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SPORT
IN
PEACE AND WAR

ANTHONY BUXTON

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BY

ANTHONY BUXTON.

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PREFACE.

THESE chapters, some of which have already appeared in print, were written partly in times of Peace and partly in times of War. They have been collected into a book on the advice of friends who shared in my amusements. I feel some apology is needed for any further reference to that over-written subject, the War, but the book contains nothing whatever of military value or interest except the most convincing testimony that a good many members of his Majesty's forces, myself included, ought to have been court-martialled for spending a great deal more of our time in amusing ourselves than we were paid to do. I can only say in mitigation that those of us who were keen on sport succeeded in keeping up our spirits by making the best use of every opportunity in that direction, and that the higher our spirits were the better for all concerned.

Moreover we can fairly claim that we made far more friends than enemies in France and Bel-

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gium, and that in many cases those friendships owed something to a common love of sport.

I wonder sometimes what would have happened if positions had been reversed and a French army had been our guests for four years in England. Should we for instance have borne with the kindly tolerance of our Allies a group of excited foreigners galloping partridges at Holkham or a line of 'poilus' dropping their beloved cheese baits into the sacred waters of the Itchen?

The two chapters on birds were originally published in abbreviated form as articles. My best thanks are due to the editors of the *Times*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine* and *Country Life* for kindly allowing me to reproduce articles published by them.

A. BUXTON.

KNIGHTON,
BUCKHURST HILL.

FOREWORD.

EARLY in the last century some one said of my grandfather, who was a pious man and a good citizen, that 'he worshipped leaning on his gun.' Eighty years ago on September 1st, my father announced to a relative 'a fine boy, screaming to go out shooting.' This was a prophetic utterance, not only about me but also descriptive of my descendants.

My son has certainly inherited a fondness for a gun, a rifle, and a telescope, all of which have been his frequent companions in peace and war, but he owes his passion for a light rod and a clear stream to his mother, whose zeal and success as a fisherwoman were rare fifty years ago.

Sport at the Front, often devised out of meagre material and under difficulties, was not wasted if it gave a pleasant interlude and a sorely needed rest to the minds of officers and men. The War stimulated ingenuity in many directions, and certainly these cavalrymen displayed invention in discovering new methods of hunting suited to the season of the year and the character of the ground.

As my son is now in Geneva, I have been allowed to do some of the spade work in bringing out this book,

E. N. BUXTON.

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FISHING IN NORTHERN FRANCE.

FISHING was the only form of sport not discouraged by the authorities on the Western Front. Regulations, often disregarded, were issued against the use of illegal means, such as bombs, nets, and explosives for destroying fish. All the combatants were about equally to blame for their destruction of fish by these means, and the rivers of France and Belgium suffered and deteriorated from indiscriminate bombing and netting on both sides of the line by civilians and military during the war.

The legitimate methods of fishing, however much employed, did not do very much harm, for trout become quickly educated to a sufficiently high standard to escape destruction.

To make an honest confession, the '*pêche gardé*' notices acted upon some of us as an attraction rather than a deterrent, for we agreed that nobody would have bothered to put them up unless there was some sort of *pêche* worth the owner's while to guard. Having found them and discovered the presence of trout we tried to find the proprietor, and were in almost every case most kindly received both in France and Belgium. The chalky nature of the soil in a large part of Northern France produces a goodly number of excellent clear streams suitable for dry-fly fishing, and though I came across no rivers quite equal to our most famous trout streams in England, there was some delightful fishing to be had, and many of us have to thank the trout of France for some of the best moments in our service at the war. Military duties when not in the line seldom entailed work after 4 p.m., and though they often interfered with the morning rise, the evening was ours to give to the trout.

If a trout stream was reasonably near, there were few evenings in the summer on which I did not 'warn out' for mess; perhaps it would be more tactful to say there were few evenings on which I 'warned in.' The first occasion on which I went fishing at the war was in the early spring of 1915. We were billeted between Hazebrouck and Aire at the time, but meeting a clerical friend of mine, the proud possessor of a motor-bicycle and trailer, of whose innermost workings he was almost as ignorant as myself, we started out on a long journey to that delightful little river, the Course, which flows into the Canche at Montreuil. All went well for ten miles, when, two hundred yards short of a village, the machine stopped with a jerk, and refused to start again. Both of us were mystified at the cause, but my friend made light of it, saying he knew that in the village there was an expert on the subject of motor-bicycles, and with great labour we pushed our conveyance along and explained our mysterious trouble to the great man. He gave one look at the machine, smiled compassionately, and asked what we had done with the chain; and we walked back down the road with him to the scene of the stoppage, where an ancient Frenchman was examining that useful piece of machinery, and wondering why two British officer cyclists preferred to push a motor-bicycle two hundred yards on a hot day to refitting the chain on the spot.

Nothing more untoward occurred until we reached the charming valley of the Course, with its rich meadows, quiet woods, and sparkling clear stream. It was too early in the season for the trout to be very evident, but we did not go back quite empty-handed, or without discovering where to come on a later visit.

One more incident of that day is perhaps worth recording. Half-way up a long hill on the way home the machine showed obvious signs of giving out, and the indicator made it plain that the petrol was exhausted.

At that moment a car was heard mounting the hill behind us. 'We must stop him, whoever it is; I bet it's a General,' said the Parson, and keeping well in the middle of the road he held up his hand. It *was* a General, moreover a fishing General and a very kind one at that, and we were soon full to the brim with Government petrol, which saw us safely home. The Parson's apology, 'I'm awfully sorry, sir; I'd never have stopped you if I had known who it was,' appealed to me, with my knowledge of his previous remark even more than to the General.

A second visit to the Course with my Second-in-Command in May was more productive. We slept at Beussent, and had two delightful days, in which twenty-eight trout were caught and an appetite for fishing not yet appeased, was aroused in my friend.

The trout rose freely to a fine hatch of small duns all over the river, which was much faster than most chalk streams, and presents great difficulties in the matter of 'drag,' owing to the pace and the sudden turns of the stream. The fish were not very large, but their appearance and their flavour as presented by our very kind hostess at the inn were altogether excellent.

In another year I fished a higher reach of the same stream where the trout were scarce but considerably larger. They were not easy to find and, when found, still harder to catch, but one beautiful fish of well over a pound was landed. This was in a stretch of water very bare of weed, and the trout when hooked behaved like a frightened water-rat, keeping out of sight by clinging tightly to the over-hanging banks, and causing me some very anxious moments before he was landed.

Some miles east of the Course is another tributary of the Canche, the Crequoise, near which we lived for some months. It is not so clear or so lively as the Course, and its trout are less handsome, but it provided sport and some success after hard work.

In April it was the custom to flood a certain meadow by this river, the stream being directed through a field and thence finding a twisty course along a very shallow depression in the grass. There was not eighteen inches of water anywhere except in one or two deep holes in the grass, and I never expected to find a trout in the meadow; but, walking home from the river one day, a rise was seen and the discovery made that there were quite a number of fish in it. There was no weed or cover of any kind, and a flat crawl in flooded grass was necessary for each approach, but it was really scientific fishing, and the trout on two occasions rose well.

Their home when not feeding was in the few deeper holes, but when a rise was on they came out and lay on the grass in water so shallow that the slightest movement made a wave, which induced the mistake of striking before they had actually taken the fly.

They seldom took the fly if the gut passed over them, and it was found to be best to try to pass the fly some inches on the near side of the fish.

I caught seven fish one morning in the meadow, and their average weight and their appearance was better than trout caught in the main river. In May the flow through the meadow was stopped, but several nice evenings were enjoyed on the main river, and I once came in for the middle of a really good rise at May fly.

Another officer who was with me, and had had little experience of fishing, caught four good trout in the first quarter of an hour, and I succeeded in losing the best fish we ever saw there.

There were very large trout in the Canche, but except during the May fly, which hatches in enormous numbers, they do not rise well, and the river is never really clear. Owing to the thoughtless arrangements of the military authorities we were removed, just as the May fly began, to carry out training in a part of the country devoid of streams, and were only returned to our billets during the last two days of the rise.

I of course hurried down on a bicycle the first evening, to find the river alive with May fly, and trout splashing and gulping at them in all directions.

As usual on such occasions I lost my head, cast wildly at several fish under my bank without result, and paid scanty attention to another fish which was rising more steadily and quietly under the further bank.

After some time I happened to be looking in his direction exactly as he rose, and saw a huge tail waved in the air at an astonishing distance behind where his mouth had sucked the fly in. It was a momentary apparition and even to guess at his weight would be impertinent, but I believe it was the largest brown trout I have ever seen. There was no hope of reaching him from my bank, and the nearest bridge was some distance off; but he was the only trout in the world for me, and I raced to the bridge and up the further bank to within reach of the monster. On arriving at the place, with quivering rod and trembling hand, he gave just one encouraging rise, and a watch was kept for the next movement to get his exact position and regain my wind; but, gorged presumably by the enormous numbers of fly, he never appeared again, either that evening or the next.

An hour or two later spent gnat covered the surface of the stream, and three good trout one behind the other began taking them under an overgrown garden fence.

It was a terribly difficult place to cast, and there was so much fly that the artificial stood a poor chance among the hundred of others, but the lowest of the three fish did make a mistake at last. I ought to have been content, for he weighed two pounds, but I rode home wondering whether the General who had ordered the manœuvres in the first fortnight of June had ever heard of a May fly, or dreamt of such a trout as I had seen that night.

There were a few large salmon in the Canche, but according to the French they never take a fly, and fishing for them in that steady flow of even water must be poor sport.

One was twice seen near Maresquel, but we never succeeded in disproving the French theory as to the uselessness of fishing with anything but a prawn or worm.

The Lys below Aire is as dull and ugly a stream as you could wish to find, but above that town trout ought to be far more plentiful than is actually the case. I once caught a trout at a mill quite close to the town, and there were a considerable number of small fish about Delette and Coyecque, some fifteen miles higher up ; but the cream of the Lys is at the very top by Hezecques, near Fruges.

Here the river is quite clear, narrow, and deep, with plenty of weed and enough fly to make trout show themselves.

In 1915 we were billeted on its upper waters, but, unfortunately, arrived in July and not in June. There were very few fish, but they were some of the fattest and most beautiful trout imaginable, and averaged over a pound.

One could walk, in July at any rate, along a mile of the river and see nothing, but at one or two places, with the exercise of patience, a few fish, which rose well for a short time in the evening, could be found.

The stream was in many places overgrown with bushes clinging to steep banks, and the trout were more often than not under a bush where casting was very difficult if not impossible. It was so free of pike and coarse fish, and so suitable for trout, that netting must have been freely resorted to, to reduce them and account for the inaccessibility of the few that remained.

The Mill at Hezecques was the scene of most of our sport in this county, for not only was the run immediately below the mill the best part of the river, but the meadow above it, bounded on one side by the river, was converted by us into a very creditable polo ground.

A deep river with muddy banks forming one side of your ground may have certain drawbacks, but it adds excitement, and on one occasion engulfed a young officer who had never played before and had literally no control of his pony, which, galloping straight across the ground, the players, and everything else, landed in the middle of the Lys, turned and jumped straight out again without any pause or apparent effort, and, moreover, without detaching the officer. He continued the game as though nothing had happened, until it was suggested, for the safety of the others, that he should go and change his clothes.

The few successes and the many losses in the fishing line came in the stretch below the mill. Five big trout were once seen rising there in a line, and, incidentally, none of them were caught. On the evenings when there was a rise of fly a trout or two usually moved up from the cover of some bushes to feed on a little run where casting was intricate but possible, and where if a trout was hooked there was about a one in six chance that he would be landed. I took my Colonel to the place one day on his way to dine with one of the squadrons, and as the only trout we saw (a very good one) was lying asleep at the bottom of the river, I persuaded him to fish the mill pool down with a wet fly.

Nothing was expected and nothing came, and after the last cast, saying he would be late for dinner and must go, he reeled up, but just as the fly was leaving the water in the most unlikely part of the pool, a yellow form appeared from the depths, seized it with a splash and was landed—a trout of one and a half pounds. The Colonel left for his dinner, and I returned to a position below the fishwe had seen on the bottom of the river, and very late in the evening a good hatch of duns appeared, which, after a long delay, attracted his attention.

Giving him plenty of time, and waiting until, as the French say, '*Il donnait bien*,' I presented him with a Driffield Dun, which he took with a great deal more confidence than they are apt to do at Driffield.

There were bushes on both sides of the river below him which nearly met in the middle, and with his first rush he was between them and leaping in the air below them, with the line still hitched up in their branches ; but even in fishing the fates are sometimes kind enough to drive the hook into the right place, to extricate the hopelessly entangled line, and to guide the angler's trembling hand.

That fish had every right to get off, but he stayed on and found his way to the net. He was the best fish in appearance and weight that I caught in France—two and a quarter pounds—and his presentation to the Colonel enhanced my military standing for several days.

There were reports, which I have no reason to doubt, of still larger fish in this water, and several of about two pounds were lost, one of them an old friend who lived in a small deep hole completely surrounded by brambles.

He took a fly dropped on to his nose through a forest of branches and behaved in the most perfect manner, playing very deep and very quietly in the hole and making no rushes or attempts to leave the place, which must have been instantly fatal. Playing a trout under these circumstances is not a pleasure, it is a prolonged agony, and when at last he came to the top and lay gasping on his side, and the moment came for the final act, in unfastening the net the trout floated down stream and the gut caught on a bramble. There was a slight struggle; the hook came away and caught in a branch, I made a dive and fell in, and the trout swam slowly from sight—a bitter moment indeed.

August 1916 found my regiment at Blangy-sur-Ternoise, another tributary of the Canche which joins that river near Hesdin.

My room, carefully selected for me by the billeting officer, who knew my taste, was in the mill house, and from my window I overlooked the gurgling waters of the mill pool. The squadron was camped on the meadow opposite, the river running by their bivouacs. There were a number of trout in the river, but very few reached a pound in weight, and at that time the rise was confined to the late evening.

Despite their size, the fishing was very amusing and intricate owing to the overgrown nature of the banks.

For this reason the mill pool itself, on which there was often a furious evening rise, was unfishable from the bank, and a raft, made of a cider barrel and two ladders, was constructed and a rope attached to it and to either bank, by which it could be hauled into a position in the stream whence the best water could be reached. This craft was launched with considerable ceremony, and appropriately named the 'Deutschland,' from its excellent submerging qualities.

There was only one big trout in the mill pool and he fell an easy prey, and was not very big after all; but there were a great number of small fish, who literally boiled all round the 'Deutschland,' even between the rungs of the ladders, and the boat was expected to sink with the weight of the catch.

Nothing so disastrous occurred ; I completely failed to spot what they were taking, and returned to the bank with one trout of six inches.

Rather more success came on a subsequent evening, but if the right imitation could have been found the result would have been very different.

The sporting instincts of the squadron were very strong, and a procession of real enthusiasts used to follow me round the meadow, spotting for rises and keeping up a running comment on the proceedings. Their keenness was most invigorating, and when a good evening came and six fish of a larger size than usual were landed, their patience was rewarded and their enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Blangy was one of our pleasantest billets, not merely because of its trout, seventy odd of which I caught, but because of the very special kindness and welcome given to the officers and men by the owners of the mill, the farm, the school, and many others in the village.

The French have borrowed a number of English words for fishing, and they get most of their dry flies—and would do well to get their rods and reels, for their own are most inferior — from England, and they call them by their English names. '*Le Coc a Bondhu*' is one of their favourites, and it certainly sounds a much more attractive insect in French than in English.

I met a few really first-class French fishermen, experts in the use of the dry fly, but most of them are perhaps even more prone than we are to forget that a trout has eyes, and to stand bolt upright opposite a fish expecting it to take their fly, when it has obviously seen them all the time. Those of them who do not aspire to fly-fishing are great believers in cheese as bait, and can show good reason for their belief; but it is a dull form of fishing, and seemed to me to produce numbers rather than size. It is likely that many Englishmen who have discovered pleasant streams during the war will go with their friends to re-visit old haunts in time of peace. They will find a pleasant welcome in a delightful country, and if they go to the right places at the right time, they will have fine sport. They should remember that to rise is '*donner*,' to cast '*lancer*,' that flies are '*moucherons*' except '*la mouche de Mai*' (May fly).

If they use English names for other flies with French pronunciation they will be understood. Experience of fishing in the Ardennes was limited to April in 1919. There are some fine fast rivers, but they are not so productive as they look, and many of them are much fuller of grayling than of trout. The Belgians complained bitterly of poaching of the worst kind by the Germans and even more by their own people, and the smaller streams have no doubt suffered badly, but the rivers run through fine steeply-wooded valleys, and a fishing holiday there in May or June would be always delightful. At Aywaille, on the Amblève, a tributary of the Ourth, which joins the Meuse at Liége, there is an excellent tackle shop, kept by a most civil and worthy representative of Messrs. Hardy. Throughout Europe trout flies seem quite international insects, and there is no need to take any but the patterns which we use in England. My fly box, after the manner I suppose of most fly boxes, contains a jumble of infinite variety in the matter of flies of every age and sort, but most of them have lain idle in its recesses for years, and the number of kinds which find their way to the mouth of a trout are very few.

