

a motley coloring. This brilliant spectacle is the song of the dying swan in another sense.

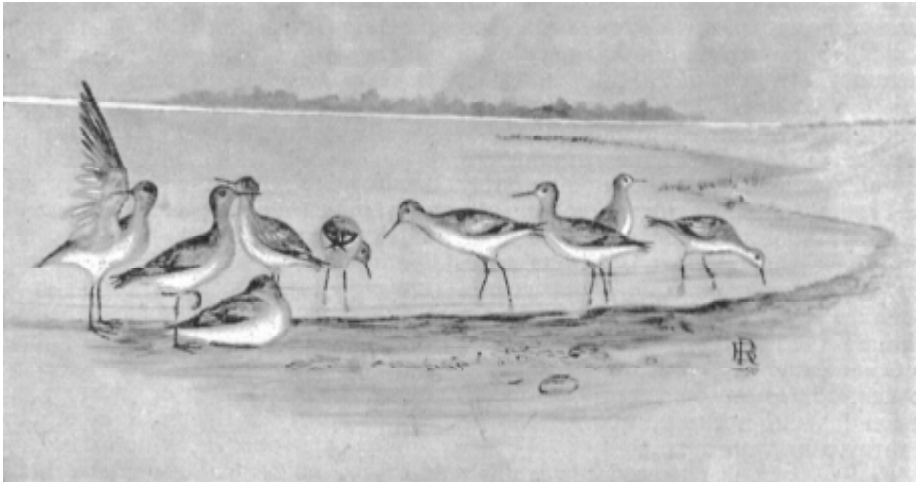
The larger fish are found nearest the shore, as a rule, following up the edge of some grass bank bordering the channel. The smaller fish, better in fighting capacity and as food, are caught off shore in six to ten fathoms, but as this is quite a distance out for a small boat most of the work is done "between passes." A favorite pastime for a morning of this sport is to run out of one pass and in at another, going or returning "inside" as the wind serves. From eight to a dozen fish should be picked up with three lines well served in a trip of this nature, and this, with the glorious weather found nowhere else on the face of the earth in the perfection it is here, the health-giving air and the pleasure of sailing, should be sufficient for any sportsman.

The flesh of the kingfish is a great delicacy if properly served. It is nearly

boneless and resembles the skeletal structure of the pompano in that steaks may be cut in perfect shape from the neck to the tail. The meat is far more delicate than that of the mullet or mackerel, being less oily than the former and richer than the latter. In this respect it differs widely from its great rival, the tarpon, the meat of which is fit food for hogs only.

The kingfish, orcoro (*Scomberomorus cavalla*), is one of the most important of the food fishes of this country, exceeding in value, though not in quantity, the Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus regalis* or *Scomberomorus maculatus*), of which species it is a big half-brother. Lay a large-sized Spanish mackerel and a small-sized king side by side, and a novice would see no distinguishing marks.

In the humble opinion of the writer, trolling for kings will be grand sport when reeling—and waiting—for tarpon is a forgotten subject.



THE BAY-BIRDS OF THE COLORADO.

BY T. S. VAN DYKE.

AMONG the places where game yet lives as in the days of old is the mouth of the Colorado River, one hundred and sixty miles below Yuma. Few parts of North America that are so easily accessible are so little known and so seldom visited even by the Indian. With the exception of a few plumage hunters, who, at long intervals, have gone that far down the

river, scarcely anyone has fired a gun for many years around the head of the Gulf of California. It is over fifteen years since the building of the Southern Pacific Railroad stopped the running of boats to the lower river, and during all that time that territory has lain about as wild as on the day Cabrillo landed.

With a party of ten from Los Angeles I boarded the steamer *Mojave* at Yuma

for a special trip down the river, the only way one can now get there except by a long journey overland. The *Mojave* is a stern wheeler one hundred and fifty feet long by thirty-one broad, with plenty of cabin room. Her navigation of the winding river is alone worth seeing, as it is Western river navigation of the extreme type, which the railroads are fast consigning to oblivion. The Colorado at its lowest stage is but a stream of swiftly flowing mud, swifter, muddier and more erratic than the Missouri at its worst. Its bars form and shift by the hour, almost by the minute. No pilot attempts to remember the channel. The boats are made to run on mud almost as well as on water, and right well they do it.

