

# THE GAME FIELD

By Edwyn Sandys

UP to the time of this writing, the weather conditions in the best game districts of the East and Middle West had been as favorable as the most ardent sportsman could well desire. This means that all kinds of non-migratory feathered game, especially quail, have enjoyed easy times and an abundance of food. This further means that when the pinch comes, which it is almost certain to do, the birds will be in fine condition to endure any ordinary amount of privation. In the case of the quail, this is a most important matter, for there is a deal of truth in the saying that a fat quail with a full crop does not know how to freeze. While city men, as a rule, can do but little to insure the winter care of the birds, the residents of towns and villages can do much. To men so located, a visit to the winter coverts entails no greater hardships than a short drive and a trifle of brisk walking. No man worthy of the name of sportsman will begrudge this slight expenditure of time and trouble. All that the quail require is an abundance of food during periods of deep snow; a few sacks of cheap grain rightly placed will save many a bevy.

Any properly informed country sportsman knows where the birds of his district are wintering, for the simple reason that he has shot over the ground until the beginning of the close season. The remnants of the bevvies will spend the winter on or very near the ground they occupied at the end of the shooting season. After the first heavy snowfall, the birds' tracks will betray the favorite foraging grounds, and thus tell where the grain should be placed. There is little use in tipping country lads to feed quail that hang about the stacks and barnyards. Such quail are all right, and will take precious good care not to go hungry if there's anything worth eating about the place. It's the outlying birds—the ones 'way down at the back end of the farm, in the remote thickets and under the brushy fences—that require assistance; and as they need but little, they should get it. Tip the farmers all you have a mind to; it can do no harm, and it may do good, but the wise man knows that when he wants a thing properly done, he had best do it himself. I dwell upon this question of winter care, because it is the easiest and best method to insure good shooting the next season. It is the cheaper way, too, for the cost is hardly worth reckoning, while to purchase birds at

a distance and bring them on for restocking, is a much more expensive and at the same time a less reliable method.

The editor of *Shooting and Fishing*, in a recent issue, criticises the editor of this magazine for objecting to telescopic rifle sights for use on game. As that criticism possesses the rare merit of being reasonable in tone and courteous, and also the opinion of a gentleman who knows a deal about rifles, a sportsman's comment should do no harm. In the first place, I think that the real charm of the pursuit of big game lies in the matching of craft against craft, rather than in the mere killing of the beast. The telescopic sight, while it possibly may enable a man to kill more game, does not encourage the development of that invaluable hunter-craft which made the fame of the greatest hunters this country has ever known. In fact, the use of the telescopic sight encourages a man to blaze away at game before he has half earned a sportsmanlike right to the shot. In the East, the chief advantage of such a sight will be found in long shots across ponds and small lakes, and long-range shooting across water is dangerous work when many hunters are in the opposite woods. On open plains, like the antelope ranges, there is no desirable gain, for the best the sight can do is to lower what should be the cleverest of stalking, to the level of long-range target practice. In the mountains, the worst feature of the sight is that it tempts a man to shoot at game, which if dropped in its tracks, or mortally wounded, will never again be seen. It is an easy matter to squint through a telescope which sharply defines a distant quarry, but it may prove a very different matter later to climb to the spot where the game went down. It is anything but sportsmanlike to drop game upon some inaccessible ledge, or crest, or across some impassable ravine, yet this is precisely what the man using the telescopic sight is apt to be led into doing. Furthermore, the clearer view encourages the taking of chances at extreme ranges, which necessarily means inaccurate shooting and more animals wounded by badly placed lead, for the telescopic sight does not lend power to more than one nerve, nor steadiness to nervous hands.

THE trend of the latest types of sportsmen's shows appears to be directly toward the extinction of such catchpenny affairs. What

sportsmen and all interested in *sport* desire to see is an instructive and interesting show kept within the limits indicated by its name. Exhibits of arms and sporting goods and of anything directly bearing upon sport are all right, but anything beyond that is undesirable and out of place. A genuine show, properly planned and carried out, needs no clap-trap to make it interesting.

THE variation in the antlers of the caribou does not appear to be rightly understood by many sportsmen. Not long ago a Detroit gentleman asked me to purchase and forward to him what I considered to be a really fine mounted head. It happened that there was a choice one for private sale, so it was purchased at a fair figure and duly forwarded. It was one of the prettiest of all the heads I have seen—in fact it was a great attraction at an exhibition a few years ago—so I considered the recipient a fortunate man. In a few days there came a cheque and a note of thanks, which also said, “while all sportsmen who have seen the head admire it, they agree that it would be greatly improved by *even* horns!” Even so, how odd would be an even head of any size. I do not recall one fine head which had the two main branches alike, and I have yet to see a large head show that symmetry which is so characteristic of the antlers of the wapiti.

THE tremendous annual destruction of spruces and firs to supply the demand for Christmas trees is a matter of no small concern to sportsmen; for every good sportsman is interested in forestry. While no right-minded person would think of marring the pleasures of that all-important day, a great many sound thinkers are opposed to the unnecessary sacrifice of young wild trees for the purpose. Hundreds of thousands of young trees, which if let alone would eventually make valuable forests, are now foolishly destroyed; and there is no real necessity for their use. Well-made artificial trees could not be distinguished from the genuine article, and would better serve the purpose, as they could be manufactured of the most desirable sizes and shapes and, most important, of non-combustible materials—in fact every tree might be its own electric, gas, or candle fixture. It seems to me that big money might be made in this direction, and vast public benefit result from the preservation of young timber. The perfect imitation of any suitable tree would be a mere trifle to American ingenuity.