DRY-FLY FISHING FOR SEA TROUT.

SO many books and articles have been written on the subject of fishing that some excuse may be necessary for adding to them. My excuse is that I am to describe a kind of angling which is new to most people, and about which even those who have tried it have still a great deal to learn. Dry-fly fishing for sea trout is still in its infancy, but it probably has a future. Personally, I have only caught sea trout by this method on a river in Norway, but I see no reason why, in any moderately clear river or loch in that country or in this, they should not take a dry fly. The Norwegian river in question rises in high mountains, and is largely fed by melting snow. Some miles from the sea it runs through a very deep lake, which no doubt has a special attraction for the fish. They can, and do, ascend the river which enters the lake at its upper end. The best of the fishing, however, lies between the lake and the sea—a glorious stretch of water, fast and clear, with many pools of every shape and size, and rushing torrents between them; all of it in a wild valley, with the mountains falling almost sheer on either side to the narrow flat through which the river runs.

About ten years ago a very expert fisherman, who was not having any great success with the usual methods of catching sea trout, was exasperated into trying the effect of a dry fly. He tied an 00 Wickham's Fancy to a Test cast and floated it over the noses of the sea trout which he could see in the water. Of course, with so small a hook and so light a cast, disasters were frequent; for all that, the result was astounding to himself, the local inhabitants, and the fish. They took the dry fly during the daylight a great deal better than they had taken the wet; and the great discovery was made that one could, on a dry fly and a small rod, kill sea trout of great size in a rapid flow of water. Next year he returned with larger floating flies and stronger gut, and reaped the reward of his previous experiments.

Salmon are large but very scarce in the river, but this is more than compensated for by the size and quantity of the sea trout, which often reach a weight of about 15 lb., and occasionally even run to 20 lb. The extraordinary weight of the fish in proportion to the size of the rod and fly; the amount of fresh knowledge, which really pays him, that the angler may gain every day; the pace of the water; and the fact that, with practice, can be seen many of the fish over which the fly is floating—all these things give an intense and peculiar charm to this form of sport. There are, at the right time of year, a great many big fish in the river, but it is not easy fishing, or coarse fishing; and to catch many of them, one must be at one's best all the time.

My great difficulty on the first occasion when I stood by this river was to know where the fish lay, and where they would take a dry fly. It was the first thing to be learnt, and, until it was discovered, much time and energy were wasted in fishing the wrong parts of the stream. I know now exactly what the water looks like, in which I expect my dry fly to be taken ; and I will try (though it is not very easy) to describe it.

At the head of any pool in a quick rocky river the main stream runs in, forming a series of waves, which diminish in size and gradually disappear as they reach the smooth tail of the pool. On either side of the main stream the water flows in wrinkling eddies, more or less towards either shore. These eddies meet a backwash from the shore, and between this backwash and the eddies may be seen a band of straight-flowing water of varying width, narrower at the top and widening towards the tail of the pool. This water runs smoothly and evenly, parallel with the shore, and has an oily appearance. It is in the tail, and still more in this oily band on either side of the waves, up to the very head of the pool, that fish may be expected to take a dry fly. If the main stream runs near one side of the pool, the fishable water on that side may be compressed into a very narrow streak, but in most cases it will still be there. In high water, the right place to fish is near the bank, and in low water recedes from it towards the main stream ; but, wherever it is, it has the same general appearance, and the fly floats down it at about the same pace. It was of no use to fish in backwaters in this river, because sea trout did not lie in them, and it was impossible to avoid the drag in the eddies which run roughly at right angles to the waves. Provided the water runs straight, the small choppy waves often seen at the sides of the main stream at the head of a pool are well worth fishing. Any one new to this kind of fishing would do well to make a careful note of the appearance of the water in which he has his first success, and remember the pace at which his fly was floating when it was taken. Having got these two things clearly into his head, he had better at first confine his fishing to water of a similar appearance and pace.

Sea trout might reasonably be expected to be uneducated and careless about the correct floating of the fly, but this is emphatically not the case. They do sometimes look at a fly which is dragging, but they do not take it. Occasionally—very occasionally—they have taken my fly when it was lying on its side ; but I think it is no exaggeration to say that ninety-nine per cent. of those caught with a dry fly took it when both wings were cocked and the fly floated free of any suspicion of drag. Nothing but the youngest parr would look at a fly on its back with the hook in the air. I have had very convincing evidence of the dislike of sea trout to a dragging fly. On two occasions, when every movement of the fish could be watched while casting over them, they refused the fly when it was dragging, but took it at the next cast when floating correctly. I also saw others frightened away by the same fault. The avoidance of drag is of course difficult, but it is not quite so difficult as a fisherman coming straight from a gently-flowing chalk-stream to a violent rush of water would expect. The pace of the stream does not prevent a fly from floating correctly, provided the water runs straight, and the casting-line lies in water moving at the same pace as the fly.

The next thing to learn is to spot the fish. This is not easy at first, and the best way to learn it is, perhaps, to get somebody who is an expert at it to point out as many fish as possible. Sea trout always lie on, or practically on, the bottom ; and this position, coupled with the quickly moving water and varying light, makes it a difficult matter to see them. For some time I failed altogether, but after having many pointed out to me I gradually learnt what to look for, and how to look for it ; and that is half the battle in seeing anything. The body of the fish seems very transparent and of a light bluish-grey colour, but the tail appears in the water a darker slaty-blue and more opaque than the body, and is apt to give him away. The waving of the front fins will settle the question whether a suspicious-looking object is a fish or not. Bands of light can be seen travelling from time to time down the pool, and by following these with the eye some of the bed of the river can be searched. A very favourite place for a sea trout to lie is just up-stream of a big stone which breaks or nearly breaks the surface. It looks most uncomfortable, but they seem to prefer these positions to lying below a stone, as a brown trout would do. Even the big fish often lie in quite shallow water. They seem to choose positions where the bottom is smooth and unbroken. Of course, much of the water is too rough to see into, but in most of the pools places can be found where with practice one can locate the fish. It is quite possible—in fact, it is much more usual—to catch fish which have not previously been seen ; but it is worth while to learn the art of seeing them, not only because it leads to more success, but also because it adds enormously to the excitement and pleasure in the fishing. There was one pool in which we had no success at all with a dry fly, though we killed fish in it, especially during rain and late at night, with a wet fly. The top of it was a kind of whirlpool, and the rest was very deep and had a very smooth surface.

Certain sea trout in the river might always be found in practically the same position. These fish, which soon received Christian names as well as other attentions at our hands, did not move up in a spate. They shifted towards or away from the bank as the river rose or fell, but they seemed to think they had swum far enough, and preferred to stay where they were, rather than continue their journey to the lake. One of them, who was christened 'Black Joe,' owing to his remarkable colour, gave me a great deal of amusement. He lay so near the shore and was so dark in colour that my gaffer suggested, after I had fished for him without result for a week, that he was sick, and had better be removed from the river with the gaff. I thought the fish sulky and ugly rather than ill, and refused to attempt any such methods of catching him. After three weeks' fishing, the day came when Joe's appetite, which till then had entirely failed him, was quickened by the sight of a cinnamon sedge. He looked no prettier out of the water than in it, but I pardoned his appearance and was much delighted with his capture. He was an old cock with a large hooked beak, and he ought to have weighed 13 lb. instead of 10. I had some of his scales examined, and the verdict was as follows: age 8½ to 9½ years, the first 3½ of which he had spent in the river. Since then he had spawned two or three times. His removal seemed popular in the river, as his place was immediately taken by three others, overcrowding which Joe would never have allowed in his lifetime. These fish, however, moved up two days later.

Another special friend of mine was Gamlehaga Bill. He took one of my red quills quite early in our acquaintance, but the hook broke in his mouth. About a fortnight later I very nearly persuaded him to take a blue pill fished wet. I got no further rise out of Bill, and the last time I saw him was the Sunday morning on which I left the river. We gave him a parting present of a 'digestive' biscuit, floated in tempting pieces over his head. There was no hidden danger in the biscuit, but Bill thought there was, and at the second piece he turned sulkily away into the stream, and there we left him.

I was never able to discover any difference in the attitude of sea trout which were ready to take a fly from that of those which were not. They were always lying on the bottom and showing no movement except an occasional wave of their bodies from side to side. It was necessary to keep out of sight, though the natives had the common fault of being careless in this respect. Sea trout see a human being fairly quickly, and they have an annoying little trick of lying still and pretending to have seen nothing at all.

On several occasions I was able to watch every movement of the fish while the fly was floating over it. The trout in each case made no sign until the fly was passing over its head. If it meant to rise it turned quickly round on noticing the fly, and shot down stream and towards the surface, until it reached a point just below the fly. It then steadied itself in a vertical position before actually making the rise. The fly was taken from three to six feet below the fish's resting-place. The first movements were very rapid, but the actual rise was made quite slowly and in several different ways. The whole movement reminded me of a man in the deep field, racing back towards the boundary to make a catch from a big hit, and steadying himself as he gets under the ball. Unfortunately, even sea trout sometimes misjudge and drop the catches. In making the rise the fish either just breaks the surface with its lips, or makes a head and tail rise, or rolls right out of the water like a porpoise, and takes the fly as it turns downwards again. The smaller ones now and then jump clean out of the water, drown the fly, and then pick it up from below. In some cases—apparently when he is too late to reach a point below the fly—the fish gulps it in with his head pointing down-stream.

The Norwegian gaffer told me that a sea trout which missed the fly did not rise again for ten days. How he made this calculation I do not know. At any rate it was not always correct. It was the exception to rise a fish a second time, but members of our party succeeded in doing so occasionally. Of all the good moments one has in this kind of fishing, I think the moment of the actual rise is the best. The sight of a great silvery trout rolling solemnly out at the floating fly sends down my back a fresh quiver of surprise, excitement, and delight every time I see it. Great self-restraint is needed to prevent striking too soon. The actual rise is made so slowly that it is almost impossible to wait for what seems an age before the great mouth closes and the fish disappears. That is the moment to strike, and to strike hard. It is necessary to use gut strong enough to stand a considerable jerk. If all goes well, and the hook is driven home at the right moment, one enjoys that rare sensation of having hit a half volley in the middle of the bat. The fish who merely shows his lips is the easiest to hook, because the rise is over so quickly that one has no time to strike too soon. On English chalk-streams it is rare to hook a brown trout far back in the mouth ; but luckily sea trout appear to take the fly, if they take it at all, with a confident gulp which gives one the chance of driving the hook into the tough angle of the mouth, or perhaps, which is best of all, into the tongue.

It is difficult to understand why sea trout take the dry fly as readily as they do. On this river there was not often much natural fly on the water.

On certain days a fair sprinkling of grey duns, some red-bodied duns, and from time to time some small dark fly, appeared for an hour or two. Towards the end of July, at about 9.30 p.m., numbers of large sedges hatched on the banks, but these very seldom got on to the water during daylight; whether they did so late at night I do not know. I opened a number of fish, but the results, on the whole, were meagre. I found occasionally a good many grey dun nymphs and subimagos in their stomachs. In many there was nothing at all. In the majority there were a few small grey dun nymphs with the wings not much developed, corresponding in size to about 00 hooks. I also found in different fish one or two blue-bottles, a few sedges, a daddy-longlegs, and some animals which looked like short, pale-green centipedes. I very seldom saw any number of sea trout feeding on natural flies; and it was unusual to see a large fish rise at all. If a rise was seen, the fish could generally be tempted by the artificial fly.

The best flies to use were Wickham's Fancy, Cinnamon Sedge, and Grey Quill, size No. 10. It is advisable to take rather a larger size for the late evening, and rather a smaller size for days when the fish are coming short. The Grey Quill was an excellent fly, but it had one disadvantage: it was very hard to see in rough water. One fish, who was quite easy to watch, left his place and carefully examined a Silver Sedge, but thinking, I suppose, that it was too large for him at that time in the morning, he dropped back without rising. I gave him a smaller Grey Quill, and he took it as though he liked Grey Quills. The fight which followed was in rough water full of rocks and miniature waterfalls. The fish was fresh-run and very strong. He kept fighting for the pockets behind the rocks in which to get his wind, while I tried to guide and pull him out of the pockets into the little falls and runs, and so increase his exertions and prevent his getting any rest. To add to my difficulties, I had to run through the water to pass him round the outside of an island of stones. Disaster often seemed imminent, but never quite occurred; and he was gaffed at the tail of the island—a perfect fish of 11½ lb.

The flies should be strongly tied with plenty of very stiff tackle and well oiled before use. They do not last long, and it is poor economy to fish with a draggled fly. The hooks must be above reproach, and the gut strong, but it is advisable to have a somewhat finer point at the end of the cast during the day. It is most important to grease the casting-line thoroughly to ensure its floating. If a fly will not float properly, and persists in lying on its back or side, it is best not to fish any more water until the fault is corrected. I have had a great deal of trouble with the annoying habit which some flies have of lighting on their backs; and, though many theories were started as to its cause, no satisfactory conclusion was reached. Sometimes it seemed to be a loop of gut, sometimes the balance of the fly itself, which caused the mischief. Personally, I suspect that it was more often the fisherman. Whatever the cause, it was no use moving on until the fly was made to float square on the water with both wings cheerfully cocked.

Owing to the pace of the stream, the slack line must be drawn in with the fingers after the cast has been made, in order to keep in touch with the fly and make the strike effective. It is no easy matter to regulate this shortening of the line in quick water; and I lost many fish through having too much slack when the fish rose. To strike hard, and yet not to be able, owing to the amount of slack, to produce any effect on the fly, is most annoying. Another frequent cause of annoyance is striking with a hook previously broken on the rocks behind one's back. To feel the hook go into a fish and yet not hold him, and then to find that you have have been fishing with a thing no more dangerous to the trout than a buttonhook, is too much for any man to bear. I used the same rod that I use in England for dry-fly fishing—a split cane, 9 feet 6 inches in length, and very light, without a steel centre. The reel took 35 yards of line and 100 yards of thin backing. This rod sounds an insignificant weapon for dealing with heavy fish, but it is surprising how quickly they can be killed, if the angler takes care to fight always with the stream on his side. At any rate, the smaller the rod the greater the satisfaction in killing a fish. It must be allowed, however, that some of my companions preferred a rod with a steel centre; but split cane is good enough, without the help of steel. Moreover, the extra weight is a bar to delicate casting, and delicate casting is essential.

It is a golden rule, not always easy to observe, never to let a fish get one foot below you. If this rule is kept, the very pace and violence of the water drowns the fish ; and, generally speaking, it need not take more than about five minutes to kill even those of 10 lb. The fight, however, often takes one several hundred yards below where the fish has been hooked, and is as varied and quick as any one could wish. The play of a sea trout is savage, violent and exhilarating, but there is not much method about his madness. He shakes the fly as a terrier shakes a rat. His amazing leaps and rushes, though exhausting to himself in heavy water, make his play more exciting to me than that of any other fish. The rod bends to an alarming curve and tingles with the strain. It has the effect of making me laugh, and I feel more confidence and less abject fear than when playing a brown trout. My confidence has no justification —I lose quite as many sea trout as brown trout, and far too many of both.

Wading is necessary in order that the angler may be as much as possible below the fish over which he is casting, and that his line may not cause the fly to drag. When the trout is hooked, the bank must be reached at once in preparation for a rush down-stream. Large sea trout leave the pool very readily ; and a man must be ready to leave it, if possible, with some yards' start along the bank. 'Get away as near him as you can, and keep there,' is as good advice in catching sea trout as it is in catching foxes. For a rocky river the banks of this particular stream are fairly good going; but waders are not ideal things to run in, and fast running is necessary to keep ahead of the fish in the rapids. Once out of the pool, the fish is carried down by the stream tail first and near the surface. He obviously feels helpless, and is liable to get choked in the waves. When this happens he may often be gaffed very quickly, as he comes into the stiller water under the bank to try to get his wind. If the fisherman can manage to leave the pool ahead of the fish on a short line, he may feel pretty confident of killing him. If the fish gets out of the pool in front of him, he will probably be lost, owing to the drowned line getting round a rock. Even if this does not happen, I always expect the hook to be torn out of the mouth of a fish downstream of me. It is a mistake to be nervous about putting strain on a big one as long as he is up-stream of the rod: he should be bullied and given no peace, and the line recovered the moment he stops running.