Here the boat strikes with a jar that almost upsets you if standing carelessly, but on she puffs. You find she is still slowly moving. On she goes, and soon she resumes full speed. She simply rides the mud with her flat bottom, and the mud is so fine and soft that it slides beneath almost like molasses. Then she glides for a while along banks where the willows nod as green as in summer's noon, and the cottonwoods shine as if Christmas were months away instead of a few days, then suddenly she strikes hard and firm.

Instead of going ahead she now backs water, then goes ahead again, then backs, then ahead and back, and before you know it the wheel has washed the mud from under and on she goes again. Then again on the swift current, along winding banks where Indians stand giggling in gay robes of red, beside dense masses of the arrow weed, into which the dusky damsels fly from your camera, and before you know it the steamer is fast again. A few moments backing and filling and she swings around backward into open water, wheels about and goes on again. She simply wiggled over sideways. Then away she speeds again, by bars of slippery mud and piles of driftwood from the heart of the Rocky Mountains, and again she comes to rest.

After a little vain wiggling a boat puts out full of Yuma Indians, the best and most willing "roustabouts" in the world. The anchor is dropped on a sand bar; an Indian mounts it to hold it down while the capstan winds in the rope. The anchor ploughs the mud, but the

Indian keeps his seat on the bucking bronco while its fluke dives into the mud. The boat wheels about, stern down stream, and the big wheel again backs water for a while. On goes the boat, stern foremost, and suddenly she is turned about and going ahead again. She washed a channel through the bar.

For fifty miles or more below Yuma few waterfowl are seen along the river, though black lines streaming in air far inland indicate lagoons there with plenty of ducks. Such is the case, but it is not worth while to stop here, nor to get excited at the long-drawn g-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-o-o-o-o of the sand-hill crane or the cackle of snow-geese or white-fronted geese.

But when the boat stops for wood you may take a run into the groves of mesquite, a little back from the river, and try the pretty cousin of the California quail, Gambel's partridge. You may find the backwoods relative the sharper of the two. A merry chase he will lead you, just a trifle out of reach all the time if you try to bag him on the ground, which, in a fit of vexation over your vain attempts to get good wing shots, you may be rash enough to do. A lovely little bird he is, and never more attractive than when, on the opposite side of a broad mesquite, he whizzes downward on a curve that would be quite difficult to intercept with shot, even if you had a clear view of it. Quite entertaining, too, he is when, above the arrowwood about as high as your head, he rises with a chirp at about twenty-five yards, shows you his chestnut sides for an instant, and then scuds away on a level with the top of the dense arrowwood that takes him out of sight before you have the gun to your shoulder. And when you do happen to be quick enough, you find that he can shed shot in a marvelous way.

The line of Mexico is soon crossed, and rich bottom lands spread miles away on each side of the river. On the Lower California side they are inhabited by the Cocopahs, an almost independent tribe of Indians, reputed wild and dangerous, but perfectly safe to travel among if one knows how to mind his business, which my noble countryman rarely does in Mexico. On the other side are the Maricopas, a peaceable and industrious tribe. Both mark afar the steamer's sooty banner trailing along the

clear sky, and through the green bowers of poplar and aspen and willow, that stand almost as thick as canebrake, they come trooping, arrayed in all variations of garment from nature to civilization.

High in air large white pelicans with black-tipped wings are soon seen, sailing with wondrous grace for birds so heavy, and many of the bars of the river are white with them. Here the dark form of the cormorant cleaves the air, and there, with outstretched neck, the sand-hill crane leaves the boat at a safe distance. The *teetleet* of the curfew rings along the shore and an occasional willet helps out the other indications of approaching tide-water. Ducks become more frequent, little divers dot the water, and the steamer makes longer runs without obstruction. The timber on each side grows thinner and lower as we approach the more newly made land, and as the vast flats spread away on each side you can see how land is made and how Mexico is yearly gaining from the United States thousands of acres of better land than she lost in 1848.

And soon the timber vanishes, for the land is now washed for miles on either side by the rushing spring tides, that come in a bore, or wave, ten feet high, and beyond the reach of this is desert, Desert of the worst kind on the right, to where, far in the western sky, the towering mountains of the Sierra Nevada continuation are fringed with pine. Desert on the left, to where the tips of the far distant hills of Sonora loom faintly in the mirage, all of it rich enough soil but for want of water.

Nowhere in the United States to-day can there be seen such quantity and variety of "bay-birds" as on the shores of this river and around the head of the Gulf. These shores are long and low and protected from heavy surf by miles of shallow water, so that the flat-bottomed river-boat coasts with safety.