SPORTSMEN who are troubled with a dread of venomous snakes will be interested in the latest remedy for snake-bite. Never mind looking toward the decanter—this is different. It is mentioned in the London *Lancet* as the discovery of Dr. Calmette. According to report, it has performed a wonderful cure in the case of an Indian coolie woman who had practically expired from snake poison, supposedly owing to the bite of a cobra. One injection of the remedy, antivenene, restored the woman to consciousness and a second completed the cure within three hours. If the snake was a cobra and the cure as described, the remedy should easily overcome the venom of our deadliest snakes.

JUDGING from some reports lately to hand, a lot of deer are illegally killed in the Adirondacks by men who are paid to supply lumber camps. This same evil exists in all lumbering regions, and an efficient remedy for it is not easily found. The camp hunter's usual method is to kill throughout the winter and hang his deer in certain secret places, from which he can bring in meat as required. To have dead deer too near camp would be taking too many chances, for an inquisitive stranger might happen along any time. Hence the deer are hidden at various points to which the meat supplier can make his way by craftily selected routes. All skinning and cutting up is done away from the camp, and it is no easy task to run the culprits down, especially as the lumbermen want the meat and are not at all eager to expose the source of supply. I remember once in Michigan woods running down one of these camp hunters. He had sent word that he knew where a bear was dened, so I started very early the following morning. He had not expected me before the following day, so when I reached the camp about mid-morning, he was in the woods. Thinking that he possibly might have gone to the den, I hit his trail and about noon overhauled him. In the snugest of dells were hanging half a dozen skinned deer of recent killing and my lad was busy breaking one up. He looked a bit sheepish, but finally explained that such work went on near most large camps. As he knew I wouldn't squeal, he finally led the way to a hut in a ravine where the hides were stored. He told me that was his way of making his winter's living, and he knew of several others in the same line of business. That identical business still goes on in the lumber country, and the only way to stop it is to fasten the responsibility where it

rightly belongs—on the shoulders of the bosses of the camps.

THE lesson of the past big game season appears to teach that after all is said and done, the best rifle for all-round work in the woods is the one of large caliber and limited range. My first deer hunting was done years ago in Michigan woods, and the natives used to laugh at my gun. It was a high-grade, fourteen-gauge muzzle-loader, and the lead was a soft ball run in a mold made for the gun. Held right, it would drop a deer in his tracks. While its range was necessarily short, it was long enough for all ordinary work in heavy timber, and before long the natives ceased laughing at the gun and tried to borrow it. It was seldom loaned, because I knew they would shoot buck-shot, which is not to be tolerated. Later, I got a repeating rifle, a .44, which was an excellent arm. Still later, the .45 was adopted, and it proved right. The last of all was a .45 equipped with a shotgun heel-plate, and this has rendered the best service of all, especially for quick work. Its range is limited, which greatly lessens the chance of boring a hole through some poor fellow 'tother side of a township, while a ball from it, properly placed, is an argument which few moose, caribou or deer can prolong, let alone withstand. The perfect sporting rifle would combine a flat trajectory with a limited range. This has not yet been produced. Could I have any kind of sporting rifle for the asking, the request would be for a .45-caliber repeater, a flat trajectory and a two-hundred yard range. The use of such an arm would mean comparative safety to other hunters, it would demand genuine hunter-craft on the part of the man carrying it, and it would mean that game hit in the right spot would stop there or in the immediate thereabouts.

According to the Boston papers, the close of the big game season found the market overloaded with deer, a choice buck selling for 12½ cents the pound. This would suggest that a great many men had tried to square the cost of a sporting trip by bringing out deer for sale.

THE value of big game to a State like Maine is a matter which few outsiders rightly understand. A recent estimate places the number of deer killed by visiting sportsmen and residents at the astonishing figure of 25,000. Allowing one-fourth of the total to visitors, and that it costs, all things included, \$100 for each deer, the outsiders must have chipped in \$625,000. Cut that in half, and there is quite respectable pickings left. The same estimate

allows \$40,000 as the value to the State of the moose crop, as far as outsiders are concerned. Add to these figures a fair sum for the contributions of resident hunters and it is easy to understand what a gold mine Maine has in her game. And still a set of shortsighted farmers rail against the game laws, and complain of the ravages of the deer among the crops. It seems to me if I were a farmer up there, I'd *bait* the deer with any crop they'd stand for, and make my good money furnishing sport to men who had the price. There is, too, an ominous growl among sportsmen that Maine is growing greedy in the matter of trying to squeeze the visitor. It isn't always good business to drive a free horse to death, and the horse in this instance, if not actually driven to death might easily be driven due north and over the boundary. Once make Maine so expensive that a man can save money by going on into Canada, and into Canada he will go "as sure as shootin'."

THE latest atrocity committed by that irrepressible foe of all sportsmen, the market hunter, is the slaughter of wapiti for the two tusks! Think of it—for the sake of a pair of miserable teeth, there are men who will butcher grand brutes and leave the carcasses to rot upon the ground, and this in America, mind you, and not Africa, and the reason for it because a secret society of the "Elks" has the tooth as its emblem, which makes a pair of teeth (really worth nothing) command a price of from about three to five dollars. Many "Elks" whom I know are rare good fellows, and not a few of them good sportsmen. The society would do well to insist upon the wearing of artificial teeth by qualified members.

REPORTS from Maryland waters tell of plenty of fowl and excellent shooting at most of the well-known points. It appears also to be an excellent quail season. A letter just to hand from San Francisco spoke of rattling good sport on the Pacific side, so the winter tourists should find plenty to do. The only unfavorable report to hand came from North Carolina, where the quail crop is said to be extremely poor, owing to a most unfavorable breeding season.

RESIDENTS of British Columbia are agitating for a game protective association, and many of them have declared for a rigid observance of the game laws. The northwesterners will do well to get to work in time. They have a grand province and much game, and wise action now will eventually insure to them the best all-round shooting on this continent.