One of the most exciting fights I had was with a fish lying in the tail of a pool and just on the near side of a narrow line of choppy waves. The tail of the pool was divided into two portions by the point of an island fifteen yards above the fish. The stiller water in which he lay flowed between me and the island, while the main stream ran at a great pace along the further side of it. The only bridge from my bank to the island was two hundred yards below me. My first cast sent the fly short by some few inches, and the fish made no sign. At the next the fly dragged, and I neither expected nor got a rise. The third was a better shot. The fly lit about two feet above him and sailed nicely over his head. He whipped round like lightning and took it some six feet below where he had been lying. I felt well home in him, but the danger lay in his forcing a passage round the point of the island and going down the stream on the further side of it. He seemed to realise this, and began to jerk and fight his way up the fifteen yards which divided him from the fork of the stream. Twice I just beat him, but, though he failed to turn the corner, I could not pull him down-stream again, and felt him collecting his strength for a final attempt to make good the last few yards. I prepared for the danger as well as I could by wading in below him half-way across to the island, but I still had the deepest water to cross if he got round to the main stream. The final rush came, and, as I feared, I failed to stop him. He rounded the island, and the reel shrieked as he sailed down the waves on the further side. I plunged my way across, filling both waders to the brim, and landed on the island lurching about like a drunken man. The fish was well ahead of me at the end of a dangerously long line, and there was no pool for one hundred yards below, and bad going between me and it. I blundered after him as well as I could, reeling up as I ran, and reached smoother rocks by the side of the pool below. His journey down the rapids had luckily made the fish quite as blown as my run in full waders had rendered me. I caught him up in the pool, and we travelled down it side by side to its tail, where the gaffer, who had crossed by the bridge, joined me, and hooked out a very beaten nine-pounder. That, I think, was the only fish of any size which got a good start of me down-stream, and did not escape.

The weather was very varied during my last visit to the river. We experienced every kind of day and every height of water. I cannot find by looking at my diary that any kind of weather or any height of water was specially favourable. We came to the satisfactory conclusion that one might hope for some success on any sort of day, except when the water was really thick. From ten in the morning till 2 p.m., and from six in the evening onwards, as long as the fly was visible, seemed to be the best hours of the day. The last few moments of light were the likeliest of all, especially in the stiller pools. During a month's fishing there was only one day on which I did not rise a sea trout of more than 3 lb. to a dry fly. On that day the river was rising rapidly, and looked the colour of Scotch broth. The two best days I had, differed very much in weather and water conditions. The first was bright, still and warm, and the water low. After fishing very badly in the morning, and killing one fish of 4 lb., I killed five more after 4 p.m., weighing respectively 3 lb., 5 lb., 5 lb., 5 lb., and 11½ lb. The best one was caught on a wet fly in the dark at 10 p.m. He went down under the centre of a wooden bridge, below which I had already been taken by two of the other fish on a dry fly earlier in the evening. I could see nothing, and had to discover which supports of the bridge he had gone between, by following the point of the rod. Of course he had taken the middle channel, and the water was neither shallow nor slow. By clinging to the upright posts in mid-stream with one hand, I managed to get myself and my rod under the bridge, and safely reach the shore again below. Then a 'kjer,' or submerged pier of stones and logs, was passed, and after a stubborn fight in the growing darkness he became exhausted, and was successfully gaffed.

On the other day the river was very high from a great spate, but just beginning to fall and quite clear. The local experts asserted that the dry fly would be useless, but I determined to give it a chance. As I walked to the edge of the first pool I saw a trout lying almost on the bank. He would not look at the fly, but another fish just below him rose and was missed. This, at any rate, showed where they were lying, and proved that the dry fly was worth a trial. I had one of the most exciting day's fishing I have ever had. The pools were running so high and fast that they were not worth calling pools at all, but little bits of suitable water could be found near the very edge of the river, where a fly would float. When a fish was hooked, he was whirled off at once by the torrent, and I had all I could do to run, scramble, and splash my way at a sufficient pace to keep with him. It was no use hoping to reach a pool below in which to kill him—there was no pool short of the sea. He had to be thoroughly choked, and was gaffed as he swept into the bank from the racing stream. Many fish were lost, but six of over 3 lb. were landed, and one of them weighed 12 lb.

On this same day my companion fished only with a wet fly, and I should say that it was a particularly favourable day for wet-fly fishing. He, too, had a fine day's sport, but the dry fly beat wet both in weight and numbers. One of my six fish made a wonderful rush for the sea. He was hooked about five hundred yards from it, and after playing ducks and drakes with himself till he reached the middle of the river, he turned his head for the sea and raced down the stream, while I ran for my life over a bridge, level with him, and then along the bank below it. I was powerless to stop him, and the best I could do was to try and keep him to my side of the river as I ran. The fish took two kjers in his stride, and neither he nor I stopped running until he was gaffed, only a hundred yards above the sea. I lay on my back and gasped with excitement and exhaustion. He was not more than 5 lb., but he was one of those absolutely unrestrainable fish, who know exactly where they want to go the moment they are hooked, and set about getting there as quickly as possible. He looked as though he had come out of the sea that morning; and he very nearly got back to it.

On another occasion a really big fiish took the fly when I was at the bottom of a steep and rocky bank, across which it was impossible to move at any pace. He just gave me time to scramble up the bank to the level ground above, before he began his down-stream run. I had a good start with him, but he got at once into some most alarming waves, and we covered one hundred yards in no time. Then he pulled up right under me close to the bank, and showed himself to be something like 15 lb. The gaffer scrambled down the bank after him, but the fish saw his danger, and, sailing out again into the stream, gave a most extraordinary exhibition of strength. He cut through the waves, which were running at a terrific pace, and ploughed his way up against them along the further bank, foot by foot, for fifty yards. The line made that peculiar hissing sound as it cut through the waves up-stream, and every possible ounce of strain was put upon it. At last his strength failed him, and he stopped. I got his head round, and in a moment he was swept towards me with the stream. I reeled up as fast as I could, and he came level with me. I started running again, and never stopped till I and the fish reached a pool 150 yards below. Here he lay beaten and on his side, and I began to haul him slowly in towards the bank. Just before he reached the gaff, I suppose because I was too anxious and hurried, the hold gave and the hook came back to me with two scales upon it. I think he must have been hooked in the back. It seemed to me that this was so, as he passed below me, and it is not likely that any fish hooked in the mouth could have fought his way so far against such a stream. It was a very bitter moment, but I had enjoyed the best fight I have ever had with a sea trout, and the memory of it is pleasant, although it ended in the wrong way. I hooked and killed a bigger fish than this. It took a Wickham's Fancy near the top of a quiet pool, and, though not so violent in its movements, went down through several pools and the rapids between them—some 300 yards in all—before being landed. It was a hen fish of 17 lb., and quite fresh-run. I succeeded in rising two salmon to a dry fly, but through my fault, or theirs, they did not touch it.

My actual bag for the month, not counting fish under 3 lb., was 77 sea trout, and 1 grilse; of these, 69 sea trout were caught on a dry fly. The reader should not, however, infer from this that the wet fly was of little or no use. The dry fly was so fascinating that I do not think I gave the wet a fair chance. There were undoubtedly times when the wet fly, even in the daytime, was more killing than the dry; and a change from the one method to the other gave a delightful variation to the fishing, and a much-needed rest to some of the muscles of the wrist and arm. To fish any river for ten hours a day for a month without a break is a hard test of the sport. That river stood the test. I never took, or wished to take, a day off, except Sunday mornings. Fishing began at 6 p.m. on Sundays, and we went by the first watch we could find to reach that hour.

The fishing I have described is that of a river where the fish attain weights which I find many anglers disbelieve in, so far as sea trout are concerned. Luckily, however, there are plenty of rivers in our islands of a similar character where these fish take a wet fly; and I see no reason why they should not take the dry fly as well as or better than the wet. The weight of the fish is not the only attraction in this form of angling. The fascination of it lies, too, in the delicacy of the fishing, and the intense excitement of seeing the beautiful rise of a sea trout of whatever size to a dry fly. The smaller fish of ½ lb. to 2 lb. took it savagely on some days; and a fight with a 2 lb. sea trout on a small rod in rapid water is not the thing to be despised. Provided that there is always an expectation of some day catching the biggest fish in a river, it does not seem to me to matter very much what size the bigger fish are.

THE TROUT OF THE MILL-POOL.

IMAGINE a narrow racquet court with water covering its floor, and you will have a picture of the Mill Pool. The court is fifteen yards long and six broad: it is paved with the clearest of clear streams some three feet deep, over a light gravel bottom. Its front wall is a tall mill, its sides are brickwork dropping plumb—one fifteen, the other twenty feet to the water. It has no roof or back wall, but possesses a gallery at the lower end in the shape of a bridge, fifteen feet in air, at the level of the lower wall, along which, to the left, its wooden fence also extends.

In the front wall is a low arch, leading to the mill wheel, and six feet along at the foot of the lower wall, half-way between the back of the court and the left serving square, is the opening of a brick-lined culvert, out of which flows the stream when the mill is not working, from its source in the village just above. It is a covered-in culvert some four feet wide, and you see nothing but the mouth of it—water to within two feet of its arch.

Just over your head, as you stand in the gallery, are the branches of a tree: under the bridge, tied to it by a chain, is a punt, and behind you, down-stream, is a straight stretch of water, shallower than that in the mill pool, darkly shaded by trees and bushes on either bank.

THE TROUT OF THE MILL-POOL.

About ten years ago I stood for the first time on that bridge, and under me there wriggled, plain for the blindest of eyes to see, a string of feeding trout, the uppermost with his head at the culvert four pounds or thereabouts, the lowest under the bridge, all in order of merit down to one pound, and all in such condition and of such rich colour that one wondered if they ever stopped wriggling and feeding. Whom did they belong to, and could one get leave? On to the bridge sauntered a groom—grooms can do anything. 'Arl get ye laive from Mr. 'Oomphreys,' and I arranged to be there at 6 p.m. the following day, and kept the appointment.

Below the shaded stretch was a two-pound trout feeding recklessly on duns — so recklessly that though I committed every imaginable mistake, he insisted on getting himself caught. So far so good; now for the real business in the pool. I eyed the four-pounder and his satellites still wriggling and feeding, and I discussed with the groom how they should all be caught, when a third party arrived on a bicycle. ''Av ye got yer pairmit?'

'No,' I said with quiet dignity; 'I've got leave from Mr. Humphreys.'

'Oh, 'av ye; ar'm 'Oomphreys and ar niver 'aird owt of it.' That was a stumper; I turned for explanation to the groom. 'Well,' said he, 'ar niver thought owt ud coom of it, ar niver bothered.' I humbly apologised to Mr. 'Oo—what else could I do? 'And now what had I better do?'

'You'd joost hetter pack oop,' he said, and I did, but as I left the bridge he gave a parting shot. 'Ar don't suppose ye've cotched owt?' I owned up shamefacedly, and he showed a kindly humanity, for he let me take my poor little two-pounder, and then I did a silly, wicked thing—Heaven knows why; but I think because of the absurdity of the situation which he had produced. I turned back and tipped, in full view of Mr. 'Oo, who looked on and saw it was only two shillings—I tipped that placid, brazen-faced liar of a groom. Then I 'packed oop' and fled the place for two years to let things cool down a bit, when again that same string of trout was visited (the groom had gone, as such grooms do), and this time 'Oo was approached direct. He remembered me well, laughed, and was kind, telling me how to get 'laive' in the orthodox manner from the owners of the Mill.

Mr. A., the innkeeper where I was staying, drove me to the place, and I stood in a position to attack the four-pounder, and appreciated the difficulties of the job. If one waded up below the bridge there was no room to cast, and, moreover, the tail of the string would object to being stamped on while one fished for the head of it, and would show its objection by bolting up-stream and putting itself and all the others to ground in the culvert.

The alternative was the bridge itself, but if by some chance the fish was hooked, how was one to land it with a three-foot landing-net from water ten feet below, no way down above the bridge, and no chance of moving down-stream because of it? Well, it was not hooked yet, so I chose the bridge, and made up my mind that whatever else happened the four-pounder should have first chance of getting herself (it was obviously a hen) caught.

I think it was a sedge that was presented to her, but it lit on her tail, and was only flicked out of the jaws of number two, a fat three-pounder, just in time, much to that fish's bewilderment and disgust, for three-pounders are not used to such treatment.

A few more attempts, and the fly fell just into the mouth of the culvert; very slowly that broad tail wagged and lowered, and the grey head rose up I saw the white mouth open and shut, and realised that the difference between three feet and ten feet was going to be vital. She fled up the culvert out of sight, and where or how far it led, Heaven knows! The rod point was lowered and held right below the level of the bridge to avoid the line getting cut on the bricks of the culvert—the reel screamed, the trout heaved and jerked, other trout bolted in and out of the culvert, and there was, I can assure you, much commotion and excitement in the water and out of it; and I wondered who had constructed that mysterious underground passage and what he had put in it, and prayed that the architect was a simple man with simple tastes and had put nothing in it at all by way of ornament or obstruction. Probably it was so, for nothing fatal occurred, and then suddenly the line slackened, and before I realised what was up, out bolted my fish once more into daylight.

Out of the culvert into the pool, out of the pool into the air, out of the air into the pool, up the pool under the wheel arch, another leap dangerously near that awful wheel, but still on, as I realised with a jerk, when all the slack line from the culvert was recovered and fish and rod met once more. She fled from the arch into the only patch of weed which the pool contained, and therein buried herself and came to rest, while I stood up on that bridge, enjoying the feelings of an attacked balloonist who has forgotten his parachute.

I looked at Mr. A. and he was white as a sheet ; but something had to be done, and now was the time to do it. I gave him the rod — the first rod he had ever held—and told him to pull himself together, and do nothing but hang on till I reappeared, and then trembling with fright I scrambled down the bank below the bridge into the stream like a cartload of bricks, up floundering under the bridge into the pool. 'Drop the rod,' I gasped ; 'I'll catch it.' His teeth were clenched, and he was literally hanging on as he looked down in anguish at me.

'Drop it, man, drop it—slack the line and drop it!' He dropped and I caught it, and that excellent fish never moved, and once more we were united and now on the same level, so wading and reeling in I approached the weed and saw her great back in the middle of the patch, and tried to scoop weeds, fish, and all into the net, but it was too small, and she naturally kicked in the most terrifying fashion. Still the gut held, and she remained embedded and fixed in the weed. Her tail was seized, but it was too slippery to hold and she flicked it free. Then I slid my hand up her side, and in the end thumb and forefinger met in her gills and all was well. Mr. A.'s face grew pink again, and he said 'Bar gom,' a sign of returning consciousness, as I waded back under the bridge, the fish clutched in my hand, and clambered out to safety on the bank to sit and gloat, too exhausted from sheer excitement to stand, and realise that the fish really did weigh, what I had for two years dreamt it weighed, four pounds. Too late for the fray, Mr. 'Oo appeared with a huge fifteen-foot length of landing-net shaped like a soup-ladle, which I trust and believe I should not have used had it arrived in time.

Last year I was there again with leave. Mr. 'Oo was there too with his abominable net, so were the trout, a big red brown cock fish, who only appeared occasionally out of the culvert to swear at his wife, a lightgrey rather shorter fish, but even plumper, whenever she rose too near his tail. Even she was only half in sight at the mouth of the culvert. Then there was a blotchy-coloured hen fish, who was also quite indecently fat—appeared to be nobody's friend, and to have no very fixed position, besides other smaller fry of two pounds, &c. These minute descriptions may sound ridiculous, but the trout were only a rod's length off, and the water was as clear as a chalk stream at its source can be. They seemed quite indifferent to company on the bridge, presumably because any one crossing it always looked at them, and, thanks to a wholesome dread of Mr. 'Oo, resisted the temptation, which must be extreme to the youth of the village, to try to catch them. I tried for the light-grey hen fish first, but she moved too far up the culvert, and as nothing else was in sight for the moment I put a fly over a fat little trout of one pound, which he took at once, and intending to put him back allowed the use of the long net. Once on the bank, however, 'If ye don't want 'im, ar do,' from Mr. 'Oo, and in these hard times, I gave in to him.

This capture had not disturbed the occupant of the culvert, and the grey fish after a long wait reappeared, or rather the last few inches of her did.

After many attempts I got the fly, a red sedge, to fall two feet up the culvert, by hitting the gut against the brickwork of the near edge of its arch, half-way along the cast, which had the effect of jerking the fly up the dark interior of the culvert. She saw it and rose quietly. I hit her hard, but the hook did not hold and she seemed puzzled and annoyed, but not frightened; so I changed to a Liddles Fancy and allowed it to sink, as she was obviously taking more things under water than on the surface. She took no interest in it on the few occasions on which I got it up to within sight of her, until a lucky cast passed it between the wall of the culvert, against which she was lying, and her mouth. She had to see it that time, and just tilting up sucked it in exactly at the corner of the culvert in full view. The hook went in with a thump and she raced from sight, heaving out the line. I kept the rod where I had kept it with her grandmother, and after a long interval she too reappeared from the culvert, and fled round and round the pool jumping and boring. There was no weed this time worth bothering about, but she seemed to be tiring at last and fairly steady, so, scorning the soup-ladle, I gave Mr. 'Oo the rod, who looked happier than Mr. A. about it, and repeated the bridge manœuvre successfully. She was still on, but, revived by my company in the pool, by no means beat, and what with attempts to charge between my legs, which I only just closed in time, dives for the culvert and rushes for the punt, which was still there, and attached by its dangerous chain, I had a warm five minutes of it before I got her—three and a quarter pounds and a picture of condition, 'Oo all the while utterly puzzled at my refusal to use the soup-ladle. 'Ar'd av cotched it out before that, onywaay.'