Everywhere was the buff coat of the curlew as he waded about and plied his long sickle-shaped bill. Beside him, with bill as long, but curved the other way, the avocet, in snowy coat and wings of jet, stood fat and happy. On almost every square yard of the shore the black, white and brown of the willet blended into gray, and beside him played the same yellow-leg that, on the sand-bars of the Atlantic side, so stirred

my boyish soul. In sober gray the sanderling trotted along the mud-flats, and in flashes of white and black little sandpipers whisked about as if scant time were left them to get somewhere. With the crowd mingled the phalarope, the dowitcher, the oyster-catcher and the turnstone. The air, too, was alive with gulls and terns, and plover whizzed about with tender whistle.

Where the shore was narrow enough to give one a blind within shot of the water's edge the quantity one could kill of these birds, if disposed, was enormous, and at high tide the grassy flats up the inlets and on the high grounds gave cover enough to keep one shooting all the time. So plenty are the birds that one quickly tires of shooting with a shotgun and will get far more satisfaction, though less game, with a rifle.

Hérons, egrets, ibises, bitterns and all kinds of water birds swell the list for those who like plenty of wild life, while acres of the open waters of the Gulf are black for miles with ducks of various kinds. Inland, where rushes fringe the water in the sloughs, the ducks and geese remind one of the palmy days before the rapid settlement of Southern California.

You want wading boots and a good shotgun well held, for be it remembered that even in the wildest regions ducks are no longer hauled down with a garden rake and even geese require a longer rake than formerly. Though there is no shooting at them here, they have to run the gauntlet of several thousand guns to get here and their memories are good. But when you are well hidden in the reeds you may see sights that you can see in few parts of the United States.

Along the horizon line and across the sky the waterfowl stream in long strings, bunches and crescent lines, while the open water is darkened with sheets of them dozing away the noontide of the warm winter days of this latitude. Where tall rushes rustle in soft whispers in the gentle breeze you may see the mallard bow his wings to alight, and at the report of your gun fold them, droop his head and neck, and whirl with dull flop into the mud, where the willet and curlew are wading. And before you can get him a sprigtail may be set for your direction, and you will have to hold well ahead of him and be careful to land him near your feet, for the reeds are thick,

and even with a good retriever you have no time to lose in looking for ducks.

With curved and rushing wings teal ride down the air, and the plaintive whistle of the widgeon winnowing above sounds as if he would alight if you would give him a chance. Other little teal sail about in the open water out of reach, and there, too, floats the spoonbill, as unconcerned as if you did not consider him one of the best of ducks. Circling with cautious wing high above the pond before alighting, canvasbacks and redheads finally slide down on long inclines with stiff set wing, and if the pond is large enough geese wind slowly around it two or three times and then slowly settle down into the center.

The Canada goose seems shy of these grounds, though it is said it is very plenty here in most seasons. But the lesser dark goose, or Hutchin's goose, was occasionally seen. I had hoped to see here the wild and elegant whooping crane or white sand-hill, when fat scarcely inferior in flavor to the wild turkey and much his superior in knowledge of man and the range of his latest guns and rifles. But he was not here, and the snowy pelicans, circling high in the sky, were the only thing that savored of his presence. But everywhere in the sloughs and larger lagoons the snow goose was very abundant.

We went fifty miles down the Gulf to go into a slough that probably surpasses everything in North America for wild fowl. But Captains Polhemus and Mellen, the owners of the boat, had not been there for fifteen years, and we found the mouth so closed with sand that the boat could not enter it at that tide, and it was too long to wait for the spring tides. But from the quantities of wild fowl pouring into it and over it we could imagine that it would have been a wonderful sight. It is miles long and wide enough to hold millions of birds.

But in some of the smaller lagoons we found game enough, especially as we were not trying to kill anything to throw away or take back. In one of them the whole party posted around its edges, and, keeping up a steady cannonade, could not keep out the ducks and geese, which came streaming in from every point of the compass, and, instead of leaving at the sound of a gun, as they would do from some of the smaller

ponds, merely made another circle, set their wings and came rushing down.

On most of the ducking grounds to-day everything is a duck. But here we could pick our shots and take only the best ducks, and such only as would land at our feet.

But one thing marred the trip, and that was the absence of Wilson's snipe. There were none here, and I could see no grounds such as he likes. I love to have the little darling about, even though I do not shoot at him. I love to see him pitch and twist about in the shades of evening, and see him sometimes steal along in the mud near me and probe with his long bill. But he was not here, and probably never was, though in Lower California, on the right kind of ground, I have found him far south of this.

