung up our game so as to be convenient for use. By the end of the week it was pretty well loaded. But it did not remain so for long. On Satur-

day night a party of friends from town came up to visit us, and game and other provisions disappeared with astonishing rapidity.

We made a merry party that night gathered around the camp-fire, and song, story and jest followed each other in rapid succession. With our supply of lemons a huge bowl of punch was brewed,

Old Ralph, scenting the good cheer from afar, came down from his cabin on the hill with several other darkies, and their hearts were all made glad with a "dram." Tired and sleepy, about two o'clock I retired. The last thing I remember seeing as I dozed off was R— (who I think staid up all night), seated on a camp-stool, explaining to the darkies how earthquakes were caused by a certain unmentionable gentleman who resides below, moving his furniture about; with other scientific facts and theories of a like kind. In the meantime his audience sat on the ground, presenting a circle of black faces on which the fire-light shone, revealing open mouths and eyes as large as saucers, all of which made a *tout ensemble* that was ludicrous in the extreme.

Next morning the weather was cloudy, and as it began to rain about eleven o'clock, we procured a wagon, packed up our equipment, and reluctantly abandoned our camp for the realms of civilization.

THREE DAYS' GRACE.

THE tiny slipper she had dropped
He lifted from the brookside dust,
And placed it on the dainty foot
That had so lightly held its trust.

"Ah! Cinderella,"— but she waived
His homage of the eye and knee;
Half mockingly, half tenderly—
"I am your debtor, sir," said she.

"Ay, and I wait the payment, love!"
She flushed, then laughed back, as she sped
From stepping-stone to stepping-stone:
"Give me three days of grace," she said.

He cleared the streamlet at a bound,
And whispered, gazing on her face,
"The favor is not mine to grant,
For all your days are Days of Grace!"

Sarah J. Burke.