A short ten minutes later her place was definitely taken by her wandering sister with the blotchy complexion, who was even more irritating to the cock fish than the late occupant had been. She was a most amusing subject to watch, for she kept having exciting chases after, I think, minnows, which escaped out of the culvert and which she hunted exactly like a terrier after a rat up and down the wall of the pool with quick, short strokes of her tail, doubling and twisting and shaking them in her jaws when the hunt had a successful finish. Two other spectators now arrived on the bridge, a workman, who after watching my fishing in silence for some time, suggested, 'If ye slashed it oop under yon whail, ye maight drar summat out.' This was done literally, and resulted in the bolting of a small trout with his tail between his legs.

This man told me that the main food of the trout was water-lice ; that may or may not be their correct name, but they were a kind of transparent aristocratic edition of a wood-louse, and the dead fish was full of them and of shrimps.

The other spectator was a small boy of a silent but inquisitive disposition, who, judging by his appearance, cultivated the smaller land variety of the above insect, for both of which reasons I suggested that he should sit in the gallery rather than in the stalls.

The blotchy trout was a difficult one to deal with, as she would not sit still, and was almost invariably too high up the culvert, except when butted out by the cock or making an excursion after a minnow. The tree above my head had had many of its leaves replaced by flies before. I induced her to take a Liddles Fancy, and she instantly shook herself free again and remained in full view, suspicious, but still occasionally taking things under water. Just before I had to go the cock fish came down into view, perhaps to find out why the hen had ceased annoying at his tail. He was the best of them all, and the greediest, for he took the same fly with a gulp at the first shot, and kept it as a memento of a most exciting afternoon. Either the gut was frayed or I was too violent, probably both ; at any rate we parted at the strike, and he sat in that pool below me, shaking his head and lashing his tail like a mad bull, and finally charged up the culvert, his decoration on his nose. He will find it hard to get rid of; but most of my sympathy goes to the blotchy hen. His peevishness will descend on her shoulders, and his buttings may have an added point to them, if she takes her meals too near his private seat in the culvert.

I took a friend to this same pool on a later occasion, and, with his wife, watched the playing of another four-pounder. Once more the rod was dropped, and caught, but while we two spectators on the bridge were following the main struggle in the pool, another incident, which anybody is at liberty to disbelieve, occurred. In the stillest part of the pool we suddenly noticed a long, thin, villainous trout of some three pounds standing on its head, and grubbing up something black from the bottom of the river. It appeared to be absolutely indifferent to the fisherman standing in the water, and to the movements of the other trout dashing or boring round it. Presently it succeeded in getting across its jaws the black object on the bed of the stream, and, rising to the surface, it lay on the top with its head out of the water, gnawing and worrying at its prey, exactly like a terrier with a rat, apparently trying to eat it.

'It's a kitten!' came from all three of us, almost simultaneously.

Believe it or not, as you will, a kitten it was! This ridiculous trout, still holding its prize on the surface, swam towards the fisherman, who, obviously nervous of the intention of this apparition, retired discreetly to the bridge, followed by the fish. The whole business was so absurd that we should not have been in the least surprised if it had handed to him the kitten after the manner of a retriever, but, passing by his legs, it disappeared under the bridge. The four-pounder eventually followed, and was killed some distance downstream.

When Mr. 'Oo once more arrived upon the scene we told him what we had seen, and, moreover, showed him the kitten lying on the bottom where it had been dropped below the bridge. His information was interesting: he claimed the kitten as his property, for he had drowned it with his own hands three days before.

To the obvious retort to this story: 'Of course it was——a pike!' I can only answer that we three know it was a trout, and saw it again next day and fished for it. From the appearance and its behaviour I am certain that it was stone blind. We should no doubt have tried with the natural bait, which was still there, but a fair-sized kitten is not so easy to put on a dry-fly hook.

GALLOPING.

THE absence of fences in most parts of Northern France made possible a form of Sport entirely new to me, which in dry weather, especially in September and October, provided us with a great deal of fun. I refer to galloping down hares and partridges without the assistance of dogs of any kind.

In wet weather, except in the devastated area, too much harm was caused to crops, so that the early Autumn was the cream of the Season, moreover it was almost impossible to catch a partridge by this means after October and very difficult after September.

Naturally it was not a destructive sport to the game concerned, but if properly conducted, that is with a field of not more than four horsemen, it was exciting, scientific, and required very good eyesight. To keep a partridge or hare in view when galloping 'all out' up-wind, and at the same time watch for crops, steep banks, and sunken lanes was a severe test of eyesight. With regard to partridges, the most essential thing was to select the right bird after the covey had been put up once or twice, that is the bird who got up last and with the worst signs of fatigue, and to arrange for his flying into country where there was no covert of any kind, such as grass banks or roots.

A really tired partridge was impossible to find without a dog in cover of any sort, and success depended not merely in getting a bird beat, but in getting it beat in a suitable place. Hot still weather was the best chance, because the birds tired sooner, did not get blown out of sight downwind, and were easier to control. Comparatively large bags might be made in September in suitable country with a large field, but the smaller the field the more scientific the sport, and the less damage caused to crops, and for that matter to the partridges.

From a shooting point of view I cannot advise the introduction of partridge-galloping in the few places where it would be possible in England, though it kills few birds, the victims are almost invariably young and nothing makes them so impossibly wild. For all that, it is the most amusing and the most difficult method of coming by a partridge known to me, and the sense of triumph on the one and only occasion on which I personally slew an 'old' bird was very great. We had had several unsuccessful hunts, and then finding a large covey on high ground my companion and I galloped them in three flights, giving them no time to get their wind, straight down a long gentle slope. At the fourth flight, as usually occurs, they broke up, the other officer shouting to me to take a bird scuttling up a small lane, while he turned to the right after another which showed obvious signs of fatigue.

My partridge, the old hen of the covey, disappeared round a corner of the lane, but galloping down it and putting her up, by rising in my stirrups to see over the lane bank, I succeeded in marking her down and putting her up again before she reached cover. She wobbled back very tired towards a large root field, and I was almost on the top of her when she lit in a small ditch and scuttled down it to the roots, unable to rise again.

Armed with a polo stick, a weapon with which I am inordinately inefficient, I chivied that unfortunate bird round and round in a circle, hitting everything except the partridge, including my mare's forelegs, before a lucky back-hander finished the business.

The dilemma of what to do when you have two absolutely beaten partridges at your feet and are entirely alone occurred to me on another occasion in the same country.

Probably the best solution would have been to shout for assistance and await action till it came; but I tried for a right and left, and in demobilising No. 1 his companion ran off while my back was turned and was never found again.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, it is worth remembering that when a partridge tries to get up and fails, it hardly ever succeeds at a second attempt, and the best plan is at once to dismount and run it down on foot. The horses enjoyed it enormously and soon learned what was required. I had a chestnut mare who hunted a hare like a greyhound, and whenever one got up in sight of her, even when on parade, she always gave a telltale bound forwards towards it.

Hare-galloping was perhaps the better sport of the two, involving longer and far more tiring gallops, and the necessity for good instinctive combination among the members of the field.

We found the best plan was to let one or two draw for the quarry, while the others rode wide and well forward, keeping to the highest ground or in such a position as to turn a hare away from covert or wire if it existed.

Once a hare was found, it was the business of one or two only to press her, while the others rode cunning, saving their horses, ready to take up the running at a favourable moment.

Like most, if not all, hunted animals, the main idea of the hare is to find a substitute, in which case the hunted one squats and the fresh hare goes off in view. This was actually seen to happen so often, that there can be no doubt that a hare goes deliberately to the place where another is lying and puts her up, in exactly the same way that hunted deer, and presumably foxes, shift their responsibility.

I always believe that a fox's point is an earth or another fox, and that when we speak of a certain wood being his point, we have a much less definite idea of where he means to go than the fox, and are not strictly accurate.

In the case of roe and hares I have seen the change effected at my very feet, and the fresh animal seems to take on the job without argument or reluctance.

Some years ago a roe hunted by beagles came running up to within a few yards of me unconscious of my presence and threw itself flat on the ground with neck out-stretched, and just as the hounds appeared another, which had not been noticed before, stood up by the side of the squatting animal and bounded off at the last moment in full view. The whole thing was obviously deliberate, including the act of letting the hounds get a view.

One of our best hare gallops was close to the pleasant little country town of Fruges in the Pas de Calais. Four of us hunted a very strong hare for three-quarters of an hour in a series of large rings on rather hilly country, where there were enough hares to make a change difficult to avoid, and where the undulations made it almost impossible to keep her in view all the time. At last that exciting moment came when she ceased to gain and began to come back to us, and finally all three of us drew right up to her. She dodged into a little round hollow and there squatted just short of an osier bed, which meant safety if she could reach it.

We put her up and tried hard to force her again to the open country; but a hare when her mind is made up is an impossible animal to head, and dodging under our horses' legs she reached the osier bed. I hurled myself off and dashed after her on foot, but she could still go about as fast as a man in field boots could run, and she was finally lost sight of in the covert from which we could never put her up again.

Just after the issue of the strictest orders against the pursuit, let alone the capture of game, we had another great hunt, and by the supreme effort of one member of the party of three, our hare was turned from a great wood which she had nearly reached and induced to make once more for the open. Two of us were galloping two hundred yards behind her, when we noticed a staff car coming up a road towards us. The hare doubled round the front of the car and disappeared on the road bank while we flashed past and a red hat appeared at the windows, but the staff officer merely holloaed us on, much to our relief, and putting up our hare again after a short search on the bank, we galloped back towards one of the steep narrow gullies common in that part of the country. She reached it and plunged in, but by riding along either bank we could still get an occasional view of her below us in the bottom of the gulley, which she followed until she reached a larger one which joined it.

The bank was steep, but we slid down while she with difficulty laboured up the far side on the top of which was a small boy holding on a cord the most absurd mongrel, apparently a cross between a pug and a sheep dog. We both holloaed, the dog got a view, and jerking the cord from the boy's hand, after two turns round a tree, caught, I doubt not, its first and last hare.

We did our best to initiate both dog and boy into all the ceremonies proper to the successful end of a great hunt, but both seemed rather shy, and very bored with the whole proceeding.

After removing its head as a proof to the Mess of our success, we presented the corpse to the boy, open-mouthed in bewilderment at the two English officers who had thought it worth while to gallop for miles after a hare, make absurd noises at its death, and then, when their object was accomplished, ride away with nothing in their pockets but its head.

A piece of land eminently suitable for hare-galloping, owing to the fact that it was devoid of cover, uncultivated, and very flat, was within easy reach of our billets at Naours, north of Amiens. Though we considered this place the property of the squadron for the time being, others, in some instances persons of the highest rank and authority, occasionally poached on it.

A barbed wire fence stretched half-way across it at one place, which made the preliminary arrangements complicated and difficult. The party had to be divided, one or two members being placed on the far side of the wire, to take up the chase of any hare which got through, while the others galloped round, or hung about on the high ground to cut in if she turned back through the wire.

One great gallop ensued when we could only spare a single horseman for the far side of the wire ; he went through several parishes and was not seen again till late that evening, when he returned without the hare ; he had run her to a standstill, but had failed to put her up out of a patch of long grass in which she had squatted.

The hares at this place got into such excellent practice and condition that they became almost impossible to catch, but we had one or two triumphs. After galloping a hare for about a mile to the wire, we handed her over to two companions on the far side. After a time they lost her, but we saw her slinking back, and taking cover behind a shed waited for her to pass again to our side of the barrier. After some hesitation she did so, and two of us cutting in behind kept her just in sight as she bobbed along through the tall grass into the widest part of the open plain. She disappeared over a crest, which we gained just in time to see her enter a small patch of lucerne. The inevitable fresh hare jumped up from the lucerne, but we were not deceived, and getting our rightful quarry once more on her legs, we slew her by the side of a ploughman, who described our condition as '*tous les trois tout à fait au bout*.' Pleased with this expression we presented him with the hare for his supper, which set him off into ecstasies over '*la chasse*' in general and hare-galloping in particular.

The greatest honours in 'galloping' fell to another squadron. They were returning from night manœuvres near Fruges very early on a September morning, when a fox was seen crossing the plain. Leaving one of their number in charge of the squadron, the remaining officers rode at him and, after galloping some distance, lost sight of him in a valley. The scouts, however—who were well out in front—got a view and turned him back towards the main body of the squadron, when the hunt became general and the pandemonium and excitement rose to fever-pitch. Bewildered and tired by the size of the pack, the fox lay down in a field of beans, and one of the subalterns, springing from the saddle, caught him by the scruff of the neck. He enjoyed the unusual privilege of having all the rites performed upon him with much noise and ceremony, and then being allowed to depart quite unharmed.

A FOX OUT HUNTING.

DURING the last snow I had the luck to see a fox stalking moles in broad daylight, in brilliant sunshine, with a good telescope at two hundred yards, so that every movement could be closely watched and even the fox's expression seen. I was near a low hedge talking to a Belgian, when I spotted an animal walking towards us along a track in the snow, and putting the glass on it saw it was a vixen. She turned off the path downwards for a hundred yards, then made a sharp turn up wind and stiffened into a perfect point, right fore paw raised, ears cocked, and every muscle stiff. She remained on the point for some moments, making no movement except an occasional turn of the head as she listened to her quarry—a mole. Then came the very careful stalk, each foot lifted and put down with the utmost delicacy and very slowly, ears always cocked, and brush held clear of the snow until she arrived within pouncing distance—I should judge about eight or ten feet. For grace of movement and neatness I have never seen anything to equal her even in a fox.

Another pause while she sank slowly back on to her haunches and collected herself for the spring, turning her head from side to side to listen. Her whole attitude was one of intense excitement, and she imparted the same feelings to me. At last came the pounce, a most beautiful thing to see, very like the pounce of a cat, followed by a quick, short scramble on the molehill, ears laid back, and then she raised her head and there was a look of bitter disappointment on her face, for she had missed. However, that was not the only mole, and she at once re-cocked her ears, started off again, and soon had another point. The whole performance was repeated for my benefit six times, and I am sure that I was just as disappointed as she was that every stalk was a failure. The snow being hard and frozen and crusty must have made stalking exceedingly difficult, and no doubt accounted for the lack of success. The Belgian was hopelessly out of tune with my feelings, and would keep saying, 'Ah, quel beau coup de fusil. Mais je serais bien content de l'avoir mort pour vous montrez le peau.'

I was determined to get him interested ; but be knew nothing of telescopes, and in trying to fix mine on the bank for him, I made some slight sound, at which the vixen looked round, picked us up, and with one whisk of her brush was off for the woods.

I saw on that morning among others the tracks of the following animals: pig, roe, badger, marten, and polecat. The badgers had been snuffling in the long coarse grass, which was appearing above the snow, in which they made little round holes with their noses. I could not discover what they had been after, probably some form of beetle.

A relation of mine who owned two Sealyham terriers in France, which have now safely returned from quarantine in England, had a fine fox-hunt in the Cologne Valley, north-east of Peronne. In February, 1918, he had three good hunts after a fox with these two dogs, losing him in each case, and on a very wet afternoon, when no one else would join him, he went out alone on foot, and drew the same osier bed near Doignt where he had found before. The fox was there as usual; there was a great scent and they ran two large rings up the valley and back to the osier bed before the first and only check occurred on the railway, which the fox had run for some distance. A cast forward hit him off and they hunted slowly up-stream about half a mile, when the huntsman got a view of the fox, crossing a field not far ahead, and warming up they ran hard to an osier bed near Hamelet, where he had waited for them. After several turns round the osier bed there was a sudden silence, and then the unmistakable sounds of a worry. Whether he was really beat or had been foolish enough to despise the terriers and decided to turn round and have it out with them is uncertain, but when the huntsman reached the scene the terriers were tearing at the dead body of a dog fox. Except for a slight mark round his neck, which might have been caused by a snare that had once held him, there was no sign of previous injury, and to kill a dog fox on foot with two small terriers in February in an hour and a quarter of absolutely fair hunting is, I should think, an unique experience.

The total bag of these two terriers for the season of 1918–1919 in France, Belgium and

Germany, aboveground and underground, was twenty-one foxes, fifteen badgers, six polecats, one pine marten, and four hundred and sixty-five rats, from which it may justly be inferred that both they and their master were thankful when the quarantine period was past and they could get to work again.

PIG-STICKING.