We found tracks of deer on both sides of the river, but the ground is quite level for many miles, and hundreds of acres of wild hemp growing ten or twelve feet high, and large areas of arrowwood nearly as high and very thick, make it almost impossible to see deer except from horseback. Farther back from the stream they are found in the rough hills and in the patches of mescal and cactus, but it is a dangerous place to hunt unless you are sure of where the water is. Antelope are found on the large plains of Sonora, but on the desert the antelope is even a greater ranger than on good country. They go many leagues to water, and often go without it entirely, as do the deer when feeding on mescal or cactus of any kind. Moreover, the plains are so flat that it is impossible often for miles at a stretch to find any way of avoiding the big eyes that take in half the horizon at a glance.

From the great saw-toothed ranges of the Lower California side the big horn looks down upon a country all his own. No one goes there to trouble him, and, though many have started full of grim determination, few have been able to do more than say the game is there. But the rocks are so thick and sharp, the air so dry and generally so hot, the feed so scarce and the springs so far apart, the danger of losing your horses is so great, that nothing but gold can tempt those who know the country best, and most of them want their gold somewhere else. Strangely enough the mountain sheep loves the crest

slope of these countries instead of the Pacific slope, where the hills are covered with good soil, and where there is plenty of water and feed. It was so, long before the days of hunters, and the big horn hardly ever comes near the crest of the range even for a day.

As it was not the time of year for fishing, we could not tell what the Gulf afforded. We caught two kinds of fish in the river, one something like a salmon, the other something like a mackerel, both in flavor what might be expected of such muddy water. Green turtles are plentiful in summer, and we caught two that were very fine. Fine clams were also found near the mouth of the river, but there are no oysters north of Angel's Ray.

Those of the party who were not equipped for hunting enjoyed, the trip as well as the rest. For the winter tourist it is cheaper than staying at a stylish hotel and gazing at a stupid monotony of things that can be seen as well in a thousand other places. The winding river and the ever-shifting panorama of the great mountains allow no monotony. You can even see the sun rise in California and set in Arizona. And when you tire of looking at the whirling water the mirage of the desert beyond the bottom lands will afford, you all variations of silvery lakes with timbered shores, wooded islands and ancient castles.

On the open flats about the mouth of the river the mirage is wonderful, for the most level parts of any desert are heavy rolling country compared with these vast expanses deposited but late-

ly from water. On these the clear, dry air plays wondrous freaks when the light of the sun falls through it on the bare, flat ground. Lovely lakes glimmer within two hundred yards of you, bits of drift arise into cranes that stand along the shore quite real enough to tempt your rifle, and out in the middle float ducks as fine as any you have shot at. There are reflections of the trees along the other shore, and the timber is as green as that of the willow that sweeps the boat. You can even see the huge mountains pictured in them, and you feel certain that the lakes are real, for they grow ever wetter as you come nearer, until suddenly they break into a thousand filmy bits, and in a moment are gone.

The winter climate is California's best, save when, at long intervals, a storm of unusual strength on the Pacific slope overleaps the high mountain barrier, and makes it cool and cloudy with an occasional sprinkle. The rest of the time the sun shines with as much brilliancy as if the Gulf were a thousand miles away, but the heat and mosquitoes of the intense summer are gone, while the air retains all its dryness, and is cool enough to be bracing, yet warm enough. Such an air makes wondrous sunsets, as well as a mirage that would deceive old Neptune himself; and you will think you never before saw a sunset when you see the sun sink over the lofty mountain chain, with the deep blue shade of desert for a foreground, while the tips of the higher peaks run through all the shades of purple and rose.

SOME ICE-YACHTING ADVENTURES.

BY NORMAN WRIGHT.



THE dangers of ice-yachting seem but to whet the enthusiast's appetite, whilst the rare exhilaration of delight that tingles his every nerve, when guiding one of the large and powerful racing machines over smooth ice in a stiff wind, is unequalled by any other experience to be had.

To the enthusiast the keenest suffering

comes from the fickle elements, which one day give promise of perfect condition of ice and wind, but to bury his hopes in a furious snow storm or exhaust his patience by a dead calm.

To him the dangers are either exaggerated fears and difficulties to be overcome, or they arise from inherent defects in building, presenting problems to be mastered; though it may with truth be maintained that some of the larger yachts surely possess an infernal spirit.