FEW travellers from London to Paris are aware that soon after leaving Boulogne when passing near the sandhills by the side of a swamp they are invading the haunt of wild boar. We learnt many things at the war, and that was one of them.

I shall always be grateful to the Germans for driving before them, as they undoubtedly did in 1914, a large number of pig, which, owing to the subsequent trenches, remained to provide sport on our side of the line.

I was convinced of this fact by a famous French Chasseur who hunted pig in the Forêt d'Eu, north of Rouen, before and during the war.

He told me that in 1915 he had been at the death of one hundred pig—easily a record for him—and that he knew that many of them had come in from elsewhere, because a considerable portion were really old stagers of ten years or more, an age to which they rarely had the chance to attain in that part of France in peace conditions. He suggested that they came from the Vosges and the Ardennes, in front of the Germans, and could never get back.

Though there were pig in the North of France in many of the large woods before the war, we were told the same story everywhere, that they had largely increased during the war, and though some of that increase was due to the fact that they were less hunted, the age of many of them, and the suddenness of the rise in their numbers, was convincing testimony that they came from the East.

The attraction of a wild animal may lie in its beauty, its method of life, its savageness, or even its weirdness.

The first of these can hardly, even by his best friends, be attributed to the wild boar, and probably it is the last which suits him best. His wild appearance gives one an exciting shock at the sight of him, which recurs every time he is met. You recognise that he is a wild animal, before you remember that he is a pig, and his front, heavy shape, enormous head, and shaggy coat—the colour of which is so hard to define—seems to take one back into an older Europe, peopled by mammoths, aurochs, and other remnants of a forgotten age. But it is not only appearance which weighs in his favour, there is a mystery about all beasts which go about their business at night, especially when, as in this case, their wanderings are very considerable and, except in extremely dry weather, possible to follow. No one with any experience of pig can be ignorant of their presence in a country: though he may never see the animals themselves, he is bound to notice their baths, and their routlings, if not their tracks.

The number of French or Belgians that I have met, even in pig-frequented countries, who are really knowledgeable about their habits is very small. They are, as a rule, full of information of a most definite kind as to the exact and invariable whereabouts of many more pig than actually exist, all of which are of enormous size, and guilty of an indescribable amount of damage to the crops. Inveterate wanderers and very shy of disturbance they are always difficult animals to find, and as they usually lie up in the thickest available covert still more difficult to see even when located.

They greatly prefer a big wood to a small one, but large or small, thick or thin, it must be quiet. Thick oak scrub—'*taillis*,' gorse, broom, heather, young pine, are favourite lying places, especially if combining shelter from the wind with warmth from the sun.

It is a fallacy common to most natives of Belgium and France to suppose that a pig returns to the same bed every morning. He seems to me to invariably make a fresh bed, which is scraped out of the ground, and he does not return regularly even to the same part of a wood. He spends his life visiting a number of favourite haunts, making short stays at each. In one matter he is most particular, he must have his bath, generally several baths per day, one just before lying up, and at every opportunity after exertion. They are not quite our idea of a bath, for it is soft, liquid mud rather than water which takes his fancy, but it is easy to see by the tracks how he revels and gloats in his wallow, and looks upon it as the best moment of the day. After the bath he likes to lean against and scratch his sides on the stem of a rough-barked tree, a pine if there is one, or sometimes a silver birch, and near one of the well-frequented baths, you will nearly always find a tree which has been cleaned of its bark by the violent rubbing of their bodies up to the height of a pig, with the ground round it beaten down by their tracks.

Their habit is to set out on their foraging expeditions just as the light goes, and to return about dawn ; but they are not always punctual, and it struck me that the worse the weather the later did they stop out.

Their food varies in different districts and according to the weather, but I think a pig will go further for a potato than anything else. If they are not available, beetroot, mangolds, roots of every kind, acorns, beech-nuts, young rabbits, worms, and, in hard frost in France—though I did not notice this in Belgium—stacks of corn, or preferably beans. During a prolonged frost, in which routling was out of the question, I saw a beanstack the base of which was gradually eaten to a point, when the stack fell and the '*sangliers*' finished it at their leisure. At that time every stack in the countryside suffered to a greater or lesser extent from their visits.

I remember following the tracks of one old *solitaire* in hard frost and deep snow, who must have visited quite twenty stacks during the night—they were the only food he could get.

This damage to stacks did not occur to the same extent in the Ardennes, partly because the corn is nearly all stacked in barns in that country, and partly because there are throughout it a number of springs always open, round which routling was to a certain extent possible even in hard frost.

We were told, and had no reason to doubt it, that the ordinary small routlings, resembling a child's attempts at ploughing, seen in grass meadows, on uncultivated, and, more rarely, on cultivated land, are made in the search for worms; but what the object of the very deep excavations—occasionally three feet—made in the woods is, I could not find out. Some root, no doubt, and a very tasty one, for the prize must be great for so much hard labour.

Their breeding habits are rather irregular, but more young pig are born in April than in any other month, and delightful little beasts they are. About the colour of a park fallow-deer in summer coat, with white stripes along their sides, big ears and heads, they are quaint and even pretty, rather than grotesque and weird like their parents.

I once saw a family party wending their way home through snow in the early morning, with my telescope. They were moving through a thin plantation when first seen about three hundred yards off, and as they came out into the open two old pig, one in front and one behind, and a family of six between their elders, they gave one the idea of a pack of hounds with the huntsman and his whip in attendance going to the meet. All along the slope opposite me I watched the procession: the leader would trot on ahead fifty yards or so to the next rise, where he halted for a few seconds; the whip behind would lower her long snout and lift up the hindquarters of the last little pig and give him a gentle shove, and on they all went till they caught up the leader when the whole process was repeated; the leader making use of each rise of ground to reconnoitre the country in front of him before risking his family over the crest. I had a perfect broadside view of the whole performance, and remember noticing that the last young hopeful appeared to consider that his mother's methods of whipping-in were not in the best taste. Whatever his feelings about it, the pack were obviously very handy, and carried out to perfection the military manœuvre of 'follow me in a string of ones.'

Pig rely for safety, as for most things, on their absurdly elongated noses, and I do not think that their eyes are very good, though their ears are excellent. When jumped they certainly prefer to run up-wind, and they seem to have a tendency to feed and travel in the same way.

In February, 1919, I was quartered at Engis, on the Meuse. There were woods suitable for pig on the south of the river, which is about one hundred yards wide, and has an almost continuous line of houses and factories on its northern bank. There never were large quantities of pig about, but during a north wind the chance of seeing fresh tracks was much increased, and my belief is that while that wind prevailed the pig from the Ardennes in the south tended to move north, and that some of them reached the Meuse, which runs east and west, but did not cross. The inhabitants told me that during the hard frost of 1918 some pig actually crossed the river and did considerable damage to the gardens of Engis. Small streams are no obstacle to them at all, and they will plunge in and cut their way through ice which does not bear them without any hesitation.

PIG-STICKING.

A great deal of poaching went on in Belgium during the German occupation, and I dare say some of the Belgian poachers were sorry when the armistice came. There were a very large number of guns successfully hidden in the country, and though it was too risky to use them, snares were set all over the place, and the roe were thereby sadly reduced.

I made great friends with one well-known poacher in the Ardennes, and had the amusement on several occasions of introducing him to some keepers of the neighbourhood, all of whom of course he really knew perfectly well. He told me he had killed thirteen pig during the German occupation (I did not press him about the roe), twelve of them in wire snares. The thirteenth he had shot on a summer evening in a field of potatoes, cut it up, and re-hidden his gun before daylight. He was a good hunter and a charming companion, with a fund of anecdotes told in the slow, soft French of that country which seemed to suit so well his quiet sense of humour. He had been beating at a battue in a wood near his house, the keeper of which was a short, fat, pasty-faced individual, with a round, purple nose, in direct contrast to the rest of his complexion, and wearing, to make his appearance still more ridiculous, a dirty grey felt hat exactly like a toadstool.

While at his post the keeper shot a pig, and, in his excitement, threw down his gun and ran in to examine his quarry. The pig was not so dead as it might have been, and came straight for him. He jumped for the only available tree, dropping the precious hat, and seizing a branch to swing himself clear of danger. The branch was scarcely high enough, and after reducing the hat to an even more dilapidated state than before, the pig tried to take him by the foot.

'*Et il pleurait dans l'arbre comme un enfant. Ooh mais, c'était beau à voire, savez-vous, Majeur.*' The poacher apparently enjoyed the scene too much to interfere, but the next gun finished the pig before any harm was done. '*C'est dommage que le sanglier n'a pas fini le chapeau, voyez-vous, Majeur,*' said he, pointing at that awful object still on the head of its owner, who would rather have told the story in his own way without the comments of his friend. I say friend, for these two had worked in harmony during the war, setting their own snares, and laughing together at the amateurish efforts of the Germans to catch pig in a sort of baited cage, which was built in their preserves. My friend excused his own hunting in that particular wood, '*parce qu'il n'a pas été loué, voyez-vous,*' but he seemed to me to know all the other woods equally well, including some royal preserves in which we had written permission to hunt. I apologise for the number of '*voyez-vous*' and '*savez-vous,*' but there is apparently something in the climate of the Ardennes which makes them quite indispensable to any self-respecting sentence.

A short time before I had been given a post as a musketry expert, and with this distinction fresh upon my shoulders I had five chances with a service rifle at pig, two of them by no means difficult, and missed them every one. We were much criticised by the inhabitants for using rifles instead of guns loaded with slugs, the usual weapon in that country, and no doubt a deadly one in thick covert, but the idea of shooting any large animal with a shot-gun is thoroughly distasteful to me. When a boy I once shot a roebuck with a gun, a shot which I do not mean to repeat. It is a sad fact that the Austrians are far better sportsmen than the nations more to the west in this respect, and keep the rifle and shot-gun for their proper uses. My objection to the latter is that it is almost impossible to miss as large an animal as a roe or pig with shot and easy to lose them.

The presence of snow makes all the difference to the pleasure and the chance of success in pig-hunting with a rifle, and we were not always lucky enough to be able to take advantage of it.

In the spring of 1919, the whole of one day was spent in tracking a *solitaire* in the woods opposite Engis after a light fall of snow the night before. I hit his tracks at 7 a.m. leading out of a wood into wheat, where the powdering of snow was very light, and it was disappointing to find them returning to the same wood, and still more annoying when I arrived again at the place where I had first hit them off. A circuit was made in the wood outside my old tracks to find the error, but there was nothing else there, and as a last resort I went very carefully again over the wheat field, and there found the mistake where the pig had crossed his own tracks diagonally and I had taken those made earlier in the night. After that the work was easier, the wind being in my face. The pig having finished his meal my beast kept a fairly straight up-wind course through another wood, towards a very excellent bank of oak scrub and heather warmed by the sun and sheltered from the wind. This bank was ideal for the pig, but the covert was so thick that it was impossible to see more than thirty yards in most places, and however carefully the feet were placed it was almost impossible not to make some sound. At last came the tell-tale scrunch, crash, of a jumping pig, and hearing him move to the left, and seeing a small, steep valley across which he would probably pass, I ran to a place from which I could get some sort of view of its further slope.

He appeared galloping hard up the bank, and I thought my shot (a very quick one) was not far out, but could not get off a second round. I looked down at the rifle and found the cut-off had closed, knocked in probably by a branch. There was just time to let off two more hopeless rounds and he was gone. Examination of the place showed one or two tiny spots of blood, but he had galloped hard uphill, and it was soon obvious that the bullet had only grazed him.

As it was twelve o'clock, and I had been tracking since seven o'clock on an empty stomach, I was glad of a lift from a passing car towards a combination of breakfast and lunch, but that finished, I returned, and finding that others had also been on his track, a wide cast was made and a long, straight hunt began. That pig was followed till 6 p.m., and a four-mile point had been made, but I never set eyes on him again and left the tracks where he had refreshed himself with a series of mud baths in one of the favourite wallows.

There was one venerable old *solitaire* who lived in and about the Bois de Naours, north of Amiens, who enjoyed our attentions more than once. We had noticed his tracks about in the snow, and some of the men had actually seen him and given exciting descriptions of his size and appearance. After sitting up one evening outside a favourite covert of his, I found next morning that he had left it only just out of sight of me the evening before, and though he had gone out as usual alone, he had returned with two sows and a young pig. The covert was joined to the main wood by a narrow neck, cut by a very steep gully, and over this gully were two well-used '*passages.*' The question was, had the *solitaire* and his newly acquired party stopped in this separate bit of wood. If so, there was a really good chance that when moved he would use one of the '*passages*' to gain the main wood.

Farmers and labourers often passed along the edge of this place, and I thought if a wide-enough circuit were made, even though at one point my wind must be given to the wood, the pig, if there, would not move, and I could then return, get one or two others from the squadron, and carry out a scientific drive of the wood.

Three-quarters of the circuit had been completed when I looked up and saw the four galloping hard out of the gully five hundred yards off. They had had the wind given from a long way off, but that was enough, and all I had done was just to see enough of the old *solitaire* to realise that the description of him was not exaggerated. We followed the tracks until fresh snow covered them, but a pig once moved is not really worth following, for he never seems to settle down.

I saw the old gentleman a little later, one Sunday afternoon, in a terrible hurry, ploughing his way towards the Bois de Naours, and ran hard to try and cut him off, but never looked like succeeding. After that we looked for his tracks in vain for many days, until they were found in a little valley with some straggling covert in it on the other side of the village. I went out with another officer, J——, a few days later, and some N.C.O.s mounted on a few very green remounts which had just come up, and bethought me of this valley. There was a patch of really thick gorse at the end of a narrow wood, and without much hope of result I posted my little band at vantage points round the covert and rode into the gorse. Crash! Nothing could be seen, but I knew well enough that sound, and my groom behind gave a cry of excitement, for he had just seen the *solitaire's* departing form as he charged back into the wood. We galloped down the side of the covert to the far end shouting 'Tally ho!' back, but nothing came out; so, seeing every one reposted, and another officer, E——, turning up to join in, I dismounted, leaving my horse by the side of the wood with my groom, and beat it on foot. Another crash, and the sound of a galloping beast, and as I ran for my horse I heard my groom's yells of excitement, and arrived at the wood's edge to see that hoary old boar trotting in the most unconcerned way within ten yards of my horse, over a grass field straight for E——, who was getting his sword out.

By the worst of luck, the pig turned and crossed a long, narrow meadow entirely bounded by wire, thus throwing E—— momentarily out of the hunt. My holloa brought P—— full gallop from the next corner, and getting a view as the pig topped the hill, he set out in solitary pursuit, while I made up for the loss of time caused by getting my horse, as well as I could. P—— got within ten yards, but either because his pony wouldn't or couldn't, or because the old boar was just too good a mover, he kept at that distance for the next mile over the open, till the pig reached the village and galloped down the street between the houses—women, children, and chickens flying in every direction. He turned down a lane, jumped into a wired-in orchard, and disappeared.

E——, some others, and myself, having now come up, we galloped forward to two ploughmen working on either side of a sunk lane, and only a few yards from it, in the direction in which we thought the pig must have gone.

Neither ploughman had seen him, and the only thing to do was to take up the tracks, which showed us, too late, of course, that he had followed that sunken lane for nearly a mile, and passed exactly between the ploughmen, concealed by the banks of the lane.

How we did curse that wire, and the lane, and the pace of P——'s pony. There are certain animals which are included in my dreams, and the gaunt, grizzled form of that old *solitaire* jogging out over the first field as though the whole country was his and his alone, figures very often in them.

Two French packs of hounds hunted more or less continuously during the war, and the following account refers to one of them. I regret to say that I never had the chance to go out with either. A cavalry squadron billeted in a certain village were busy at stables when an officer dashed down the street bareback, shouting to all and sundry to get a horse and come on. The sound of a horn was heard in the distance, and a pig appeared galloping past the village, hounds running hard not far behind, and the huntsman, wound about with a horn, clattered down the street on a worn-out horse. Not far off the pig was brought to bay in a hollow, and the huntsman dismounting produced a queer-shaped blunderbuss from his holsters. The hounds, knowing from experience what was coming, began to look over their shoulders, slink off, and take cover, so that when the explosion occurred the pig was alone.

Poor beast, he was very frightened but quite untouched, and the hounds had considered such a safe distance to be necessary, that by the time they were collected the pig was well away, and eventually escaped.

By a great stroke of luck my squadron was billeted for eight weeks in February and March of 1917 at Wambercourt, a village lying between the big woods of Hesdin and Fressin, and before many days had passed I had found it advisable to issue orders that no officer was to leave the village without sword, rifle, or revolver under any circumstances whatever ; also that any man in the squadron seeing a pig must at once report the fact to my Headquarters.

The country round the big woods was rolling, cultivated down, with steep banks and gullies on the slopes, and a fairly rideable plain on the top, but when we first arrived the land was too wet to try to ride a pig without doing great damage to the wheat. The two big woods which were the stronghold of the pig were carefully preserved, and we were strictly forbidden by the owners to hunt in them, but the open country and the small outlying woods we considered to be ours, an opinion that was thoroughly endorsed by the Maire and the farming fraternity, whose land had suffered considerably from the pig.

I shall never forget the first occasion on which I actually saw a pig from these billets. The evening after we arrived, two of us walked up unarmed to the edge of a wood to look for tracks. Just as it was getting dark we sat down and were talking about the chances of seeing game, when a dark form appeared at the wood's edge, and a splendid old *solitaire* trotted out on to the skyline, and grubbed his way quietly across a wheatfield. He was enough to whet anybody's appetite, and there were few sunsets or sunrises that I did not see during our stay at Wambercourt, and though success came very seldom, we were always getting news of pig, seeing tracks and expecting the longed-for chance to come.

Our first success was a bit of quite unaccountable luck. With two other officers and thirty-five men I was doing a musketry practice at iron plates placed against the foot of a bank at about 150 yards range across a little valley by a well-used '*passage aux sangliers*.' Two N.C.O.s were posted wide of and slightly behind the targets to warn me of any Frenchmen working on the land behind them, and a red flag was flapping in the wind behind the iron plates. A squad of thirteen men had already fired ten rounds each and an officer had just replaced the plates, which had been hit, while I told off the next squad to fire, when one of the N.C.O.s acting as stops began to whistle very softly. Thinking that a Frenchman had got into the danger zone I did not put the next squad into position and wondered why the man continued to whistle so softly and finally to point, when over the bank by the flag came five pigs at full gallop straight towards us.

I whispered 'Get down!' and the officer by me gasped 'Load!'—an unnecessary order; the officer by the target bolted for his life into a sunken lane between us, and the pig raced down the bank, knocking over two iron plates, when the battle began.

One pig was hit at once, and I told the man lying by me, who was a very fine shot, to finish him, which he did. The biggest pig fell back off a bank shot through the heart, and the third dropped as he appeared on our side of the sunken lane. The two survivors turned slightly to our right and so brought themselves into line with a

Frenchman who was working about 400 yards beyond them, so I yelled 'Cease fire!' and was much amazed to find the order obeyed. The survivors, with mouths wide open, very blown, and very frightened, but quite unhurt, lumbered past within thirty yards and into a wood behind us.

My main difficulty had been to stop the back row from taking part in the proceedings, and distribution of the trophies was a delicate matter. But the man who seemed to me to deserve most credit was the stop who, without heading the pig, had succeeded by his whistling in preventing me from ordering the second squad to fire before the moving targets arrived.

We ought to have got them all, but an animal galloping downhill three-quarters towards you is not a very easy shot, and the excitement was intense. A limber was sent for and the driver, who was told to look as if he had nothing particular inside it, set off to take his precious load down the village street with a self-conscious grin which stretched from ear to ear.

Only a few mornings later, after watching the edge of a wood at dawn, two of us were walking home along a crest where tracks were frequent, when my companion hissed and dropped on to the plough. I dropped too, and he whispered that he had seen the ears of seven pig coming towards us. We had not long to wait before the leader came into full view about sixty yards off—the easiest shot imaginable ; the pig turned at our two shots and was finished at once, and then the biggest of them was seen to gallop across from behind. I heard my bullet hit, and shouted to S—— to shoot him again. The old boar galloped out of sight, apparently none the worse, but when we reached the crest, there he lay dead on the field beyond with both bullets through his heart, a most satisfactory right and left, which weighed 200 kilos between them, and provided a pleasant change from rations for the whole squadron.

After that incident no more luck came our way until a day when the owner of the Bois de Fressen had a large battue arranged in the wood. We were always informed of these events by the village and took the precaution of getting into a favourable position in the open in case anything came out. We had a dull time of it, and so, I believe, did the chasseurs in the wood, for they got no pig at all ; but just as we were going home, on seeing the beaters come out of the wood, a dog opened on something in the covert, and out came two pig straight for us and right up to within thirty yards. By the worst of luck they stopped in such a position as to cause great risk to the beaters, and I had (with difficulty) to restrain the two officers with me from firing. The two pig galloped on and disappeared just as it was safe to shoot, and they had to run forward and take a very difficult and unsteady shot. Three bullets went wide, but at the fourth one pig stumbled and lagged behind, and a long, stern chase ensued over the plain. I seized one of the rifles and ran on ahead of the other two and kept the beast in sight, but failed to hit him again, and we should certainly have lost him but for the intervention of two of the beaters who had seen the hunt and headed the pig, which then lay down in a pool of water, where we slew him.

The beaters, who had toiled for nothing all day, were highly delighted, but I feared the consequences of this very public incident, and sure enough by the end of the week official inquiries and correspondence were flying about in every direction, and for some unknown reason the finger of suspicion was pointed at me, and I even received a letter from high quarters suggesting that the practice was irregular and should cease. We had, however, little difficulty in securing a well-signed petition by the Mayor and others in the village asking the military to kill the destructive pig whenever they got the chance, and we temporised by ignoring the rifle and taking to the sword, which now had a chance as the land was drying up. No opportunity came for its use until one day, after receiving implicit orders from the Colonel to take out my squadron and practice 'instant decisions,' the moment for obeying these instructions to the letter arrived.

All ranks had had orders to keep one eye open for pig, and we carried out our manœuvres on ground where there was always a hope of seeing something. Three of my troops were performing military evolutions near a narrow strip of wood which jutted out for a mile from the main Bois de Fressin, and the fourth was, for the moment, dismounted in the strip, when a corporal galloped down to me and reported having seen five pig moving across the plain beyond and parallel to the strip towards the big wood.

There was not a moment to lose, for once in the Bois de Fressen they were safe, and they had but a short mile to go. I mounted the 4th Troop under Lieut. G——-, and sent my second in command, J——, with them, to gallop down the strip to the big wood and try to head the pig from this sanctuary and turn them into the plain, while I followed with the rest of the squadron as quickly as they could be collected.

As we jumped out of the strip a 'Forrard, away!' floated back to us; and there on the rising ground was J——, hat in the air, screaming his soul out, and the 4th Troop galloping on his left along the edge of the wood. That, I think, was my best moment in the war. He had arrived in the very nick of time, headed the pig as he emerged from the strip, and sent the troop on to turn them more effectually on to the plain, a very neat bit of work.

As we galloped up to J—— the five pig were standing on the plain wondering what to do next, the squadron shaking out into some sort of formation and whipping out their swords behind me. I screamed 'Tally-ho!' the pig split up and bolted, and the whole squadron, pack-ponies included (I will not say in line), sailed out in pursuit. With the strip on our right and another wood only half a mile to our left there was none too much room, but four of the pig, with most of the squadron after them, ran in a half-moon back towards the strip, which let in the tail 'hounds' under Lieut. S——, who, coming last out of the covert, shot up the side of it and came in at the head of the hunt with his troop, as the pig were nearing the strip. Three of them dodged under barbed wire, but the fourth jinked, and a lance-corporal by a supreme effort got his sword home, horse, pig, and man rolling over together; the last was first up, sword still in his hand, and finished the pig in an excited circle of men and horses. The horse got up some minutes later none the worse. The other four pig escaped, but it was our first '*sanglier à sabre*,' and we were all too pleased to care. So was *M. le Maire*, over whose land we had ridden, for we settled the damage for five francs and a ham that same afternoon.

About a week later, near the same ground, I was trotting along a road on the plain with two troops when a whistle from behind made me look round and see three large pig leaving the above-mentioned strip and setting out at a slow trot over the open towards a small wood called the Bois de Contes. We let them get well out, and then galloped up a farm track after them. Heavy rain had fallen, and to avoid damage, much against my will, I kept the two troops in hand on the track and loosed three subalterns only at the pig.

G—— was the best mounted of the three, and we had a fine view of the whole hunt, G—— forging ahead and after about a mile turning out the largest of the three pig. We saw them both disappear into a sunken lane, reappear on its further bank, apparently touching each other, and then lost them behind a fence. A moment or two later man and pig came in to sight again, G—— on foot in hot pursuit with his sword just behind the pig's tail.

He had grazed the pig as it climbed the bank of the lane, and a few yards further on with a second thrust had got his sword right through its body, but, failing to draw it out, had been pulled from his saddle on to the ground, the sword coming out as he fell. The pig whipped round and came for him, and he just had time to jump to one side, like a bull-fighter, and run it through again as it passed by his feet.

It charged again at once, and, meeting it square, he drove his sword through its cheek, when it turned, he after it, over the field into a small patch of thick bushes. The two other officers arrived and were instantly charged in turn by the pig, who then escaped very sick and angry into the Bois de Contes. G——'s horse had meantime galloped off home. Arriving at the wood with the two troops we galloped round to the far end in case he came right through, but seeing nothing of the wounded beast we decided to beat the wood with fixed bayonets, leaving a few men to watch outside. Owing, I have no doubt, to the presence of a newly-sown field, on which they had fed during the night, close to the wood, the place was alive with pig, and twenty-one of them bolted in every direction, but no sign of the wounded animal was found.

Two other officers out for a ride on the plain met one of the twenty-one, and after a great gallop were overhauling the pig close to another small wood, when they saw one of my men returning home on his horse and leading a pack-pony They shouted to him to head the pig from the wood, but seeing another man, who at that moment appeared leading G——'s horse, which he had caught, he galloped up to him, handed him the pack-pony, and, going one better than his orders, rode straight for the pig and drove his sword well home three times. The beast just reached a small thicket in which it sat down and was killed.

It was certain that the other pig must be dead, and the following morning G—— and I made a thorough search of the Bois de Contes and an adjoining wood, and sure enough discovered him lying dead within sight of a path which traversed the second wood. The mess-cart fetched him home and carried his skin on the march to the Battle of Arras, for which we set out on the morrow.

SHOOTING.

WE were once the proud possessors of a shoot in France for the space of three days and the sum of fifteen francs. We shot it on three occasions and it provided in all five hen pheasants and a hare, and thereby paid its way from our point of view. Whether it was re-let to the incoming regiment on the strength of a solitary rabbit which it still supported, I never heard.

That was not by any means the only place on which we shot ; among others were invitation shoots, devastated areas whereon we disported ourselves without let or hindrance, parts of the coast where shooting below high-water mark was allowed. I say allowed, but that is not strictly true, for all shooting, except for a very brief period after the armistice, was strictly forbidden by the Military Authorities, and guns were therefore carried about in public places in two pieces, with the stock in a pocket and the barrel either in the trousers or under a mackintosh. When on the move, they, together with the fishing-rods and cartridges, were the most precious burden of that excellent carrier of military necessities, the squadron Mess Cart. We were once invited by the local vet. of Hesdin to shoot with a party of three local sportsmen ; we turned up three strong.

We only possessed one gun at the time, so two of us came armed with Service rifles.

The bag at lunch-time was still empty, but things improved during the afternoon with the death of two rabbits and a pheasant.

One of the rabbits was killed by a rifle, and the pheasant, a very tall one, after passing safely through the mixed barrage of the whole party, finally fell to our only gun.

The other rabbit was foolish enough to sit up quietly on its hind legs opposite the vet—who after the long pause required for the taking of aim, while the rest of the party breathlessly awaited the result, let off his very noisy weapon. All went well, and throwing down his gun, he rushed in and held aloft the prize. '*Une fois le gigot*, *je suis content*,' said he, and that being so, the day ended and we went home with our pheasant.

Much the best sport with a gun came from the duck, on the coast on the Somme, and some of its tributaries in the 'pays dévasté.'

The Bays of the Authie and the Somme were alive with waterfowl in the winter, and I spent a frosty week on the Authie in January, 1918. The local fowlers get most of their ducks at night, sitting in low turf-built huts—'*huttes*' on the edge of the ponds in the salting. Decoy ducks '*appelants*' are placed on the water fifteen to twenty yards from the '*hutte*,' and the sportsman, well fortified with food and drink, sits all night on a bed of straw looking through a narrow slit in the wall on to the pond.

The roof is covered in and nothing but a sitting shot is possible, and success depends on having good noisy '*appelants*' and choosing a night when plenty of ducks are on the move.

A good '*appelant*' is a much-prized bird, and mistakes which sometimes occur are costly, as two friends of mine discovered. They were returning home across the saltings the first evening of their arrival when they spotted a duck on a pond. By a careful stalk to a low mound on the pond's edge they got within easy shot, and taking no risks in the dark slew the bird on the water. A terrific earthquake shook the mound, and an infuriated voice issued from under their feet, '*Ah, nom de Dieu. Qu'est ce que vous faites là bas?*'

They had to '*faire le possible*' to the tune of forty francs, and the infuriated owner, who happened to be their hostesses' father, ate the '*appelant*,' but after the excellent manner of the French made great friends with the culprits.

We preferred flighting by day and night on the saltings, or in the holes which we dug with great labour in the sands; but we borrowed *appelants* when we could get them and planted them out round our hiding-places, tied by the leg with a cord fixed on to a peg.

They were a burden struggling about on one's back in a sack; but their habits when tethered out were most amusing. Anything which passed overhead, quite irrespective of whether it was a duck or not, was greeted with loud quackings, and they raised a hymn of triumph when their calling was successful and a dead duck fell in their midst. If they relapsed into silence and went to sleep, they could always be tuned up, by placing one of their number out of sight of the others.

The best *appelants* are carefully bred from well-proved stock, and we were told that ordinary wild duck caught young were never satisfactory. Most of these birds had a certain amount of white about them, but colour apparently does not matter at all.

Considering the great quantities of duck in the bay when I was there, my bag was ridiculously small. Three hours before high tide they moved up flock after flock, some on the water and some in the air, from the sand as the sea covered it at the mouth of the bay, to the banks further up the river which the tide had not reached ; but except in a gale of wind, they were nearly always out of shot, and each variation in direction of wind changed their line of flight. There was no cover, and a hole had to be dug with a spade, which of course invariably filled with water at the critical moment, and no barrels were available for sinking in the sand. Still I always got something, and gained much knowledge of their habits which would have proved useful if a second visit had been possible.

Mallard and widgeon were in equally large numbers, and there were also teal, pochard, tufted and a few golden eye, pintail and smew, and generally a flock or two of geese. Among the mallard were an astonishing number of duck with white feathers on them, some of them being almost pure white. They did not differ in size from the others, did not keep in any way separate, and were equally wild. The French called them '*canards* *flamands,*' but I could get no explanation of their numbers or origin.

My servant who accompanied me on the expedition, and found the sea water and ooze a trifle hard on my uniform, confessed on his return that he had not enjoyed it so much as I had. 'I don't care what else the Major does,' he said, 'but I do hate this here ducking.'

Others were much more successful in this bay than I was, and one officer picked up twenty-eight ducks in a day flight during a storm.

I was never on the bay of the Somme in the winter; but even in early October there was a good show of mallard there. An unsuspecting officer accompanied me there one day clad in a new suit of khaki. I possessed waders, which he did not, and in order to reach the wreck of a boat which afforded the only cover in which to await the tide and the incoming duck, I hoisted him on to my back and started to trudge through a creek which barred the way. The water got deeper and deeper, and the rider, who was no light weight, heavier and heavier, and I turned back to find a better passage; but he was too much for me, and I finally had to let him down gently into the sea. The tide was racing up, we had no time to return, and the boat was the only chance of a duck and the only hope of keeping even partially dry; so we set our teeth to it, hitched up our pockets laden with cartridges, and got across with water up to the top button of our trousers. Once in the boat, which lay on its side, we took off everything but our shirts, and hung the dripping clothing on the side of the boat. The water rose and rose, and boots, socks, cartridges, &c., were perpetually slipping in. The terror of the duck at seeing two half-naked forms against the black outline of the boat did not tend to great results, and shooting from the slippery side of a boat in bare feet with nothing on but a shirt in October is not conducive to accuracy; still, we got three mallard at the expense of a large pile of cartridges, and what with the excitement of watching with one eye round the corner of the boat for duck which were whirling about in all directions, and keeping the other eye on the precious cartridges which were balancing precariously on the few dry inches of boarding in the stern, and what with rescuing boots, socks, breeches, and other garments from the sea, we kept ourselves warm till the tide went down and left us high if not altogether dry. Dressing was a damp and sticky business, but circulation returned during the walk back to land, when, in accordance with that inexpensive practice common to the western, and, I suppose, to every other front, we jumped the first motor that came along. As the chauffeur was a lady, we avoided an awkward situation by presenting her with a duck.

Owing to the kindness of a gentleman from Amiens, permission was granted to us to shoot in the marshes at Picquinny on the Somme. The people of that village must have wondered why, though perfectly sound in the middle of the day, I always walked with a stiff leg early in the morning and late in the evening through its streets, clad in a mackintosh however fine the weather, with a strange protuberance under my arm.

During an east wind numbers of duck flighted up the river, and some could always be found in the most inaccessible places of the marsh. Unluckily, we had no dog, and the cover of reeds and grasses being very thick, with deep ditches full of water every few yards, made picking up a difficult business. Higher up the Somme on either side of Peronne there is a perfect paradise for wild-fowl, and the breaking of the banks and consequent flooding during the war had no doubt added to its attractions for them. Over most of the flooded area the water was very shallow, but the mud bottomless, and wading excessively dangerous. The river makes many sharp turns, and the best chance of finding a place where the birds could be picked up was on one of the necks of dry land, round which the river curled in a sharp bend, and across which birds passed in their flight up or down the stream. There were larger quantities and greater variety of duck here than on the tributaries, such as the Omignon and the Cologne; but on these latter streams it was easier to make a bag.

In February, 1918, we were living in huts at what had once been Montecourt, close to Monchy-la-Gache on the Omignon. The banks of the river were broken in many places and the whole valley flooded, and covered with timber standing in the water; the ground being intersected by drainage ditches which completely engulfed any one who fell in.

Naturally, the best moments for shooting were at the morning and evening flights, when the light was so bad that the edges of the ditches were quite invisible, and had to be felt for under water by the feet. They were often discovered too late, and, even when the near bank had been found in time, the search for the further one was a matter of delicate balance, and the step across was about as much as a long pair of legs, encased in tall waders, could manage. It was—to put it mildly—a damp amusement, but the finest duck-shooting imaginable. The birds came swooping down usually through timber, with that entrancing hum made by a duck at the moment when he curves his neck, sticks out his feet, closes his wings, and glides down to alight.

The valley was so full of first-class feeding-grounds that the duck were perpetually changing their flights, which involved careful search for fresh feathers and ensuring the discovery of the right place to stand. During the daytime they rested in the most inaccessible and thickly timbered parts of the marsh, and to reach these in absolute darkness in time for the morning flight meant an exciting walk, several crawls over slippery tree-trunks, which bridged the wider dykes, and more often than not two waders filled to the brim before the shooting began.

One of the best places of all was not a hundred yards in a straight line from our camp, but to reach the centre of it needed the most intricate knowledge of its geography. In order to keep this place quiet, I made no attempt to simplify the approach by planks, and the width and depth of its ditches kept intruders in search of timber away from its innermost recesses, and allowed the chance of a good morning flight there at least once a week. A line was drawn by the powers-that-be across the map north and south, only to the west of which was shooting allowed ; as this line did not quite coincide with our wishes or the position of our camp, a considerable unofficial salient was formed to include the best portions of the valley, but as the change of line had never been reported in the communiqués, we preserved a certain caution in arriving on our ground. Once there, the lack of waders for the legs of the servants of the law made disturbance out of the question.

I never killed more than eight duck at one flight, but our mess was hardly ever without something in the larder, and so far as memory goes, the bag, during about a month, was between seventy and eighty.

The stables for our horses were without sides when we arrived, and every available man being required for digging, all day was spent in the marsh cutting reeds for the stable walls ; so that, except for meals, from before daylight till after dark, I lived half under water, and was accused of developing webs between every toe.

It was possible to reach the Somme near Epénancourt from these billets, and we used to ride across country there sometimes for the evening flight. All bridges had been broken, the marsh was wide and full of watercress beds, and in many places quite bottomless and very dangerous. After much wandering, a somewhat leaky boat was discovered, which enabled us to reach the special haunts of the teal, but owing to the treacherous nature of the bog, it was almost impossible to find a place where the dead birds could be picked up, and we never got more than two or three of them. There was a large bed of tall reeds at this place, and while pushing my way through it, I was suddenly assailed by a strong and familiar smell. It was a strange place to find a pig, but his tracks—which were seen soon afterwards —confirmed the verdict of my nose. All the country round for fifteen miles east and west was open and devastated, and the war had passed twice over his haunts, but no doubt the reed-beds had been an effective sanctuary even when the French line was on one side of them and the German on the other. I have often wondered what happened to that pig in the great German offensive of 1918, when he must have come once more into the fighting line.

The hopelessly shell-pocked area near Fins and Bouchavesnes provided us with some excellent partridge driving. Shell-holes, lines of trenches, and gun-pits were everywhere available as butts, and the birds could therefore be driven in any direction to well-hidden guns. Large distances were covered by using mounted beaters, and the greatest difficulty to be overcome was the presence of belts of barbed wire across many of the drives. The grass was longest in these wired areas, and they constituted the main cover for the birds, so that the best drives were usually those in which a wired belt lay about 150 to 200 yards in front and out of sight of the occupied holes or trenches which attracted the driven birds to alight before taking their final flight over the guns. In the late afternoon the main feeding-grounds for the partridges were the old horse lines, on which a sprinkling of oats was still to be found.

The shooting bore more resemblance to grouse driving over butts than partridge driving over fences, as the birds—except over certain steep valleys—came along very straight and low. The slower and more silently the beaters moved, the less was the chance of the birds packing and turning back. Our shooting was consistently bad, and, as far as I remember, we never got more than some twenty brace in a day, but enough cartridges were expended to make it very difficult to keep up their supply, and any one going on French or English leave was always instructed to return with the maximum amount that he could carry. We once rose to the giddy heights of fashion by the inclusion of a lady in the party, which so encouraged the gun whose shell-hole she was sharing that he killed the only right and left he had ever been known to accomplish.

During the triumphal march through Belgium, we drove partridges with the full consent and assistance of our hosts, whenever the supply of cartridges allowed it; but the one drawback to that very festive and enjoyable procession was the perpetual anxiety that, owing to the length of our communications, this dire necessity would give out—as it often did—just when we arrived in the best-stocked country. We got so low in our stock on one occasion that for a whole week no one was allowed to shoot at anything of less importance than a duck, or to take any but the closest and easiest of chances. The Germans, we were told, had paid far more attention to hares than partridges, as their main object was food rather than sport ; and, moreover, a driven partridge was rather above their powers. Up till the very last day of their tenancy, they made the most of their shooting rights, and we were told by one Belgian farmer, over whose land we were shooting on the evening of our arrival at his village, that their late guests had been over the same ground for the last time the day before.

BIRDS ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

THE first summer and winter spent at the Front and at the back of the Front cured me of the idea that the North of France is a birdless region. The noise and bustle of war had no effect whatever in driving the birds even from the trenches themselves, and I remember no nesting season which has been more productive in introducing birds previously unknown to me than the summer of 1915. The commonest of all military manœuvres is—at any rate in modern warfare—that of sitting still, and while engaged in that occupation there came chances which were not lightly neglected of watching birds common in England as well as in France, and others which, for some mysterious reason, seldom cross the Channel.

In March and April I was stationed at a small château (it would have been called a villa in England) in very open country with a minute copse behind it. This copse was a harbour of refuge for the birds which were beginning to move north, and about the end of March it was crowded for a fortnight with redwings and fieldfares, as well as scattered individuals of other species. A sprinkling of golden-crested wrens kept arriving, resting a short while and passing on, and on one morning a single very tired-looking hen fire-crest took solitary possession of the one fir-tree in the place ; she too was gone the following morning.

I expected a very early spring, but this was not the case. The first summer migrants to arrive—and then only in small numbers—were the chiffchaffs on March 22nd. By the first week in April every suitable place was literally crawling with chiffchaffs, and they remained throughout the summer the commonest of all the many warblers which, I am happy to say, infest Flanders in summer.

The only English warblers I did not see during that summer were the Dartford and the wood-warbler. I was never in really good Dartford-warbler country, but the absence of the wood-warbler surprised me, and he is too noisy a bird to miss. Does he pass further west on his way to us, or does he prefer Germany to France, or did the presence of troops there or the superabundance of his cousins the chiffchaffs and willow-wrens hurry him on his way ? Nightingales, blackcaps, garden-warblers, sedge-, reed-, grasshopper-warblers, all came in their appointed times and places, and in enormous numbers. With them came three warblers new to me : the marsh-, the Icterine-, and the great reed-warbler.

I first identified the Icterine (though I had to await my leave and a reference to Dresser's *Birds of Europe* to recall his name) under the ramparts of Ypres. He used to sing every morning from dawn till 10 a.m., and again at intervals in the afternoon ; while singing he was so tame that he had no objection to the audience being within a few feet of his head. On a small tongue of land, jutting into the moat from the ramparts and just below where the Icterine sang, were one pair of blue tits and family, two pairs of reed-warblers, one pair of blackcaps, one pair of garden-warblers, numbers of greenfinches, and, as I shrewdly suspected, the Icterine's wife. In the reeds of the moat was a colony of great reed-warblers. I became intimately acquainted with the domestic affairs of all the birds on that little tongue of land, unhealthy though it was from a shelling point of view.

The blackcaps and garden-warblers had had their first nests blown sideways by shells; the latter had had too severe an attack of nerves to allow them to try nesting again—at any rate while I was there. Not so the blackcaps; they rebuilt the day after my arrival within ten feet of their old nest; but the bombardment had an interesting effect on the lady, for the three eggs she laid—I might almost say before my very eyes—were as white as a wood-pigeon's. The cock was as proud of them as if they had been the proper colour, and did quite his share of incubation, and neither bird bothered to move when they were being shelled, nor did the reed-warblers even raise their heads out of their nest when our batteries or the Germans were firing. I left before the opportunity came of studying the colour of the young blackcaps, if ever they came safely into this world, but if any one saw a white blackcap at Ypres next summer, I could have explained the phenomenon.

To return to the Icterine. After much watching, I noticed he, too, dipped down to this tongue of land and disappeared mysteriously in the bushes, followed by me. After beating vigorously, I made him lose his temper and call excitedly to the hen, who appeared, though I failed to mark in which direction she came, and though the nest was really obvious, I did not know what it looked like or whether it would be on the ground or in a bush. I almost touched it dozens of times, but it took a brother-officer and myself two more days to find it. It was a very beautiful nest, rather bulky and deep, mossy on the outside and tied, I think, to a lilac bush about five feet from the ground, and the hen only left it when the bush was touched. The eggs were covered with cherry-coloured spots. I have always found descriptions of bird notes unsatisfactory, but a 'cross between a sedge-warbler and a love-sick starling' is a shrewd, if uncomplimentary, hit at an Icterine's song. I met many Icterines afterwards, but never such a tame one as my friend of the ramparts. He changed three dull days into very pleasant ones, and I am eternally grateful to him and his neighbours in that shell-strewn spot.

At the same date I heard from an officer who returned from the trenches at Hooge, that a brood of nightingales was hatched on the day of one of the heaviest Hooge bombardments, on the lip of the first line trench.

To show how utterly indifferent birds are to shelling, on May 13th, 1915, at 8 a.m., in the garden of Potizze Château, I heard a nightingale begin to sing. Half-an-hour afterwards, German shells were rained upon the garden incessantly throughout the day. The bird sang on without a pause until 12 p.m. where the shells fell thickest, and survived, for next morning he started again in the same place as cheerily as ever.

I first came across the marsh-warbler in a less noisy part of the world, and, after what I had heard, was rather disappointed with his song. A nest was shown me in meadow-sweet, on the side of a marsh ditch. That was the only nest I saw in 1915, though the birds were common enough wherever suitable ground existed, and were almost aggressively tame. Perhaps I am prejudiced about his song; the bird, the nest, and the eggs are all delightful, especially the last, the loveliest warbler eggs I know, and the nest is a perfect model of neatness.

Late in June, I was roused to envy by hearing that another officer had found an oriole's nest in an oak wood. There was an oak wood near my billet, so why not a golden oriole? For a fortnight I watched that wood in vain. Then one day, approaching it with a friend, we both heard a clear whistle which we agreed came from a French boy or an oriole. As a matter of fact it was an oriole, or rather four orioles chasing each other round the tree-top in a state of great excitement, whistling and screeching. Next day the birds were still there, quieter, and the following day one pair at any rate seemed to have definitely settled down in a certain part of the wood, and, I felt sure, would nest. I sat down to watch with my telescope, and after a wait of about half-an-hour, saw the hen oriole hopping cautiously from bough to bough to a little thin oak-tree one hundred yards from me. She paused a moment and then flew to what looked like a small round ball hanging from one of the branches. I could hardly believe I had found the nest so easily, but ten minutes later she returned to the same place, and that time I saw material in her mouth, and there was no further cause for doubt. I watched the building of the nest, which is made of long strands of bark carefully interwoven, and never saw the bird carry more than one piece of bark at a time in her bill. However carefully I reached my hiding-place, the nest was always approached with extreme caution and from exactly the opposite direction to my watching-post. Unfortunately, for some reason which I could not discover, the nest was deserted before its completion, and I never had the opportunity of finding another one.

The whistle of an oriole has a very human sound, rich and full, but his repertoire is too meagre. He starts with a splendid note which can be heard four hundred yards off, and you settle down with the pleasant expectation of listening to a sort of Charles Capper solo, but it is all over after half-a-dozen bars, because no one has ever taught the poor bird any more. The call note is loud and screechy. I can take off both it and the whistle passably, but neither will go into print. They are amusing, active birds, full of life and sound, and the oak woods of Flanders and the Pas de Calais support a fair stock of them.

BIRDS ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

One of the commonest birds to be seen from and behind the trenches was the crested lark, a tame, cheeky little creature who seems to enjoy human company, military or otherwise, and sings his pleasant, trilly song even in January. He was the one thing worth seeing in all that horrible country round Vermelles and Loos, and he seemed to be commoner there than anywhere else, though what he finds to attract him there, heaven knows. I liked him immensely, but not quite as much as his cousin the woodlark, whom I had not met in northern France. The habits and appearance of the two birds are distinctly similar in many respects, especially in their flight. Both are given to singing quietly to themselves on the ground when approached by a human being ; both sing at a regular and not at an absurd height as the skylark does, and both are very fast runners and given to the most deceitful habits when nesting. The woodlark is the more aristocratic-looking, and is only half the size of the crested lark, has a browner, less dusty appearance, and far smaller crest. A hen woodlark sits very tight on her nest, whereas a crested lark slips quietly away when danger is still at a distance. Both these larks are most trying to the temper of any one searching for their nests ; they are so ridiculously tame and so difficult to perturb in any way, that I always lose my temper before they lose theirs. Success lies in keeping perfectly calm oneself and thoroughly annoying the cock to such an extent that he calls the hen off the nest to ask her advice and keep him company, and her return can then be expected.

The Staff were very troublesome last spring in arranging battles and other things which called me away on several occasions when I was within an ace of finding a crested lark's nest; success only came when I was 'standing to' during the second battle of Ypres. On that occasion I came across a very love-sick cock crested lark in a hop-garden. He was panting with excitement, mouth open, wings trailing, his crest and his ridiculous stump of a tail erect—altogether an absurd spectacle. He drove his wife away when I appeared, and she flipped off to a field of growing wheat, where it was soon pretty obvious that she had her nest. The field was close to a road along which people often passed, and I thought she would ignore my presence if I sat on the road. But not a bit of it! She regarded me with the greatest suspicion at once, and though she ran about in the dust at my feet, and both birds flew over my head to look at me from every point of view, she would not go to the nest while I was in sight, and I had to move to a considerable distance from the field before she went to the eggs. Even then she left and visited the nest many times before I found it. Every time any one passed along the road she got up, and almost invariably from the wrong place, for she ran to and from the eggs for a considerable distance with her head tucked in low between her shoulders. The nest looked to me more like that of a skylark than a woodlark, and was not so neat or so deep as that little bird makes hers.

In the winter in the Pas de Calais there had been quite a number of hen-harriers, buzzards, and peregrines. Twice in August and once in February I saw a great grey shrike, in each case at the top of an open down, which is not the sort of place in which I expected to see him.

I do not know whether it is still the fashion to talk of 'Continental Titmice' of various kinds as though they differed from our British ones; the great, blue, marsh, and long-tailed tits (all extremely common) look to me exactly the same in France as they do in England; moreover, they speak exactly the same language, including bad language. And what birds use worse for their size than tits? I refuse to believe that the marsh-tit I met and listened to every morning in France differs at all from the marsh-tit who eats my cocoanut while I eat my poached egg on the other side of a pane of glass in England.

Besides the birds mentioned in this article, a naturalist who keeps his eyes, and still more his ears, open will see on the Western Front practically all the birds he would expect in a southern English county, together with those additions which I have mentioned. Another small warbler, who remains a mystery, I mean to solve this summer; and there were, doubtless, other species which I was too blind or too deaf to notice.

A SECOND YEAR'S OBSERVATIONS.

Letters from men I know, and from others I do not, have induced me to write a second chapter on 'Birds at the Western Front.' After another spring and summer of the war in the North of France, I met all my old bird friends of 1915, and two or three fresh ones.

I had hoped that the buzzards and hen harriers which wintered in the Pas de Calais would stay to nest, but, though I saw some as late as May, I never found a nest of either, though I feel sure the buzzards bred.

About the middle of March a large migration of waders occurred, all going, of course, north over the Pas de Calais uplands. Peewits, golden plover, curlew, and dunlin could be seen passing, and occasionally resting, every day for a fortnight, and also two or three flocks of geese. These were followed on March 19th by the first chiff-chaff.

In 1915 I failed to see a single wood-wren, but in the winter I noticed a wood which seemed to me a typical woodwren covert. I was not disappointed, for three pairs of them came to it, and no doubt nested. I never could find a wood-wren's nest, and only know one man who can. It was a noisy wood in the summer, being full of golden orioles and other songsters of various sorts and sizes. The only nest of a golden oriole I saw last summer was in an alder, and very easy to see, though I confess I walked under it and stared at it many a time before it was shown to me by a man who had never seen one before. The nest is at least one size too small for the bird, and must be very uncomfortable to sit in. That was a red-letter day, for over and above the oriole's nest I caught ten trout on a dry fly in the afternoon, and saw one of my troop teams win a football cup in the evening.

Hoopoes.

Mr. Warde Fowler, in a very kind notice in 'Essays in Brief for War Time,' of an observation of mine, has a gentle crow over me with regard to the hoopoe. I can now crow back, for I found the valley of that now famous river the Ancre full of hoopoes, and of a mysterious silent bird which flitted from reed bed to reed bed on one of the marshy ponds so common in the valley, the haunt of great and small reed warblers. The reeds were too thick to get a sight of this bird except when flying, and then only for a moment, but, after several days of watching, I got my telescope on to a pair apparently courting in the air over the centre of the pond. They were little bitterns, and if only I had had a boat I think I could have found the nest. I noticed a strange thing about the great reed warbler, a very excellent description of which is given in Mr. Warde Fowler's essays. Though his home is in the reed beds, he repeatedly hunts for food for his young on the short green grass of the paths and river-bank, and not on the reeds at all.

The indifference of birds and animals to the noise and horrors of war is now too well known to be worth writing about, but there are certainly six creatures, all observing a friendly neutrality, which are more than indifferent, for they positively revel in the life of the trenches, and will be heartily sorry when it is over. They are owls, 'Brown,' and the 'Little,' kestrels, rats, mice, and lice. No doubt the rats and mice would be happier still without the birds they have attracted, but all six have increased beyond measure, and their life is undoubtedly richer and more luxurious than it ever was in times of peace. On the Somme battlefield Montague's harrier might often be seen last summer hunting low over the cornfields and that wide dull stretch of brown battle-ground. I never found his nesting site there, but it was probably in the marshes of the Somme or the Ancre. Nearer the coast there is a stretch of marsh between the sandhills and the cultivated land, and at this place I snatched three evenings 'Montague' hunting.

MONTAGUE'S HARRIER.

There were several cocks hawking about from time to time over the marsh, but it was hard to find a place to sit down and spy from, owing to the flatness of the country and the numbers of large bushes which obstructed one's view.

On the first evening I saw two cocks, met in the air by two hens, and undoubtedly the latter were fed by their husbands, but I was unable definitely to mark down either of the hens. Still, I had a rough idea of the probable whereabouts of the nest of one of them, and on the second evening, with a friend, I distinctly saw through the telescope the cock come over the place where I believed the hen to be sitting and thrust out its claw, in which was something—I believe a lizard. In a moment she was up and circling towards him. When just below and down-wind of him, she turned a back somersault, while he dropped his prey through the air for six or ten feet from his hand into hers. It was done without effort on the part of either, and looked the easiest thing in the world, and so I suppose it is, for I saw the same performance on several occasions, and she never missed or looked like missing her dinner. Sometimes the gift was made high in the air, sometimes near the ground, but the thrusting out of the foot to show the prize and the method of dropping it from the cock to the hen were always the same. When she had got it she planed down as I first thought to the nest, but I was wrong, for after waiting for five minutes, during which time she no doubt ate her dinner, apparently by a pool of water, in order to wash her beak and feet, she rose again, and after several evolutions lit in the marsh away from the water.

Very, very carefully we marked the spot by this twig, that yellow flower, and other minute details. We had walked to within ten yards when she rose in fright and noisy rage from her nest of four eggs in the grass, and while we looked at them she never ceased her cries, and circled continuously above us. The nest of flattened blades of grass and uninteresting-looking eggs had an artificial appearance ; they reminded me of a clutch of Easter eggs I was once unfortunate enough to find in a haycock at a children's party, to the undoing of my stomach, for they were bad. There are plenty of such nests to be seen at the proper season in confectioners' shop-windows. The bird returned in circles to the nest before we were 300 yards away, and I saw the whole process of the feeding of the hen, and also the nest on the following evening. These harriers are apparently very punctual at meals, for this bird was fed at 5.25 to a minute on each of the three evenings, and I would advise any one in search of a nest to post himself, with a good glass, at 5.15 at an advantageous spot not too near where he believes the nest to be. I say not too near, because the cock is much more shy, though less bad-tempered than the hen. Heaven grant that no egg-clutcher benefits by this advice !

A GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.

On this same lucky day, while I was plodding through the marsh, a little rich-brown creature raced away from under the tussock I had stepped on. It seemed to run too fast for a mouse, and in the base of the tussock were the perfect nest and six rich-coloured eggs of a grasshopper warbler—the first I had ever seen, though there are many grasshopper warblers in this world who must have cursed me for my inquisitiveness about their homes. While writing this article I have come across what seemed to me two cases of birds lost on migration southwards. On November 8th at Paris-Plage there were a pair of black redstarts on the sea-front, and on November 9th near the same place I saw a flock of eight Norfolk plover, who had, on the best authority, been in the same locality for several days. The latter birds breed on the downs by the Ancre in a few places.

In March and April, 1919, while at Engis on the Meuse, I made several short expeditions into the pleasant country of the Ardennes, and saw a good deal of the early spring migration. About March 5th, between Rochefort and Marche, round the edges of all the woods and in the open spaces in the centre of them, were woodlarks in such numbers as I have never seen elsewhere. I had always connected these birds with a sandy soil, short heather, and golf-links ; but none of these attractions were there, in fact it was not a country in which one would ever have looked for a woodlark. The neatness and minuteness of his body, the absurdly short tail, the clear white eye streak which gives such a finishing touch to his head, the absolute fearlessness, or is it friendliness for human beings, the cheery vigour of his song, and above all, the low, musical conversation with which he greets you as he sits or runs on the ground near your feet, or flips a few yards through the air to alight again, has made the woodlark one of my most especial favourites. Poem after poem has been poured out to his most inferior cousin, the skylark, but to any one hearing and seeing the two together there is no comparison either in song, appearance, or character. Very rare and still more local in England, to all but a select few the woodlark is an unknown bird ; to those few, he seems to delight in extending a trusted friendship. At most times his crest is laid so flat on his head as to escape notice, but a cock woodlark, when displaying before the hen, gives the impression of consisting of nothing but crest, and becomes a most ridiculous object.

One day at the end of March in a high wind I heard a woodlark singing continuously in the air for forty minutes without a break ; how much longer he might have continued I know not, but at the end of that time a rival appeared and quietly departed with the songster's wife as well as his own. This little episode, enacted almost at my feet, fetched the musician down from the air in a fit of righteous indignation, and though he soon set matters right, he did not risk going up again, and preferred to address his lady from the ground.

About March 15th the woodcock migration began and continued for some ten days, the birds apparently pairing during their travels, for they chased each other and continually made their two strangely different notes as they flighted through the woods. No one would ever suspect that the little sibilant *Siz-ip*, or the short grunt (I can think of no other description) which follows it so quickly and with such a surprising contrast, could come from a woodcock.

Notices appeared in the local papers concerning *L'Affût des Bécasses*, and the Belgians take, I think, a most unfair advantage of the migration and a considerable toll of the birds in some seasons; but they have the excuse that for some unaccountable reason very few woodcock winter in the Ardennes, and their only chance of making a bag is in November on their way south, and again as they return in the spring. At about the same time large numbers of stonechats and black redstarts also appeared, the former to pass on almost immediately, and the latter to stop and nest in the villages.

Some day, no doubt, in times of peace crowds of all nationalities, among them many who have fought, will visit the battlefields of the Western Front; but if I come back I shall avoid the ruined towns and battered trenches, and refresh pleasanter memories of birds that I have known and trout that I have failed to catch.

MORE ABOUT SEA TROUT.

TWO years later I returned to the Norwegian river described in a previous chapter to find two German cruisers anchored off its mouth. The sailors had been bathing in the lower pools, and for that reason we rejoiced when the cruisers departed at 6 a.m. the following morning; we did not know at the time that one member of our party had thought fit to despatch a telegram concerning their movements to his chief, and any stray thoughts which we could spare for matters other than sea trout turned more towards Ireland than to the bother about some Austrian duke at Serajevo. We even blamed Ireland for a telegram which arrived the day after the departure of the cruisers, recalling me to England. Then the exodus: German and English tourists all speeding home, the Germans serious and at the same time excited, admittedly hoping that England would be drawn in, but in my experience quite civil to their future enemies; the English half amused, half bewildered, and realising far less than the Germans the seriousness of the position.

There was no chance of finishing my interrupted holiday until this summer, and very pleasant after five years were the Norwegian welcome, the Norwegian coffee and cream, and last, but not least, the Norwegian sea trout. Owing to a series of spates the river had been so continuously in condition for the running of fish that the bulk had, I think, already passed on into the lake. Even while we were there the river remained too high to check the fish in their passage, with the result that almost every fish we caught was absolutely fresh run, and there were at no moment quite the usual number in the river. Certain fresh knowledge had been gained during their hard-earned holidays by some members of the Legation staff in the war. It was learnt that if a fish which had missed the fly was given a sufficiently long rest, he would as often as not come again. I must confess to failure in keeping this excellent advice. The excitement caused by the rise of a sea trout makes even five minutes' inaction almost unbearable.

The other discovery was of greater importance. Hackle flies were found to be quite as attractive as winged patterns, and though they sometimes land on their heads or tails, in which position they look ridiculous to fish and fisherman, they do not lie on their backs; moreover, they retain their shape and floating qualities for much longer periods and are therefore both cheaper and more effective. Two incidents of my visit shall be given, one because it contains a moral, the other because the memory of it is so altogether pleasant that I cannot keep it to myself.

This is the story with the moral. J—— and I drove up the valley in a cart, out of which I dropped him to fish the lower pools while I proceeded to the water above. The road passed near one of the pools in his beat, and seeing something suspicious as we trotted along, I made the 'prrrh' sound which stops any Norwegian pony, at whatever pace he is moving, in his stride. Suspicion turned to certainty on closer inspection. A great fish of at least 10 lbs. lay at the tail of the pool, and the cart flew back for J——, while I watched in suppressed excitement, thoroughly conscious of having made a good spot. The cart returned at the gallop, and after the exchange of remarks usual to such occasions concerning the brown stone with white spot, the white stone with a brown blotch, the fin waving against the rock, the blue tail, etc., J——'s eyes were opened, and operations began.

Dry flies first of many patterns alighted softly and floated past, followed, after a painful crawl round the fish, by wet flies swimming in tempting fashion past that most indifferent nose. Once I was encouraged by the faintest wag of the tail, and once the gaffer saw another fish move across to follow, but not to take, the fly. At last after calling the trout everything which it was not, we decided that J—— should rest him until the moment when the sedges began to hatch, while I went on to my own beat. He returned in due course with his wife, who was even more stupid than J—— at seeing the fish, when the same procession of dry and wet flies followed each other without effect. J—— got closer and closer, and angrier and angrier, until, patience exhausted, he cast a stone, then a rock; still no response. He plunged savagely in and stamped, but there was nothing on which to stamp. The thing was not even a rock, it was nothing but an apparition of light and shade.

Fortunately for me, I was not present when J—— stepped out of the water, cursing the author of the whole business. His wife supplied the moral as he joined her on the bank. 'Next time anybody shows you a fish, I should throw a stone at it first.' And when you come to think of it, an early stone would have saved much time and trouble. For the rest of our holiday I gave up spotting fish out of carts, but that ghostly phantom was aggressively obvious every time we passed its haunt.

There were two days on which, owing to a falling river after a spate, the sea trout were well on the rise. On one of these, owing to a combination of stupidity and bad luck, eight big fish were lost or missed, and nothing worth mentioning was caught; on the other I ought to have caught about ten, and did catch three. On this morning, after missing several trout of over 3 lbs., in my lower pools, I regained my confidence in a sharp battle fought out at the tail of a pool with a fish who pretended to be bigger than he was. The lower part of the pool was formed by a 'Kjer,' one hundred yards down-stream of which was an island in the centre of the river; between the island and the near bank was a salmon trap, constructed in the shape of a triangle, with its point containing the trap itself, facing up-stream. The sides of the triangle were made of stout, closely built fences driven into the bed of the stream, one fence reaching the island, the other ending about four feet short of the bank. This space was bridged by a plank laid on the top of two posts which led from the bank to the fence, to enable the owner of the salmon trap to retrieve his catch.

If you picture an open door of ordinary size, through which, owing to the fences, about half the water of the river was conducted in a boiling torrent, you will have an accurate idea of the space formed between the fence and the bank bridged by the plank.

Immediately after my first success, a much bigger fish wallowed clumsily at the fly and was hooked. A moment of suspense followed until he fell with a splash over the 'Kjer' and was caught in the current below. It was at once evident that the river had taken charge and that, whether the fish or I liked it or not, he was going through the door. If he went, so must I, and before I had really made up my mind to go there was an irresistible push from behind delivered by the river, and like a cork out of a champagne bottle I was shot sitting on the waves through the door and into the overhanging branches of a birch-tree, in which I was caught like Absalom. The first part of the journey was pleasant, the second was the reverse. The last vision I had of the trout before he was hidden by the birch-tree was a fin waving in the air in a desperate effort to retain his balance in the waves.

Hopelessly entangled in the birch-tree, with the trout an unknown and increasing distance below, I screamed to two ladies who were with me for assistance. Owing to the noise of the water

I was at first misunderstood, but eventually one lady returned, plunged into the river, and helped to pass the rod round the branches of the tree. At last rod and line were safely disentangled and the open bank on which to run lay before us.

The fish had been kind, for he had found a pocket below in which to recuperate, and until the last branch was reached the reel had been silent. Then came another scream from the reel as more line was jerked out by the fish caught once more in the grasp of the main current of the river. Fighting the branches of a birch-tree when you are in a state of frantic excitement, and at the same time standing in deep water clad in long waders, is not good for the wind, but I made the best face that the going would allow, and about one hundred yards below drew level with the fish. There was no place to stop owing to the pace of the stream, and we travelled on abreast, both fish and I praying for three square yards of black water to give us a pause for breath. The trout fell off a shallow ledge under a rock, necessitating a turn up-stream and a plunge into the river to clear the line, but that was the last danger, and by the road four hundred yards below the pool a little quiet backwater enticed him within reach of the gaff. It was the first time that weapon had ever been used by either of the ladies, but there was no mistake, and we three flopped down on to the grass round a fresh run sea trout of 8½ lbs. We could have 'whooped the top off the mountains' if there had been an ounce of breath left in our bodies, but there was not, so we sat and gasped in great content. The silence was broken by one of the ladies, who told me 'that it was worth coming to Norway to see my back view going through the door.'

Ten minutes later another fish of exactly the same size was killed, a ten-pounder lost, and on the way home another, which had been seen and tried with a dry fly earlier in the morning, took firm hold of a 'Little's Fancy,' fished wet. With the help of a Norwegian friend, who took a somersault into the river in the process, the trout, weighing over 14 lbs., was gaffed after a most complicated and exhausting battle.

Very little fresh light was thrown on the reason for sea trout taking a dry fly. The smaller fish were seen feeding on duns, but the larger ones hardly ever seemed to notice them. There was, however, one exception. A heavy trout rose twice, late one evening, as I reached a pool. No interest was shown in a dark hackle fly, but he rose once more at something else. It was too dark to see the fly he took, but a number of sedges were hatching on the rocks. A suitable winged imitation was taken at once, and the trout landed. Of course definite proof ought to have been obtained from his inside, but when I asked for the corpse, it had already been turned into Rûjat Lax.

It was evident that the chief factor in success was a falling river, and in failure a rising one, and that nearly all the rises were obtained in water running at a certain pace, neither very fast nor very slow.

Two friends (father and daughter) made during the North Sea passage, who were travelling to a famous river close to ours, containing salmon and sea trout, became interested in the dry fly. As promised, they came over for a day, and returned bitten with the sport and loaded with boxes of dry flies. It was a night journey down the fjord, and they reached the mouth of their river at 4 a.m.; by 8 a.m. the daughter was at a pool which she had tried five times unsuccessfully with a wet fly, but which was full of sea trout. By midday she had killed, besides others, two six-pounders, and lost a 15 lb. sea trout through lack of assistance or gaff. The habit of taking dry flies is therefore not confined to sea trout of one particular river. It seems only reasonable to suppose that, wherever they are found in comparatively clear running water, they all take them if given the chance, and no one who has ever caught sea trout by this method would think of venturing on sea trout water without a stock of dry flies in his pocket.

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